

BUDGET SIMULATOR SEPTEMBER 2019



BUDGET SIMULATOR

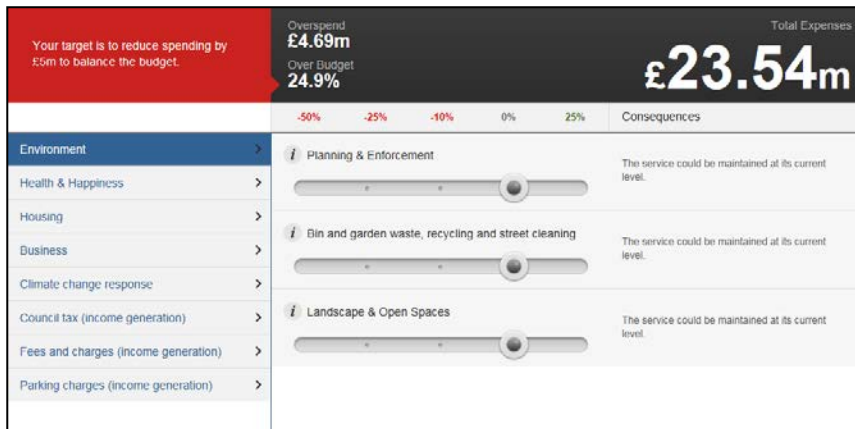
WHY

Winchester City Council needs to find almost £5m of savings over the next three years to achieve a balanced budget in 2022/23.

HOW

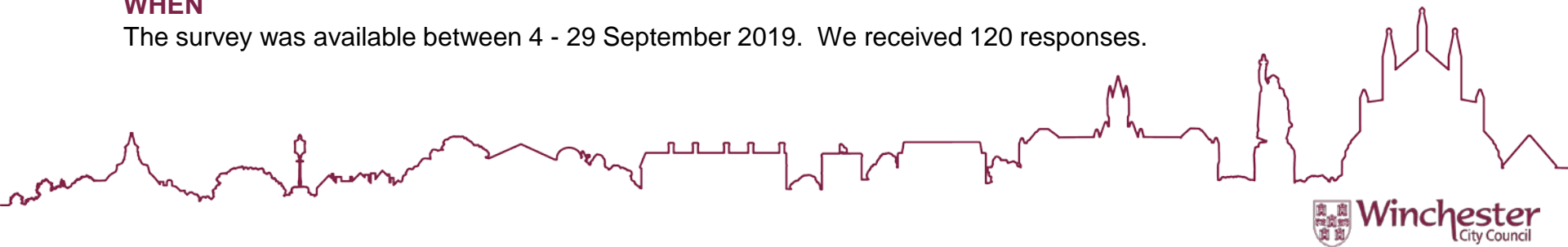
The budget simulator offered residents', businesses and stakeholders the chance to balance the budget. They had the opportunity reduce spending across council services and see the impact or consequences of their choices.

A press release was written to promote the budget simulator. It was publicised on social media, via the Winchester City Council website and in the Entrepreneur, Parish Connect and residents' newsletters.



WHEN

The survey was available between 4 - 29 September 2019. We received 120 responses.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (1)

- 🏰 The service area where people chose to reduce the budget the most was health & happiness:
 - 🏰 The budget for this service area was cut by -20.7%
 - 🏰 Sport & leisure was the biggest loser with a -27.2% revision to the budget
- 🏰 The budget for environment was adjusted by -11.1%. This service group received the lowest number of cuts:
 - 🏰 Over a third (36.7%) of people voted for the budget for bin, garden waste, recycling and street cleaning to remain as it is or to increase
- 🏰 41.7% of respondents voted to increase the budget in order to support climate change initiatives
- 🏰 Over half (54.1%) of people were willing to increase council tax by 3% or more
- 🏰 Over two-thirds (68.3%) of people voted to increase fees and charges above the inflationary 2.5% per annum
- 🏰 95.8% of chose to increase parking charges. A majority (60%) opted for a 20% rise

EXECUTIVE SUMMERY (2)

EXPENDITURE

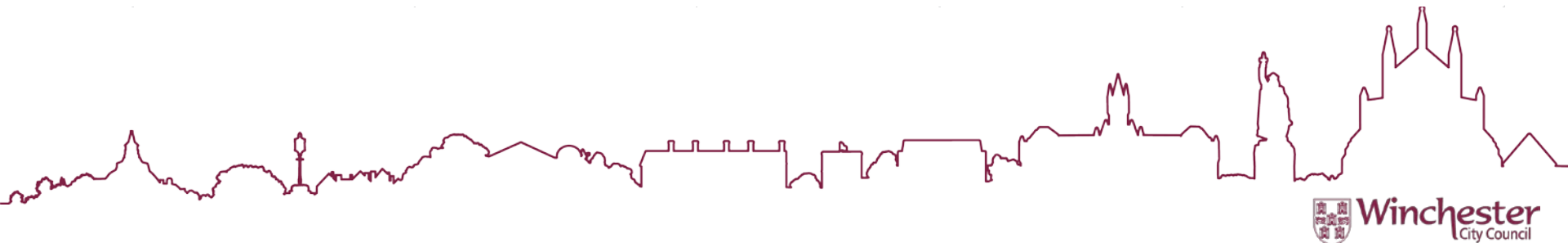
Service Group	Service Item	Original Budget	Average Change %	Average Revised Budget
Environment		£ 7,406,000	-11.14%	£ 6,581,287
	Planning & Enforcement	£ 2,228,000	-15.29%	£ 1,887,302
	Bin and garden waste, recycling and	£ 4,168,000	-9.25%	£ 3,782,460
	Landscape & Open Spaces	£ 1,010,000	-9.75%	£ 911,525
Health & Happiness		£ 3,848,000	-20.73%	£ 3,050,227
	Sport & Leisure	£ 1,117,000	-27.17%	£ 813,548
	Culture & Tourism	£ 918,000	-18.38%	£ 749,318
	Community Safety	£ 586,000	-10.63%	£ 523,738
	Community Support	£ 999,000	-22.21%	£ 777,139
	Public Conveniences	£ 228,000	-18.21%	£ 186,485
Housing		£ 1,614,000	-15.92%	£ 1,357,048
	Homelessness	£ 701,000	-11.58%	£ 619,801
	Affordable Housing	£ 913,000	-19.25%	£ 737,248
Business		£ 1,320,000	-19.10%	£ 1,067,854
	Local Economy	£ 415,000	-24.75%	£ 312,288
	Environmental Health & Licensing	£ 639,000	-12.46%	£ 559,391
	Communications	£ 266,000	-26.25%	£ 196,175

CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVES

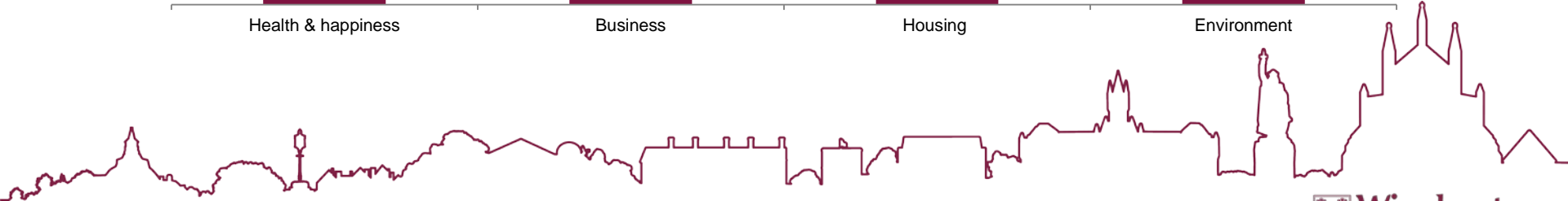
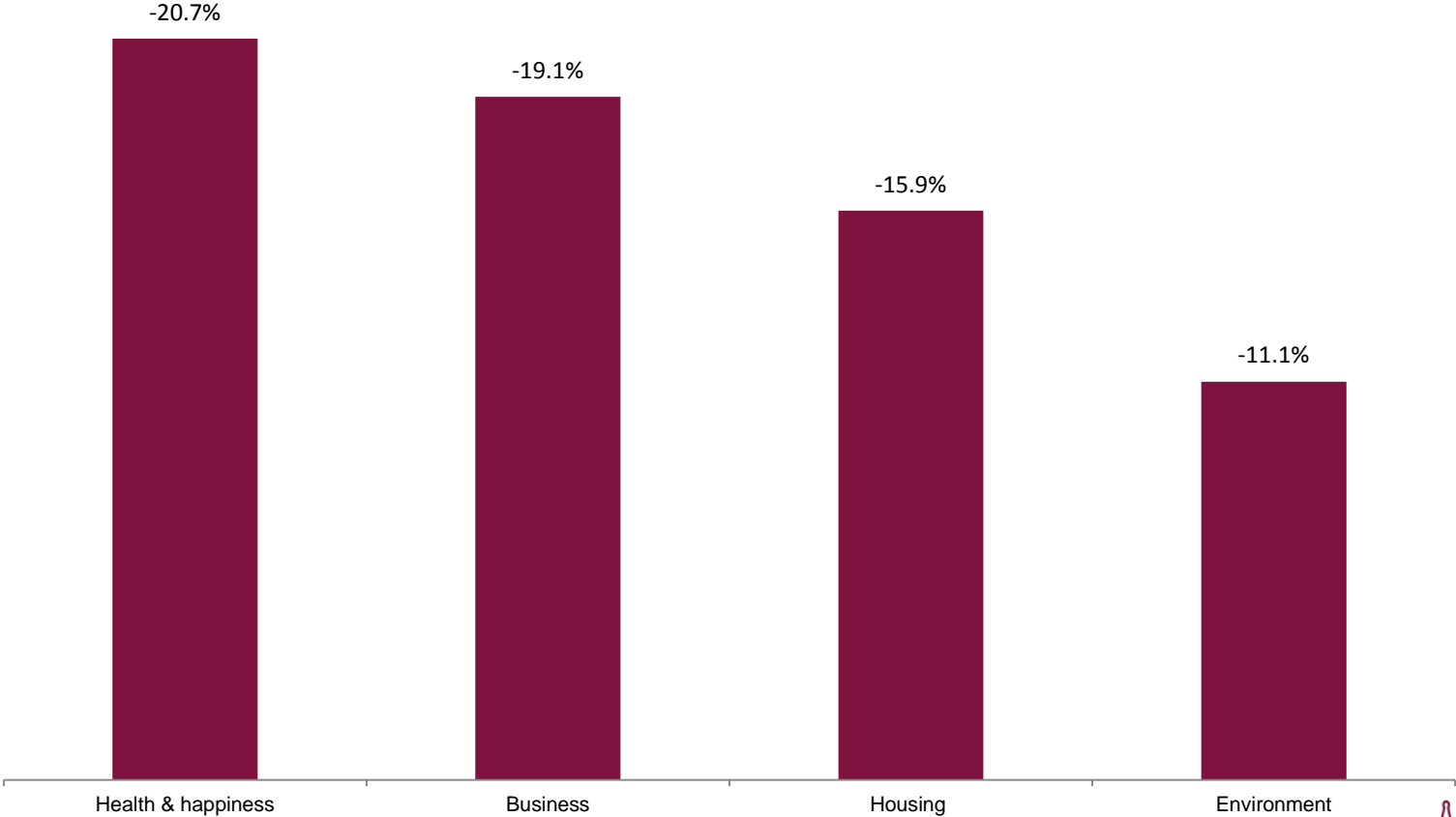
Service Group	Service Item	Original Budget	Average Change %	Average Revised Budget
	Tackling climate change initiatives	N/A	N/A	£ 150,000

INCOME

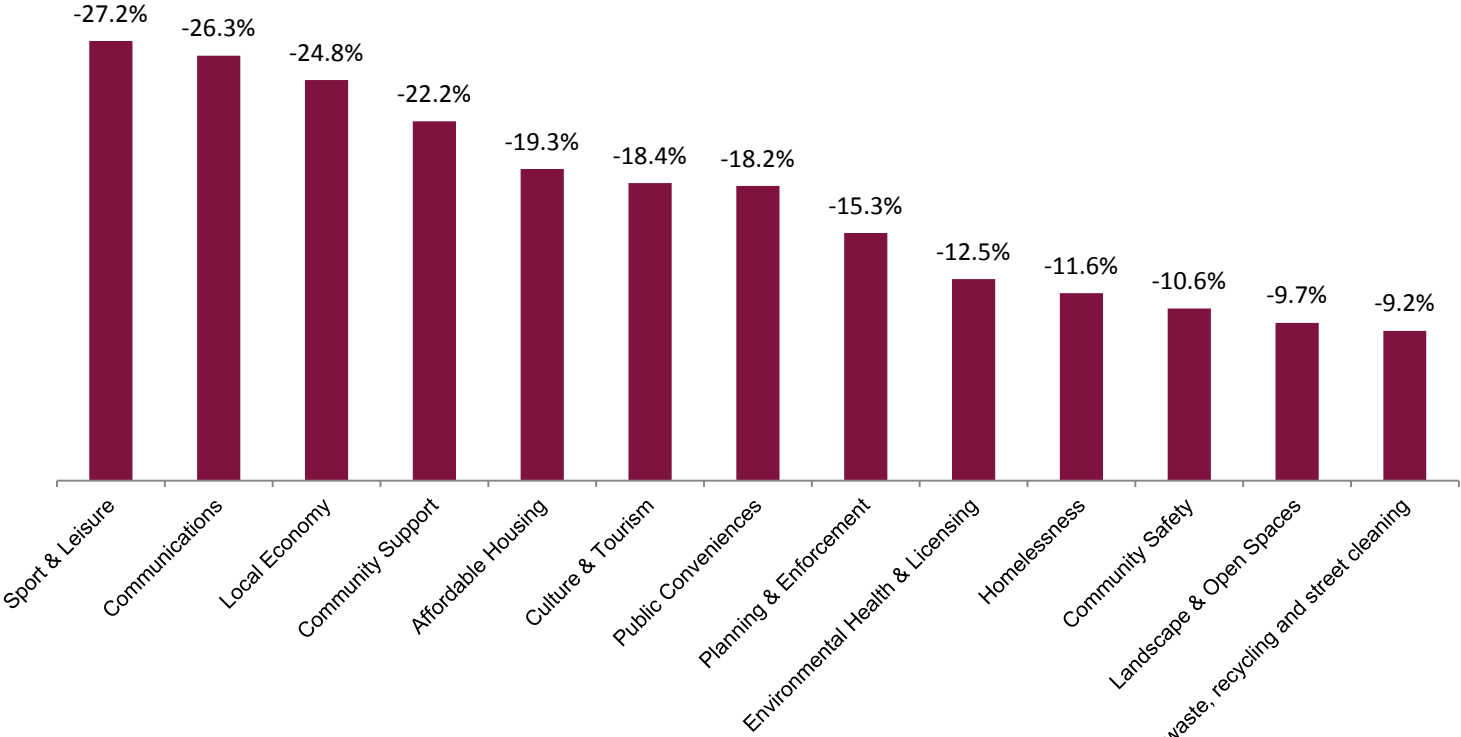
Service Group	Service Item	Original Budget	Average Change %	Average Revised Budget
Council tax (income generation) (Income)		£ 6,932,000	15.53%	£ 8,008,771
Fees and charges (income generation) (Income)		N/A	N/A	£ 772,000
Parking charges (income generation) (Income)		£ 7,117,000	16.13%	£ 8,264,616



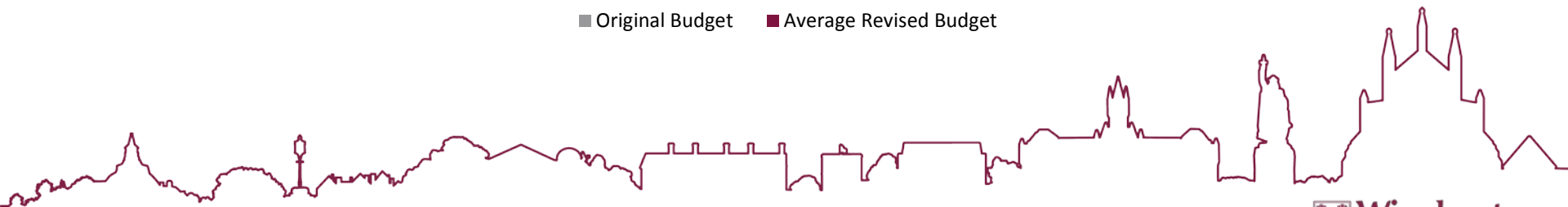
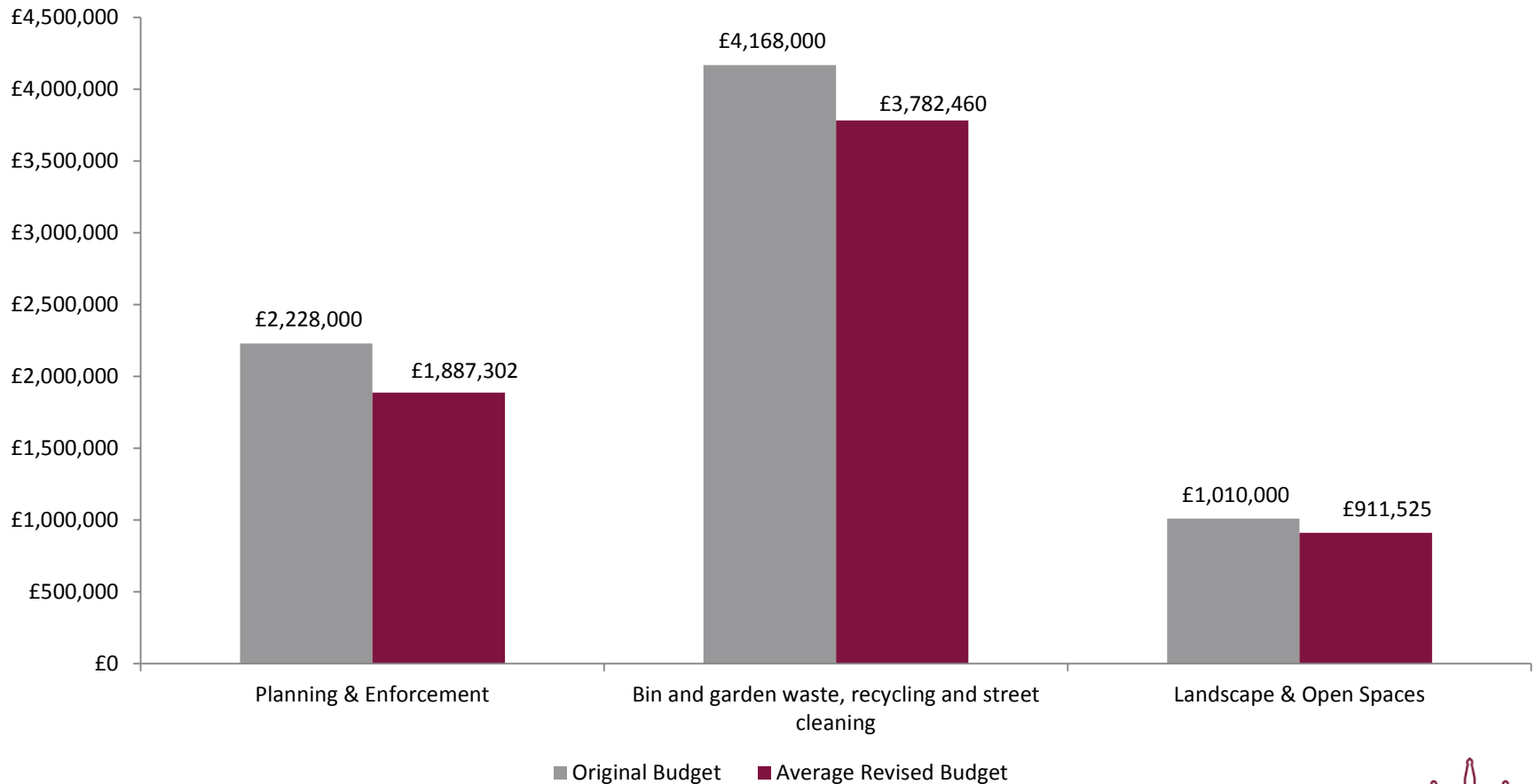
AVERAGE PERCENTAGE CHANGE BY SERVICE GROUP



AVERAGE PERCENTAGE CHANGE BY SERVICE AREA

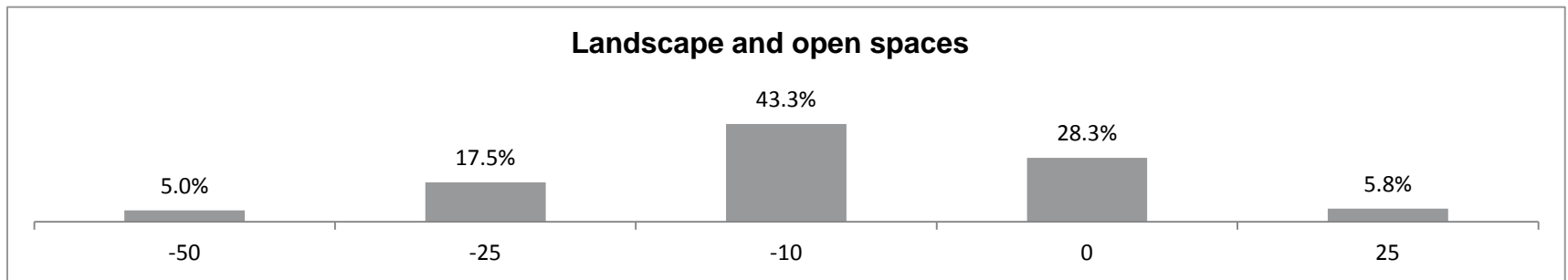
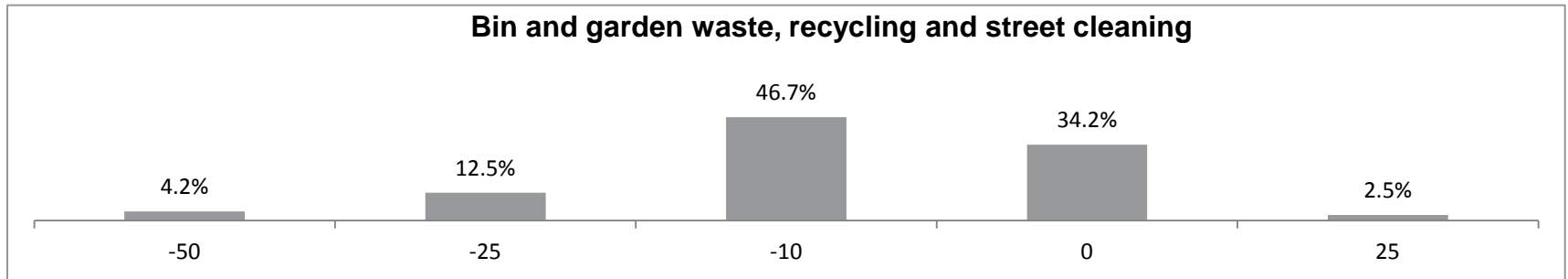
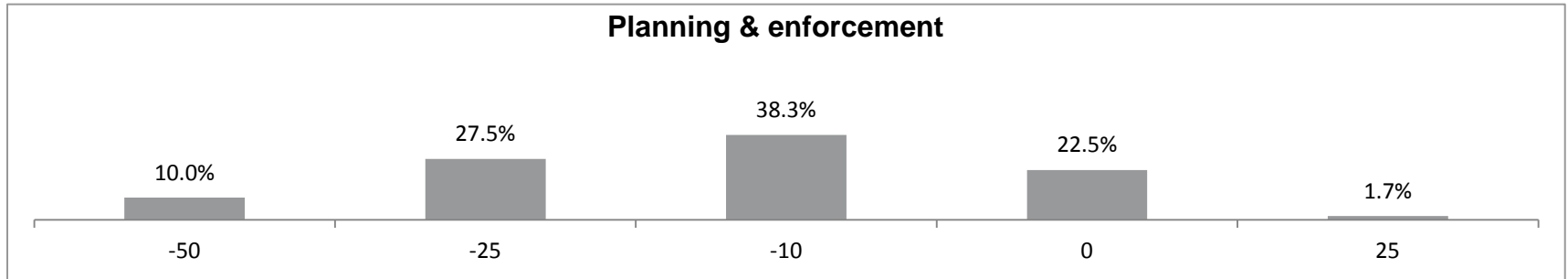


ENVIRONMENT: ORIGINAL VS. REVISED BUDGET

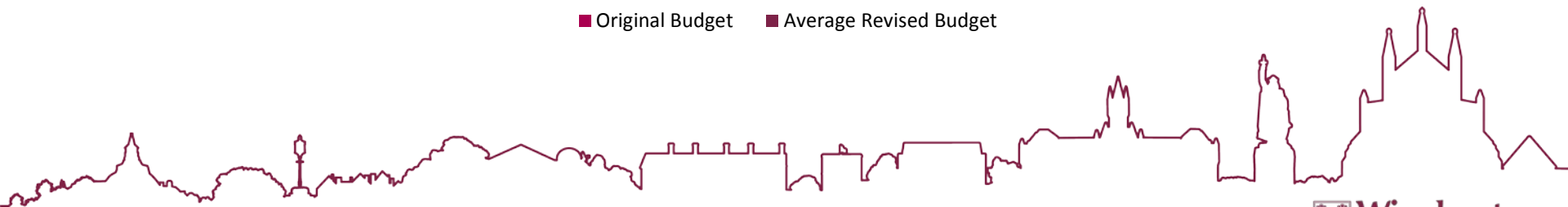
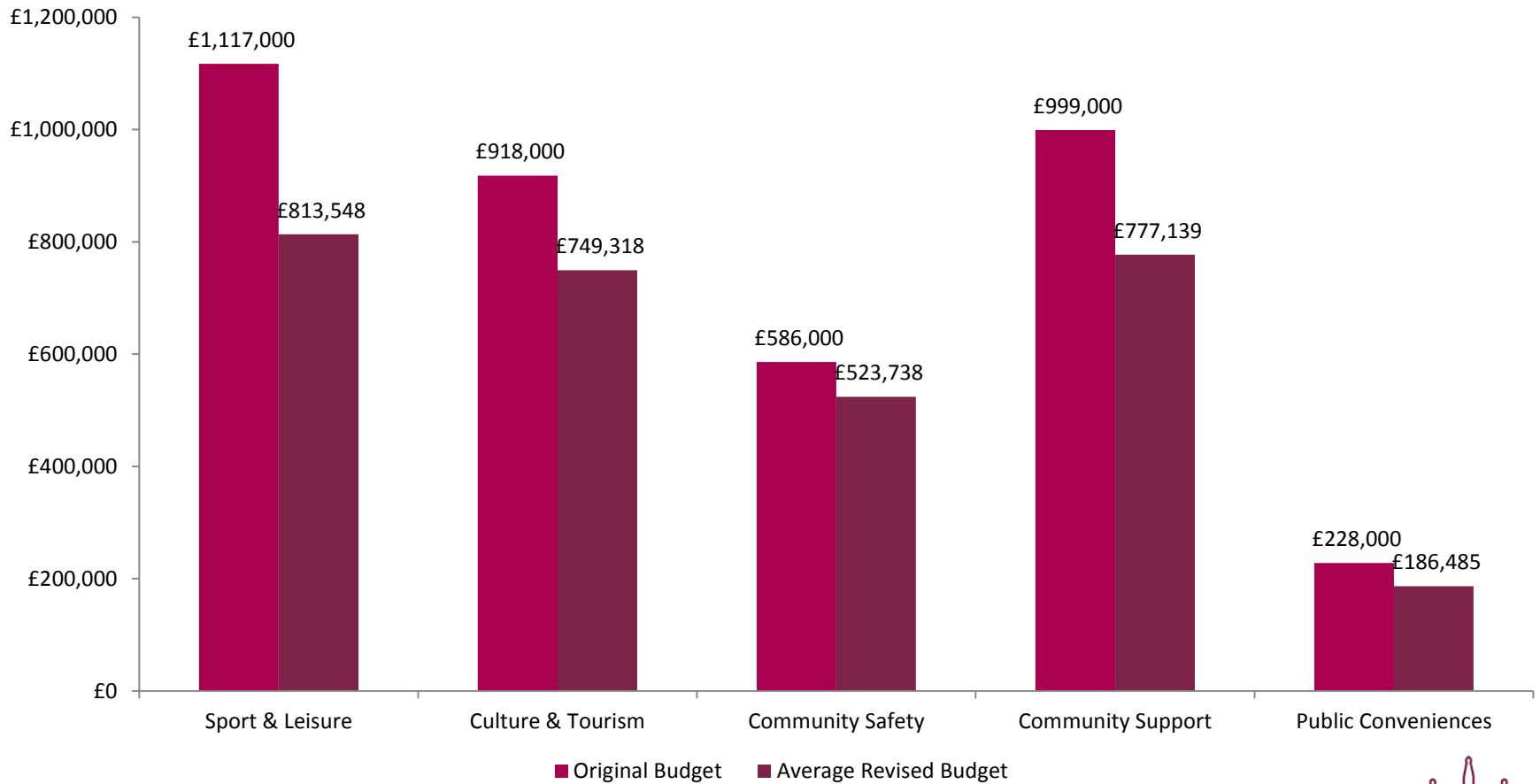


ENVIRONMENT

THE AVERAGE REVISED BUDGET CHANGE FOR ENVIRONMENT IS -£824,713, A PERCENT CHANGE OF -11.1%

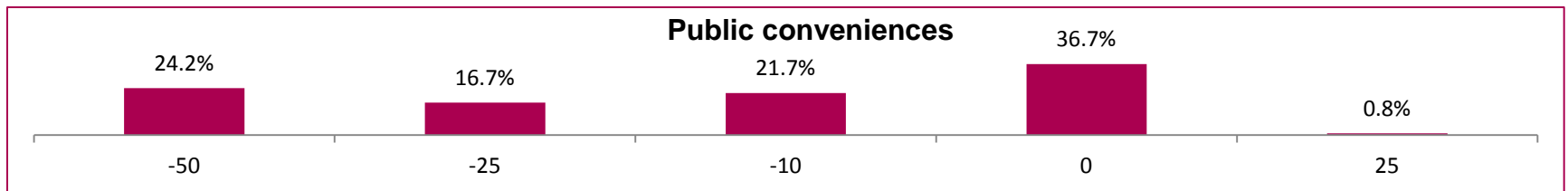
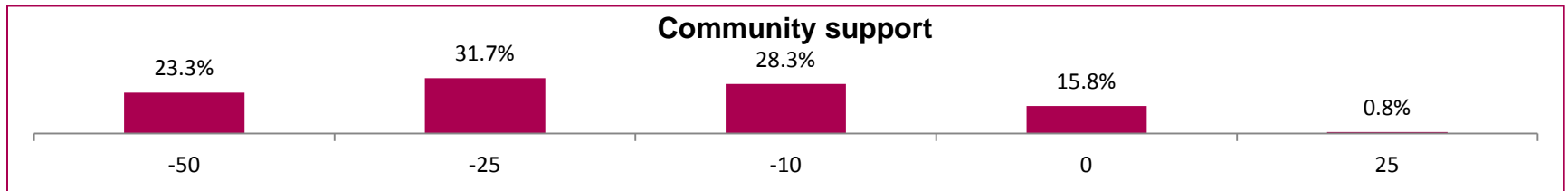
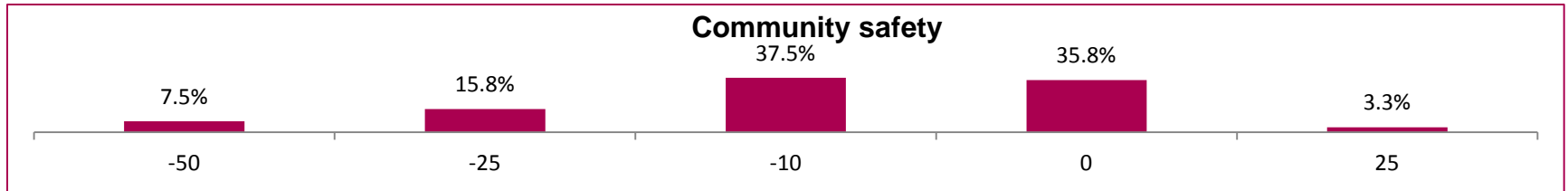
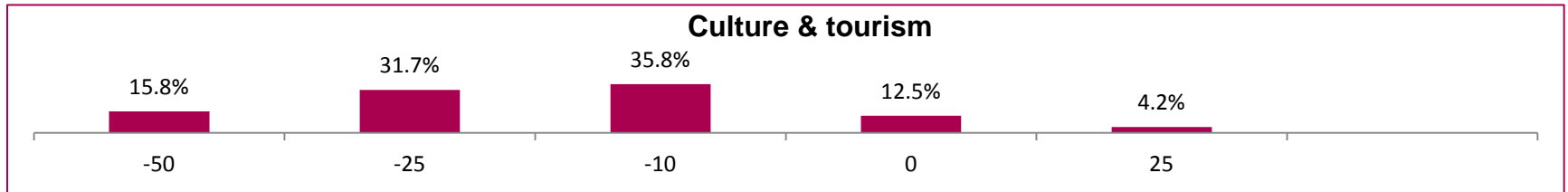
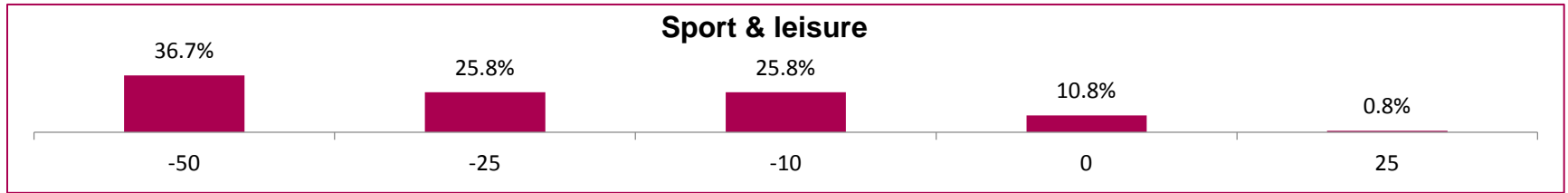


HEALTH & HAPPINESS: ORIGINAL VS. REVISED BUDGET

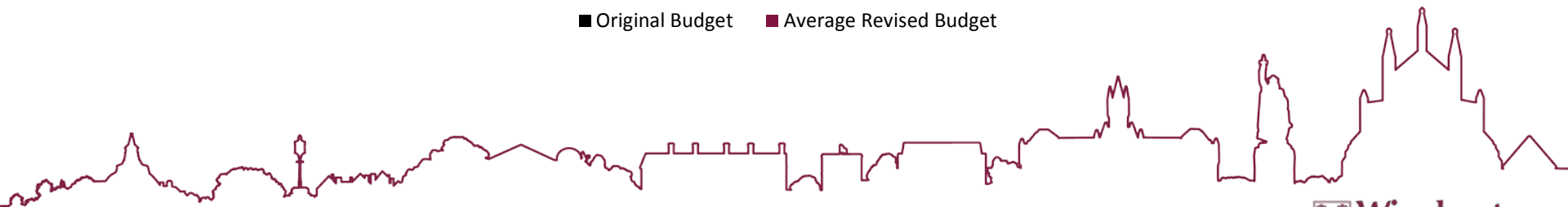
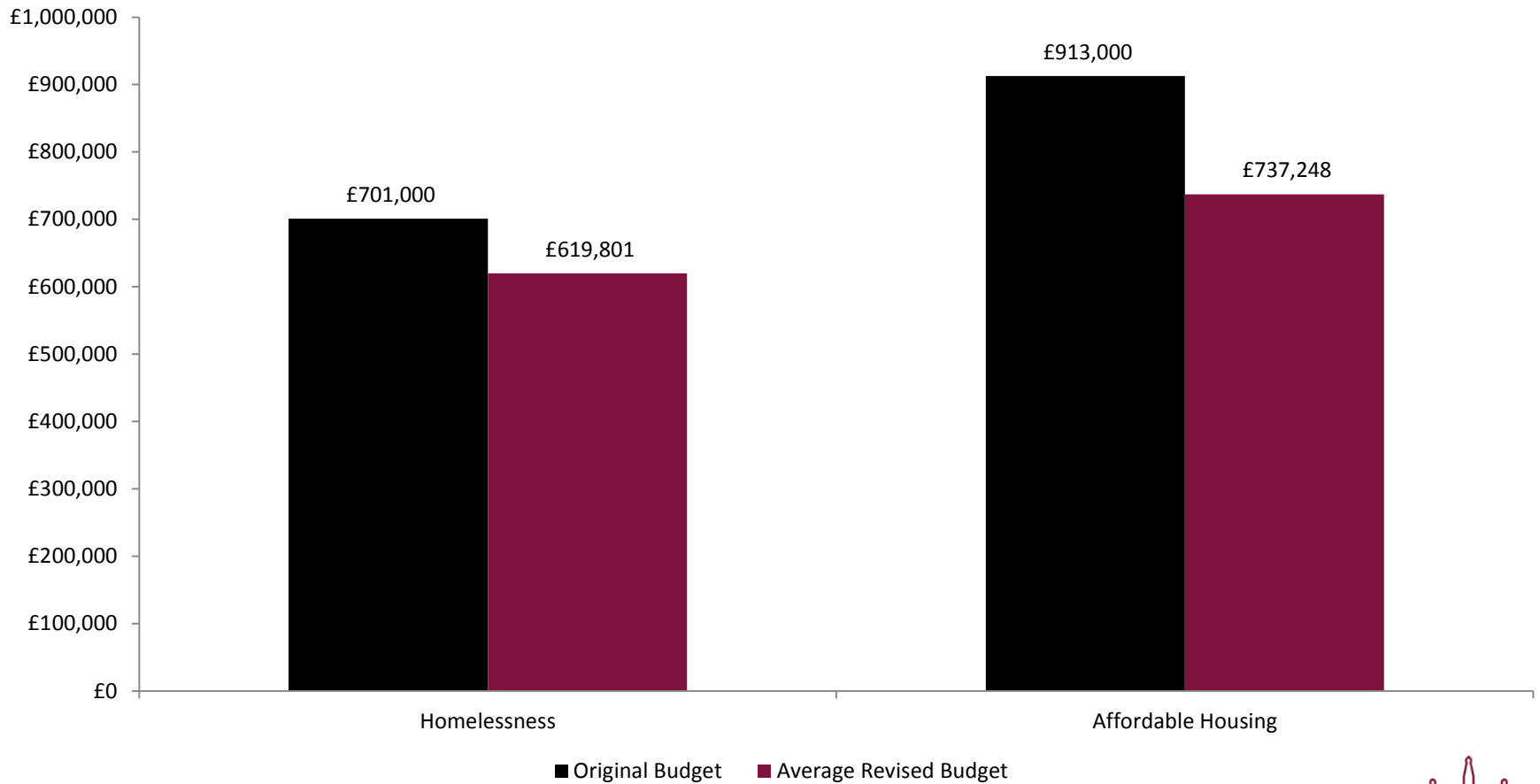


HEALTH & HAPPINESS

THE AVERAGE REVISED BUDGET CHANGE FOR HEALTH & HAPPINESS IS -£797,773 A PERCENT CHANGE OF -20.7%

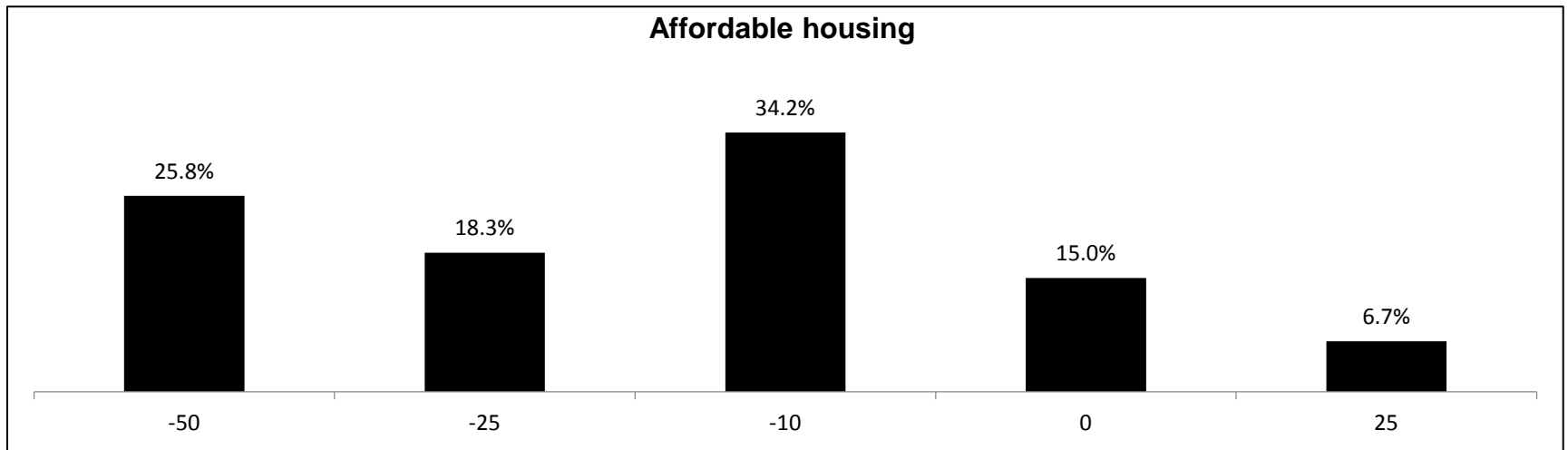
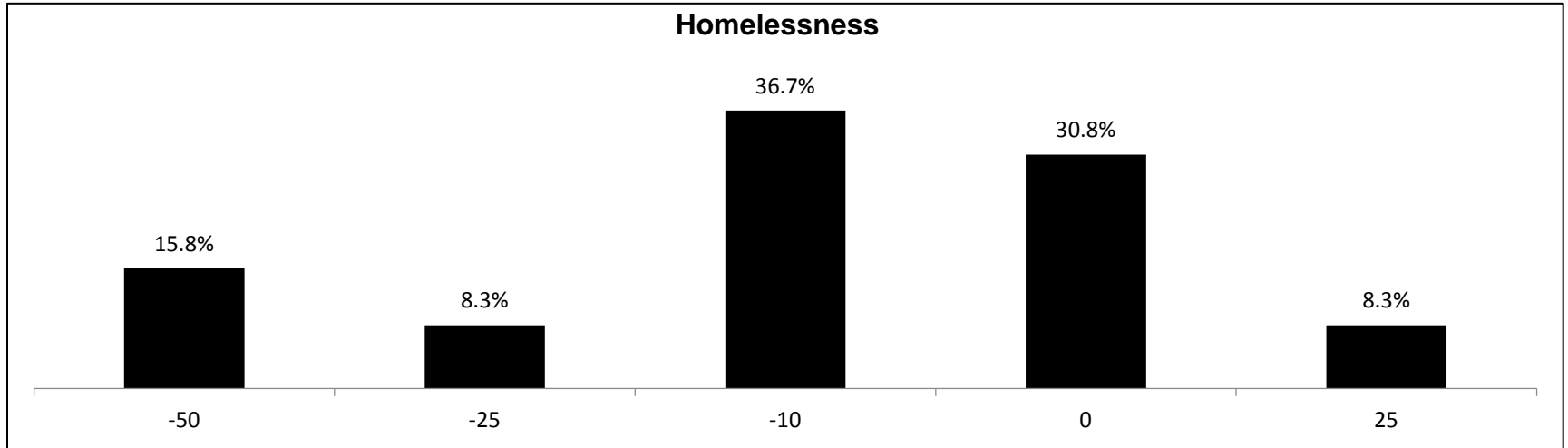


HOUSING: ORIGINAL VS. REVISED BUDGET

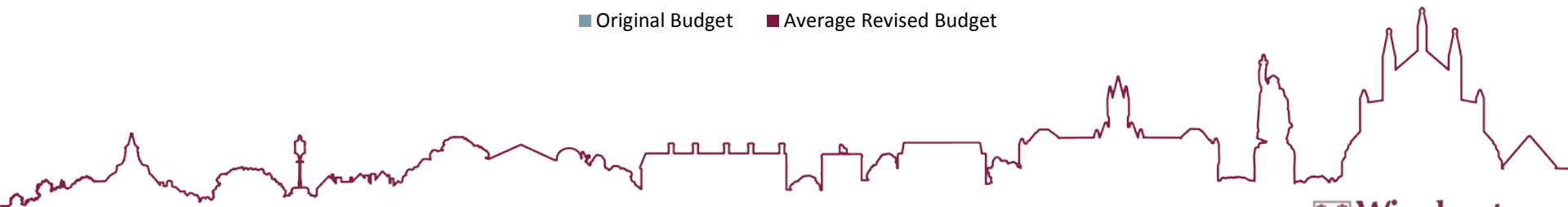
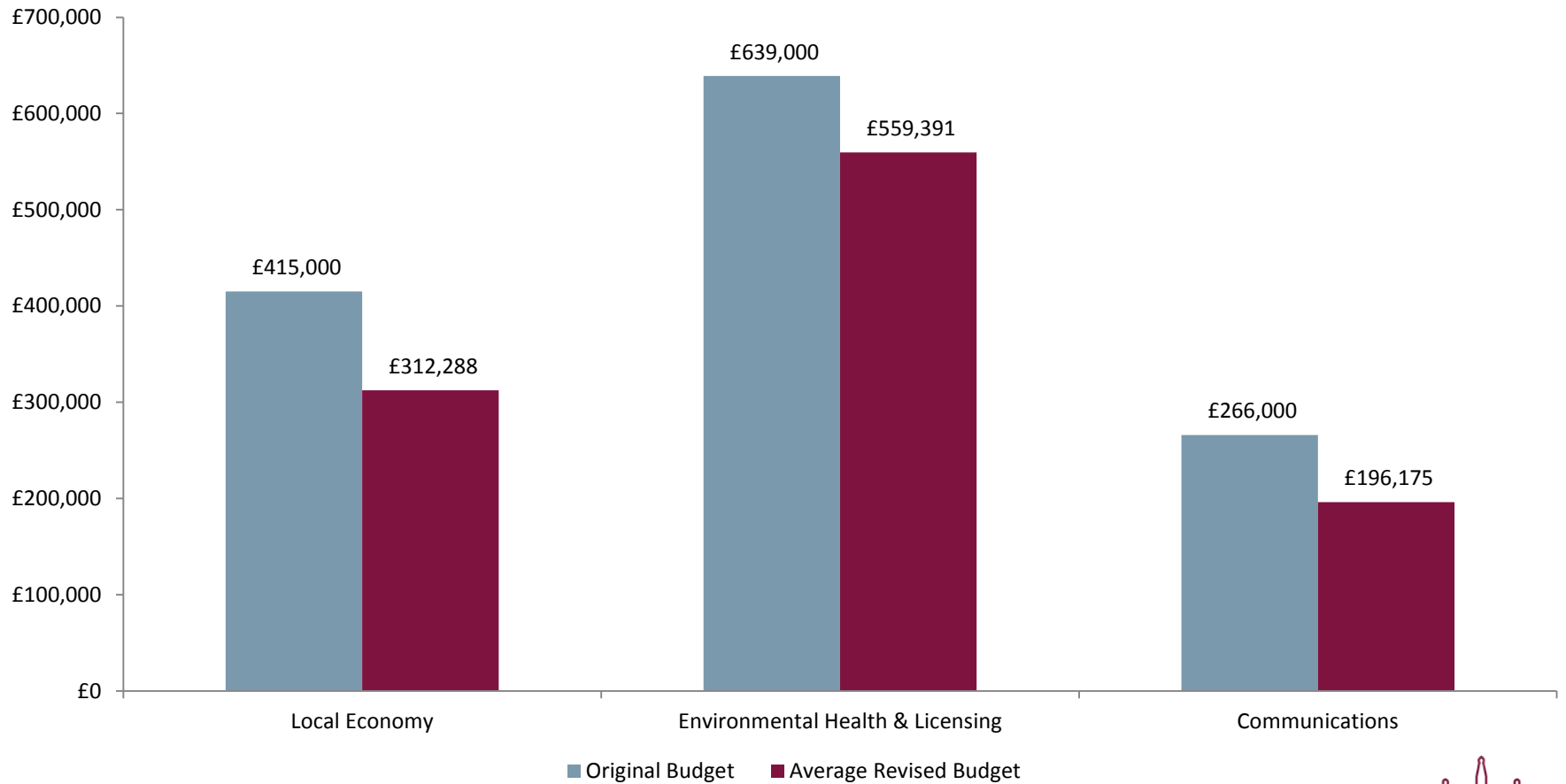


Housing

THE AVERAGE REVISED BUDGET CHANGE FOR HOUSING IS -£1,357,048, A PERCENT CHANGE OF -15.9%

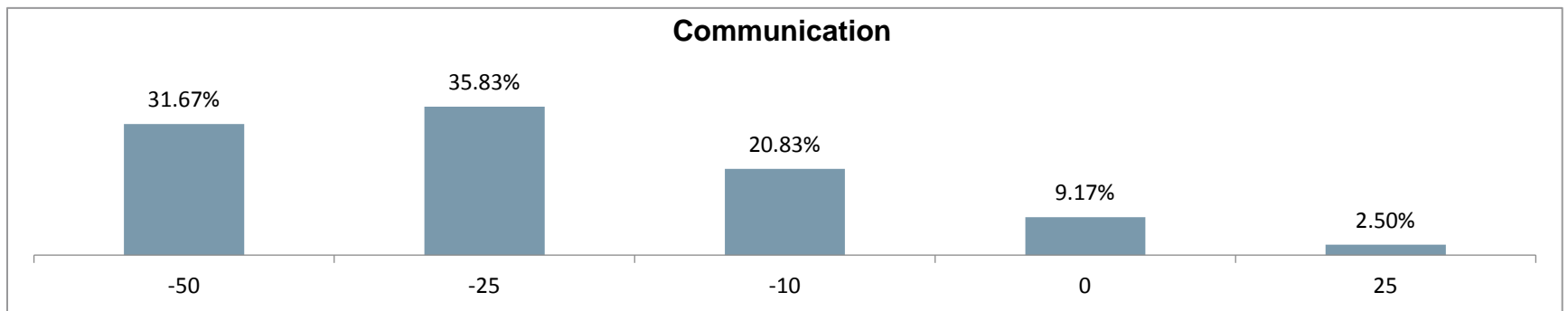
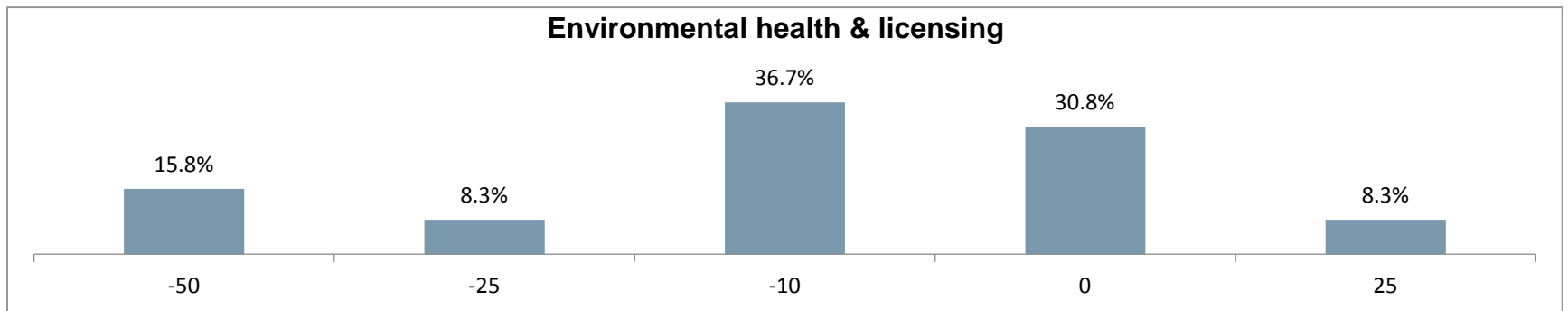
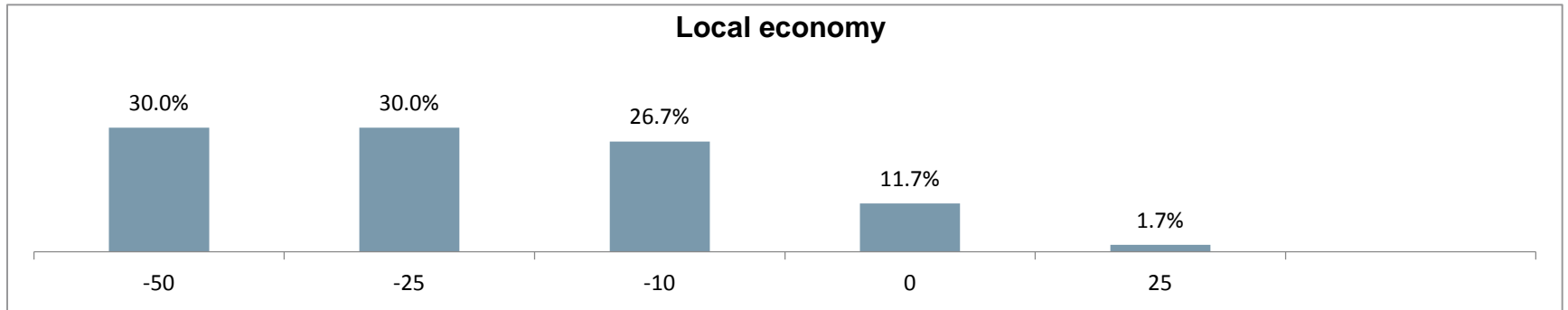


BUSINESS: ORIGINAL VS. REVISED BUDGET



Business

THE AVERAGE REVISED BUDGET CHANGE FOR BUSINESS IS -£1,067,854, A PERCENT CHANGE OF -19.1%



CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE



🏰 Younger age groups* are more likely to support the climate change and carbon neutral initiatives

🏰 11.4% of 25-34 and 35-44 year olds opted to increase the budget for this reason

🏰 Only 3.8% of 65+ opted to increase the budget for climate change

🏰 The gender* split was fairly even:

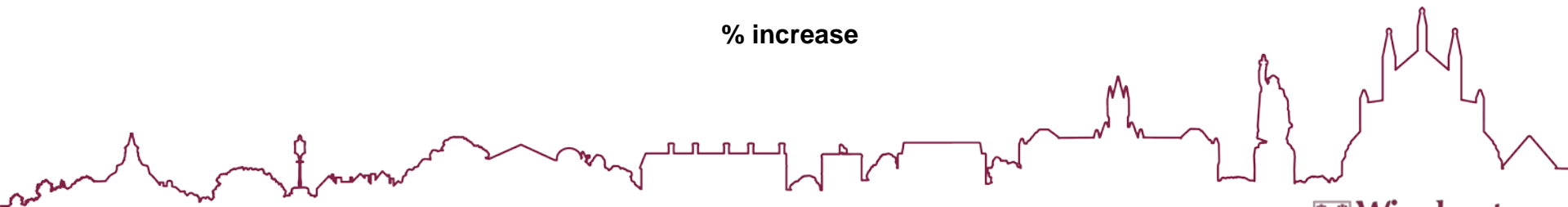
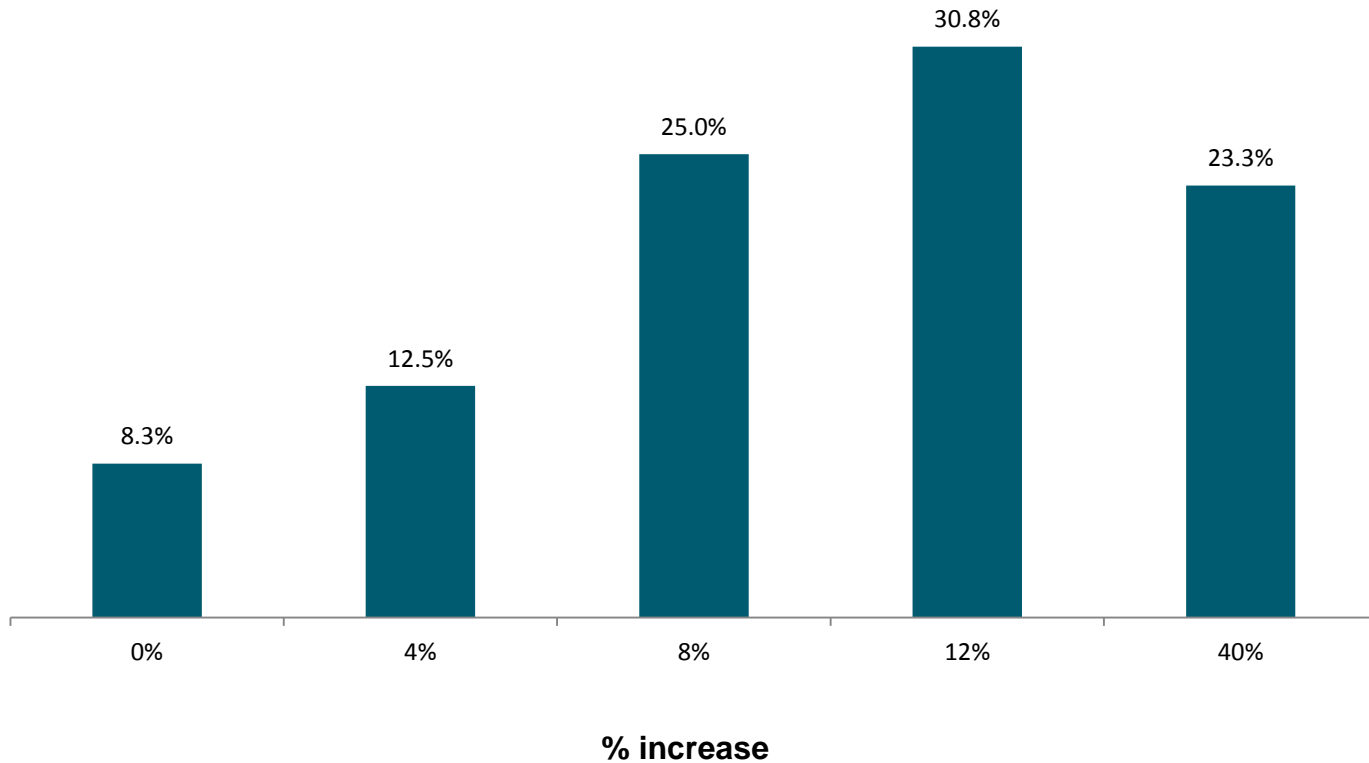
🏰 22.8% of female and 24.1% of males voted for an increased to support climate change initiatives



* Based on 79 respondents who stated their age and gender

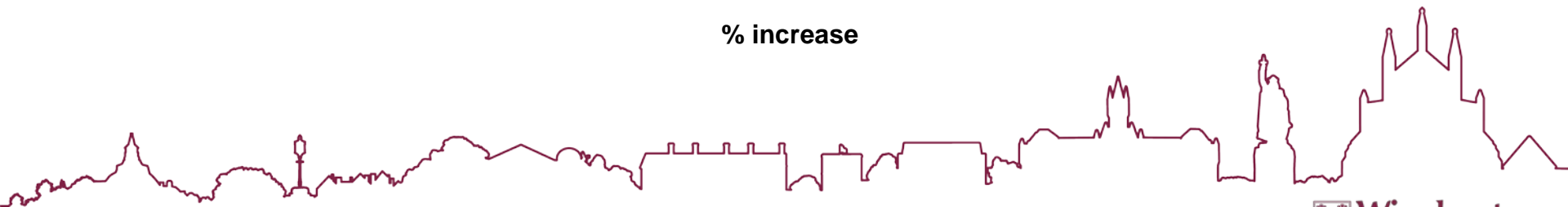
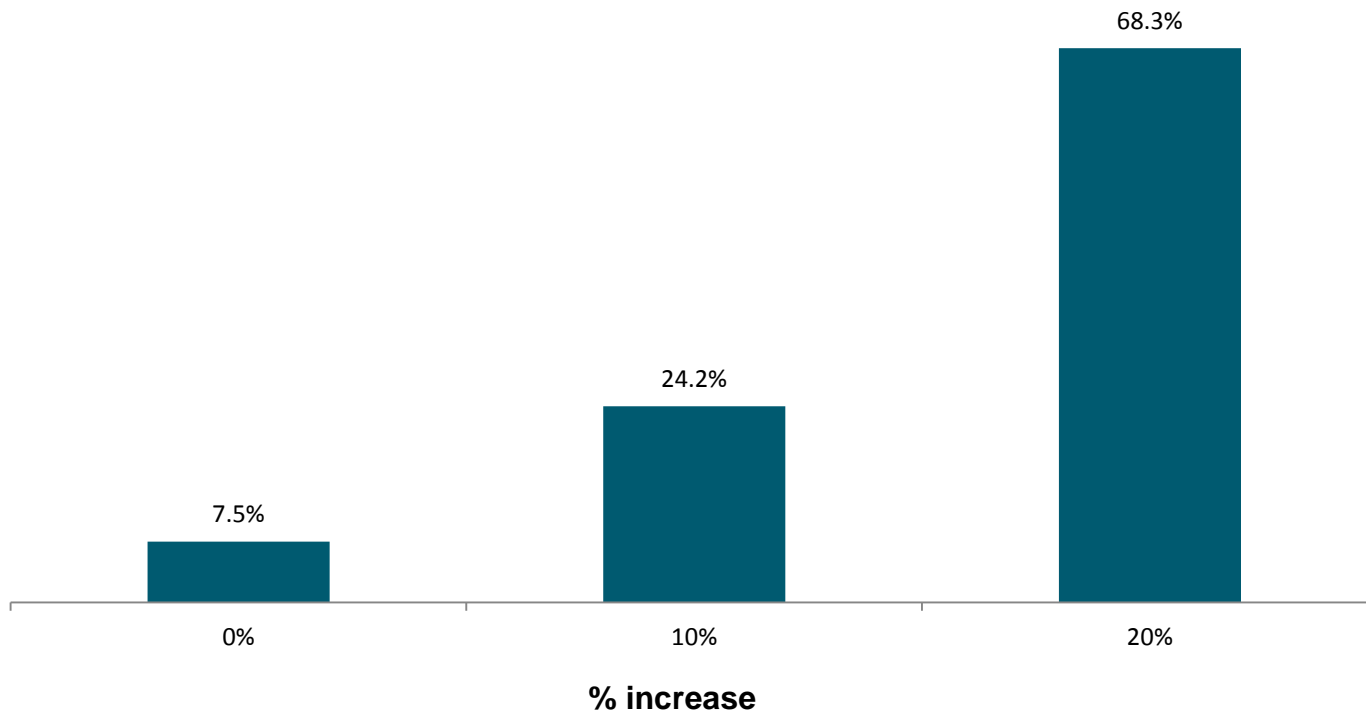
COUNCIL TAX

THE AVERAGE REVISED BUDGET CHANGE FOR COUNCIL TAX IS £1,076,771 A PERCENT INCREASE OF 15.3%



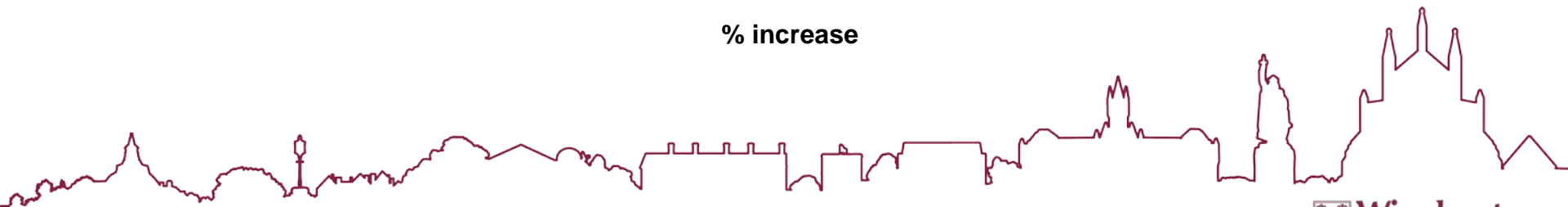
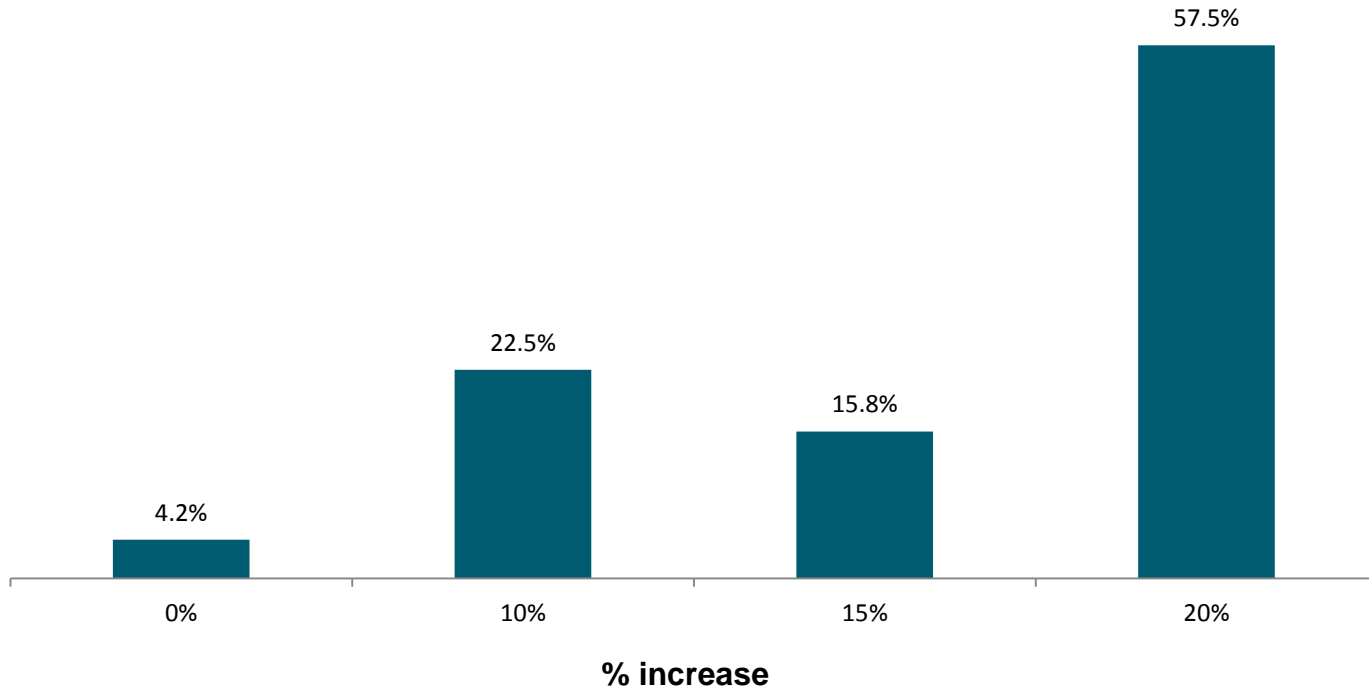
FEES & CHARGES

THE AVERAGE REVISED BUDGET CHANGE FOR FEES & CHARGES IS £772,000, A PERCENT CHANGE OF 16.1%



PARKING CHARGES

THE AVERAGE REVISED BUDGET CHANGE FOR BUSINESS IS £1,147,616 A PERCENT CHANGE OF 16.1%

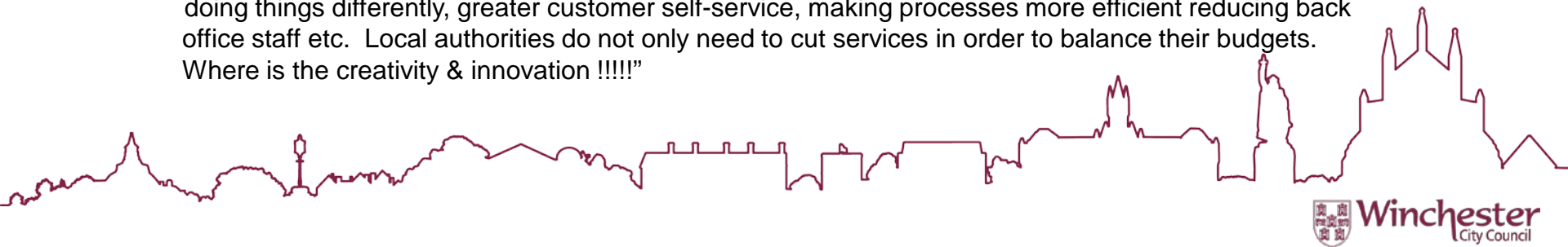


COMMENTS (1)

- “I would like to see the Council spend more on Waist Services. There is plenty of fat which can be trimmed out to support this.....”
- “An increase between 3% and 10% option would deliver some savings and some increases as would some changes in working practices and working with businesses to increase sponsorship of some activities funded by the Council. Nominal charges could be introduced for some services with funds reserved for (say) environment and climate change.”
- “Empty property videos, really honestly take a pictures pop it on a website cheaper and cost saving, honestly videoing a empty property just throwing money down the drain what a excuse. And people in big houses should pay more council taxes for living in such a big ludicrous luxurious home for a start.”
- “I wanted to be able to divert money to environmental measures, but found it difficult to make the necessary cuts. I didn't believe that a referendum for increases in council tax over 3% was a good use of time or money, and thought it was unlikely to succeed.”
- “Review other income opportunities!”
- “Increase wildflower areas in order to reduce grass cutting costs, therefore also increasing biodiversity”
- “Communications a really important area. Happy to increase taxes, but NOT parking charges, which dampen retail and activity. Happy to compromise on certain areas”
- “I'm a Councillor in a nearby borough. Concentrate on the most important issues of our time. Housing has to be the No.1 priority.”

COMMENTS (2)

- 🏰 “Very difficult to balance”
- 🏰 “I would prioritise homelessness and climate change initiatives. Winchester is a wealthy area - we should be willing to pay a little more to improve our city and the lives of the people within it.”
- 🏰 “How much is Silver Hill and the rec going to cost? Why weren't we consulted about what the consequences of that would be? No one would vote for this budget in the city of Winchester, yet you are trying to make it seem reasonable. This is disgusting, and you should be ashamed. "Winchester City Council is committed to improving its services, eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all people.“ Is this a joke? How can you improve services by destroying them? You hypocrites.”
- 🏰 “Or you could save money by not putting up budget surveys that are far too restrictive in the suggestions for saving money that can be made i.e. would increase long term parking charges in city car parks to encourage people to use park & ride rather than drive into the city this benefiting air quality at the same time. Do not cut recycling as this will only increase costs for dealing with fly tipping etc.”
- 🏰 “Easy!!”
- 🏰 “Basically, it's not looking good!!”
- 🏰 “There was no option to review Senior Management spans of control, the number of management layers, doing things differently, greater customer self-service, making processes more efficient reducing back office staff etc. Local authorities do not only need to cut services in order to balance their budgets. Where is the creativity & innovation !!!!!”



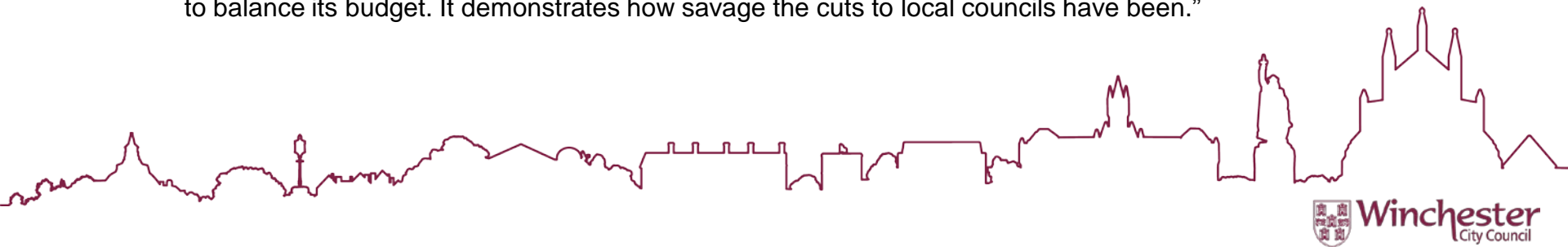
COMMENTS (3)

“There are several areas of council activity where local community groups could be supported / commissioned to fill gaps if the council were no longer able to deliver. Sport / leisure / health being the obvious one. The council team working in this area has sought to suppress volunteer-run clubs and groups in recent years and appears to have aimed to displace them - this isn't sustainable. There are also several council-owned buildings lying empty that could be offered to the community to rent, and this would generate revenue - there are tons of local groups and small businesses in the arts, culture, sport sectors etc. that are looking for premises from which to operate. It doesn't make any sense for them to be frustrated while council properties lie idle. Re council tax - part of the answer is to add further bands to ensure that the largest properties are properly taxed. It is crazy that multi-million pound properties aren't asked to contribute more - particularly as many of them are in rural or edge of town areas that require disproportionate levels of servicing (e.g. bespoke bin collections). I am guessing this would require action at central government level to give local authorities the power to add bands? Lastly, you haven't given us the option to cut the use of expensive architects on major projects, but again this seems crazy when HCC architects and local firms are available. Why are we using expensive architects from outside the area?”

“There's a lot not included here but I get the point - working for HCC we're undertaking the same exercises.”

“The biggest amount I have taken off is helping business. I own a business in Winchester and the amount you currently help business with isn't enough to do anything so might as well not have it.”

“Thanks for giving us the opportunity to share our views and see for ourselves how hard it is for the council to balance its budget. It demonstrates how savage the cuts to local councils have been.”



COMMENTS (4)

“Don't think proposed uplift to cast parking charges is enough. Private car use is a major, if not the leading, contributing factor in air pollution in the uk, car parking is a symptom of this, and it encourages people to use their cars rather than sustainable travel alternatives. Therefore as an absolute minimum, the climate emergency fund should come from those causing the problem.”

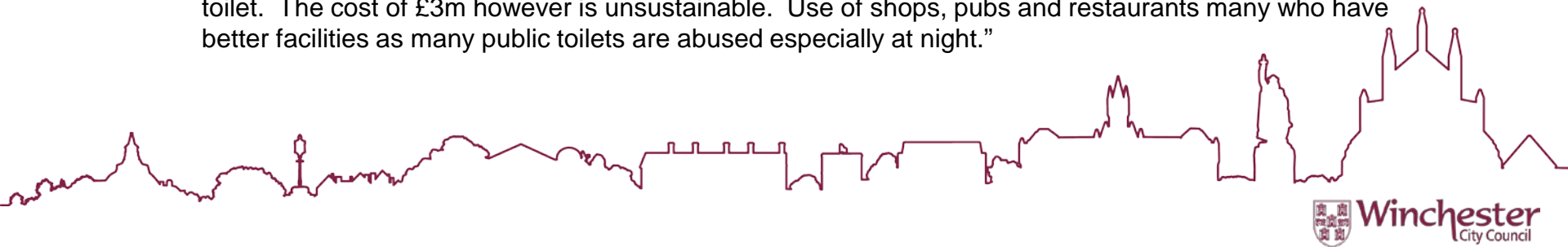
“Planning fees are paid by investors with money and not the general public. They can afford to pay more without affecting residents. They will get a ROI to cover for it. Although you are trying to encourage sport and leisure, communities and groups must pay and many look on the grants as income not necessity. People have a choice pay or don't do it. There is nothing free in life anymore.

Producing videos for marketing purposes is very costly. Those looking for housing will find it in other ways.



Increases in council tax is inevitable if we need the services, Only way to keep them low is to stop wasteful expenditure elsewhere.

Parking within the town will always be considered expensive, more use of public transport, park and ride etc. There are too many blue badge free parking. Many of these are abused and given grants and benefits to get around. I see no reason why they should not pay unless severely disabled. I struggle to walk around the town and still have to pay for parking without any benefits paid.

I hate the fact of closing public conveniences especially as I had bowel cancer and frequently need the toilet. The cost of £3m however is unsustainable. Use of shops, pubs and restaurants many who have better facilities as many public toilets are abused especially at night.”



COMMENTS (5)

-  I found the possible actions incredibly biased. There were limited income generation opportunities which can help to balance the budget - more about cutting services and when these were illustrated they were very narrow in terms of options. Also parking income has to be spent on parking - it is not available for the general budget. Overall a real disappointment and I do hope this is not seen as a driver of the budget discussions for the future.
-  Lyme Regis in Dorset have a hydroelectric generator inside the town mill (which dates from 1340) it cost them £59,000. I think we should look at the opportunities for hydroelectric generation along the itchen and undertake fundraising to pay for it. I don't know if you watch gardeners world but they often talk about community gardening and the benefits it can bring to health and well being; in harestock we have a lot of green space which the council "maintains". By setting up community gardening initiatives and making the green spaces available to them the maintenance cost to the council can be gradually reduced and they can act as a substitute for local health walks and community classes. Any money which the council spends on housing effectively makes the council a huge housing consumer, driving up demand and making it more expensive for everybody. Besides, the current Brexit trajectory will result in a decline in house prices over the next few years, we are going to have a lot of empty new builds. In any area, the smallest house in the worst location is always going to be the cheapest, it doesn't matter how big that house is; building small homes simply reduces the quality of the housing stock and thus the quality of life for future generations. In summary, I think winchester's housing issues will be resolved at the national level and we should stop spending council money on rabbit hutches. If you want houses to be cheaper still, reduce the size of the train station car park. I don't believe we should be looking to attract new business beyond the high street. New businesses simply place more demand on local housing. Winchester has historic tourist appeal, guide books market it for us, this should be enough to attract businesses to the high street. That said, I think one section of the centre should be made available to local crafts people on a "percentage of takings" basis, just to give the centre another twist.



COMMENTS (6)

Comment received by email:

“I've had a go at trying your budget balancing survey but decided not to submit my response. I understand the budget pressures councils are under. But this feels more like a PR act than a tool to give citizens a chance to really make these choices. The idea is good but it's hard to execute. The tools doesn't give us all the option available for cutting spend and raising revenue. You're giving us a limited amount of options that are minor value cuts. Some of the services being cut seem duplicative in the options. There's no option to cut the investment in the new river park in favour of accepting sunk cost so far and instead just rennovating the existing centre. Similarly the new housing spend only makes minimal savings. Similarly local business grants...are there options for you to turn them into concessional business start up loans that get rapid in line with business earnings as new businesses that are successful start to earn revenues (I.e. much like student loans!) and taking a junior debt position so as not to discourage other investors e.g. This is local loan repayment beyond revenues collected in corporation tax.

Transformation of services should also be on the menu - sometimes reshuffling of services can make them more streamlined and efficient.

On things like climate change action - a UK government and council failure to invest in actions today means dramatically higher expenses in health, air conditioning and retrofitting etc in the future as climate consequences come into affect.”

