

Consultation Report – Grounds Maintenance Review

1. Objectives of the Consultation

The aims of the consultation were to:

- gather views on the proposed service frequencies;
- identify residents' priorities in relation to grounds maintenance; and
- address any concerns through the policy and its implementation.

2. Methodology

The public consultation consisted of a survey circulated to tenants, which included a set of questions covering:

- clarity and readability of the draft policy;
- level of agreement with each of the proposed service standards;
- level of agreement with the outlined communication approach; and
- views on the overall impact of the policy on neighbourhoods.

The survey also collected information on respondents' demographic information. Specifically, it gathered data on:

- age;
- locality;
- property type;
- gender;
- race; and
- disability status.

At the beginning of the consultation window, Council tenants and leaseholders received postal letters asking them to fill in the survey and share their views on the proposed Grounds Maintenance Policy, alongside a paper copy of the draft and instructions for completing the survey either online or on paper. The draft policy and live survey were published on the North Yorkshire Council website under 'Consultations and engagement'.

A half-way review of the consultation was carried out on 27 April, which showed that 239 responses to the survey had been submitted so far. A further email was then sent to tenants asking them to share their feedback via the survey, which included a direct link to the relevant web page. Following this, the response rate almost doubled to 457.

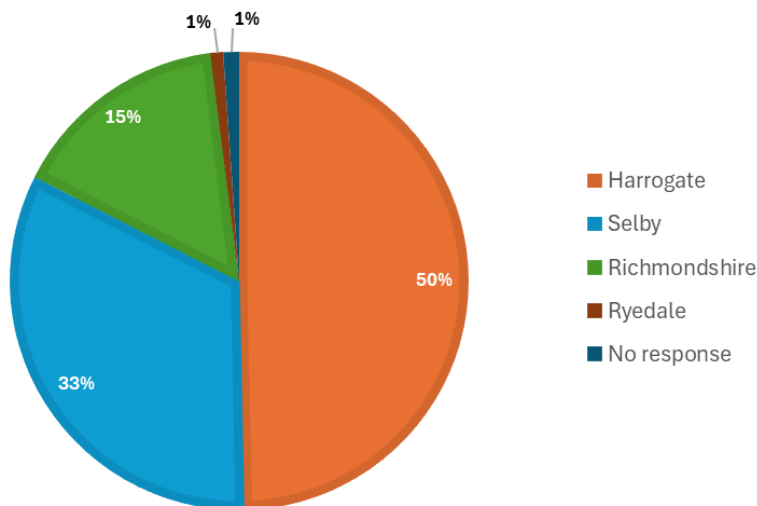
3. Profile of Respondents

Of the 457 people who responded to the survey, 437 (96%) were North Yorkshire Council tenants. Those who were not tenants were leaseholders (1), family members of tenants completing the survey on their behalf (1), responding in a professional capacity (3), or lived near an NYC property (4).

Geographic Distribution

Responses were received from across North Yorkshire Council's housing management areas, with their distribution closely aligned with that of the Council's housing stock. Of those who responded:

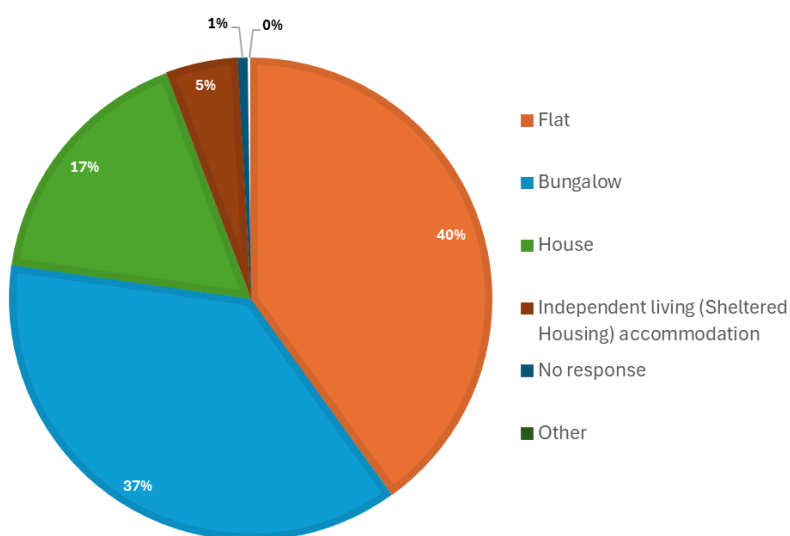
- 227 (50%) were from the Harrogate locality;
- 150 (33%) were from the Selby locality; and
- 71 (15%) were from the Richmondshire District.



Property type

Of those who responded to the survey:

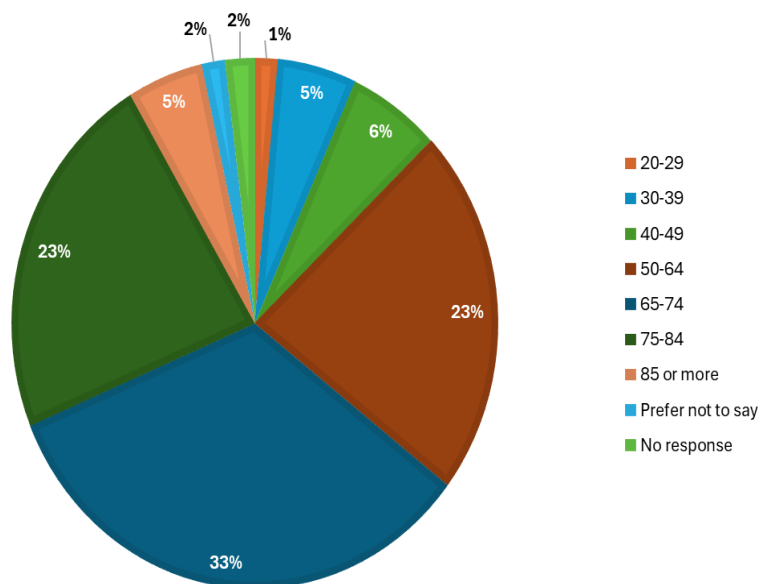
- 183 (40%) lived in a flat
- 170 (37%) lived in a bungalow
- 78 (17%) lived in a house
- 22 (5%) lived in sheltered accommodation



Age

Of those who responded to the survey:

- 7 (1%) were aged 20-29
- 24 (5%) were aged 30-39
- 28 (6%) were aged 40-49
- 103 (23%) were aged 50-64
- 152 (33%) were aged 65-74
- 104 (23%) were aged 75-84
- 23 (5%) were aged 85+

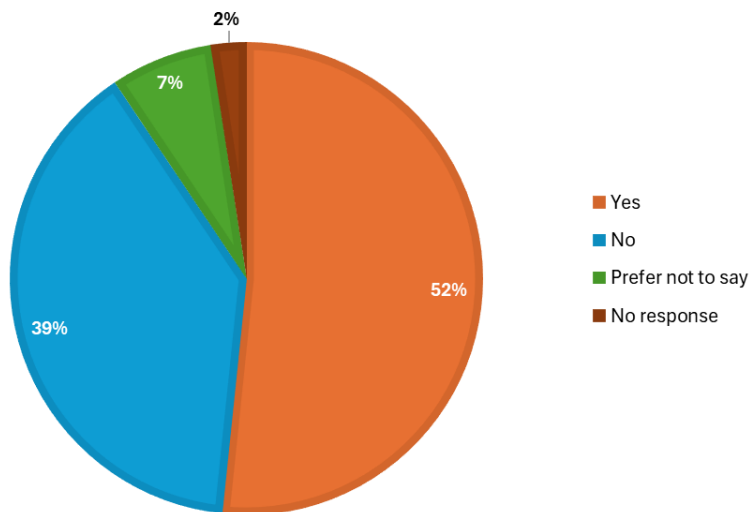


This means that 84% of respondents were aged 50+, and 61% were 65+. This is broadly in line with the expected age profile of NYC tenants, although we currently lack detailed knowledge of our tenant population’s demographics.

Disability

The proportion of tenants and leaseholders who completed the survey and consider themselves to have a disability is as follows:

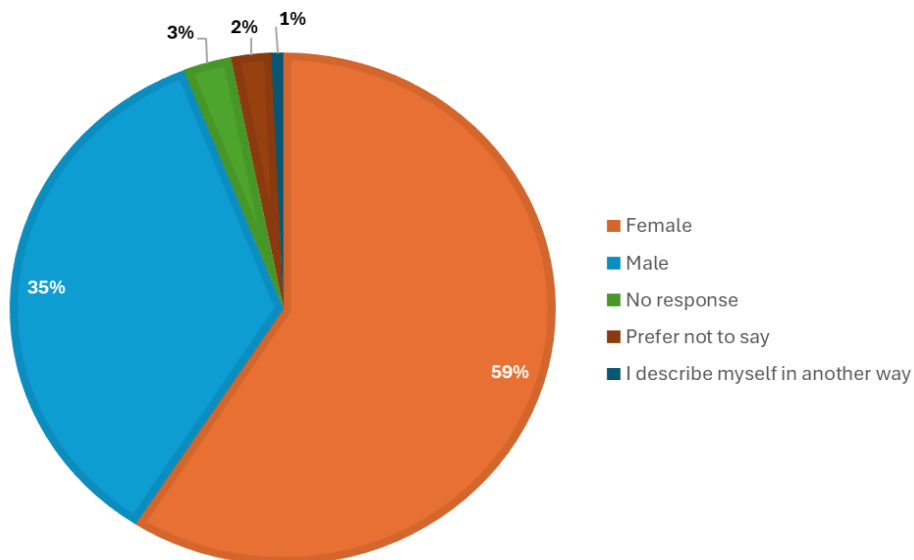
- 236 (52%) identified as disabled
- 178 (39%) did not identify as disabled



Gender

Of those who responded to the survey:

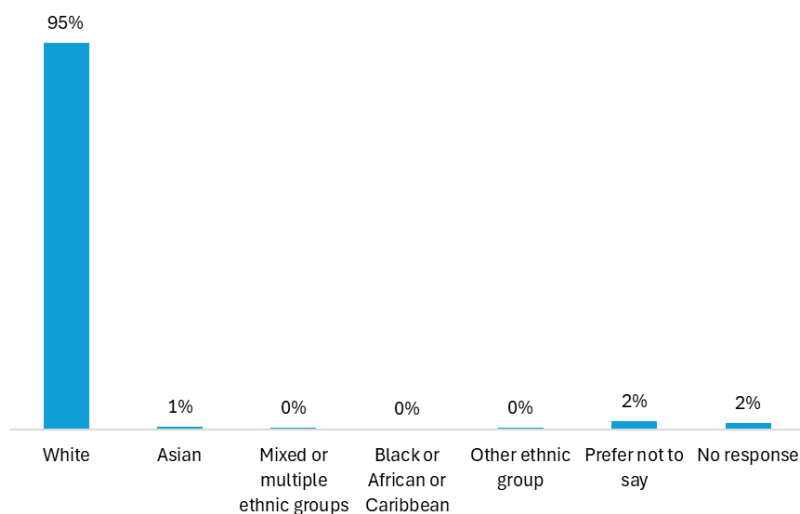
- 270 (59%) identified as female
- 160 (35%) identified as male
- 3 (1%) identified in another way



Ethnicity

The ethnicity breakdown of the cohort is as follows:

- 433 (95%) were white
- 3 (1%) were Asian
- 2 (<1%) were mixed or had multiple ethnic groups
- 1 (<1%) was black, African or Caribbean



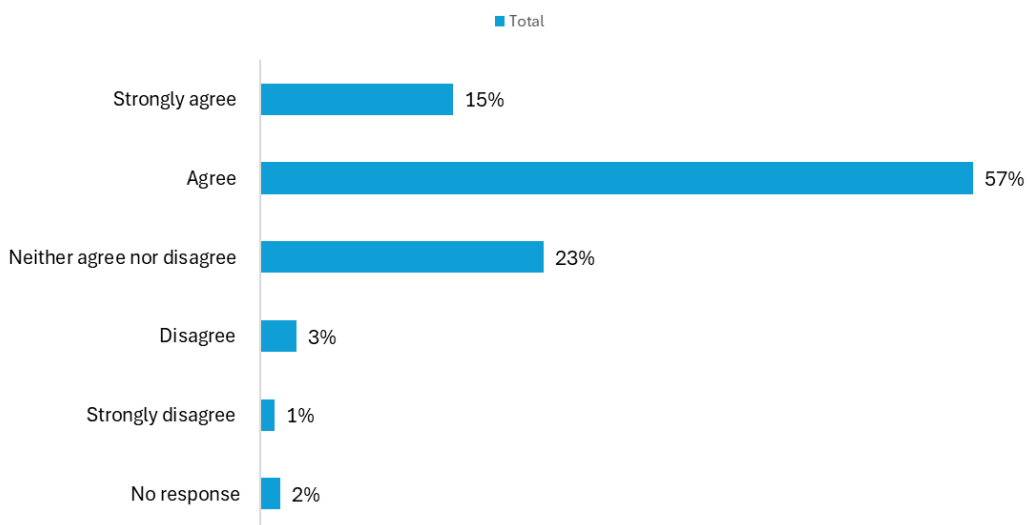
4. Consultation Findings

This section summarises responses to the consultation, combining quantitative results with qualitative feedback.

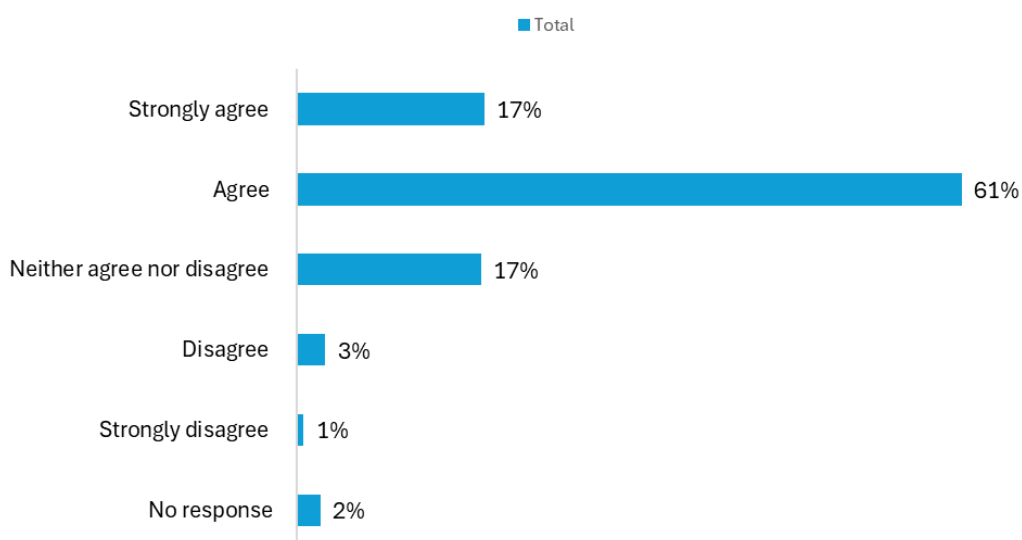
Clarity and Readability

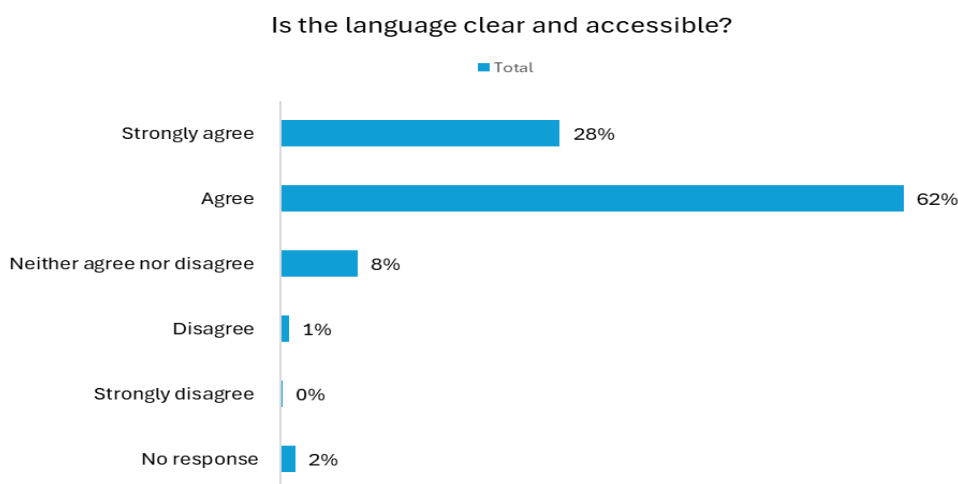
Overall, residents responded positively on the clarity and accessibility of the draft policy. Across the three questions relating to readability, an average of **80%** of respondents **agreed or strongly agreed** that the policy was easy to understand, clear and accessible, while only **3% disagreed or strongly disagreed**.

Do you find the draft policy easy to understand?



Does the policy clearly explain what the Council will and will not maintain?





A majority of comments described the policy as “easy to read”, “clear”, or “well laid out” (15 comments). Respondents pointed to the use of bullet points and structured formatting as helping to make the content more accessible.

A smaller group (7 comments) indicated that they did not understand the policy or found it unclear, suggesting some residents may require further simplification or guidance. In addition, a small number (3 comments) felt the document was too long or overly complex, indicating the need for a document with plainer language.

Some responses (2 comments) highlighted specific areas of ambiguity in the policy, including where responsibility lies for tenants’ private gardens (although this is set out in the drafted policy) and what extra support would be available for vulnerable residents in general needs properties.

Many residents also used the survey as an opportunity to express wider dissatisfaction, with a significant proportion of responses (20+ comments) not directly addressing clarity but instead raising concerns about current service delivery.

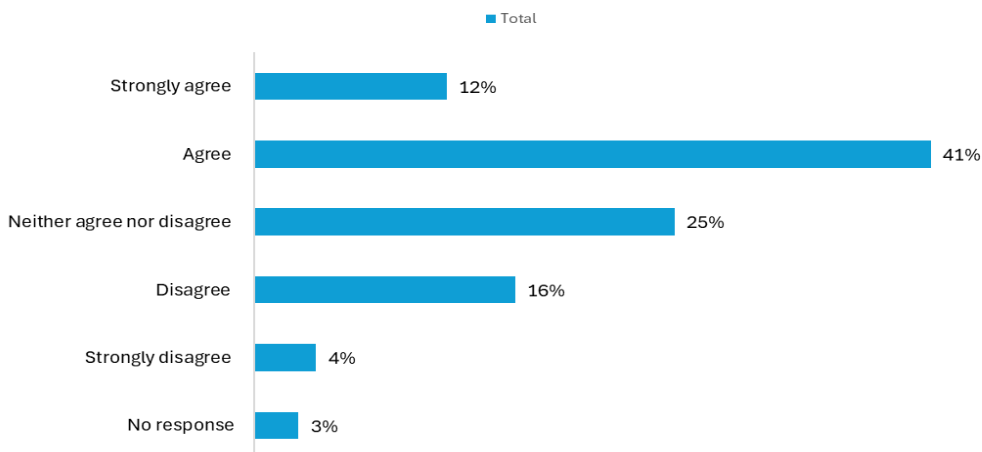
Finally, a number of respondents (6 comments) indicated that, while they understood the policy, they lacked confidence in its delivery. This reinforces broader themes identified across the consultation.

Proposed Service Standards

There is overall support for the proposed service standards. Across the relevant questions, approximately **65-75%** of respondents selected **Agree or Strongly Agree**, compared with **15-20%** selecting **Disagree or Strongly Disagree**.

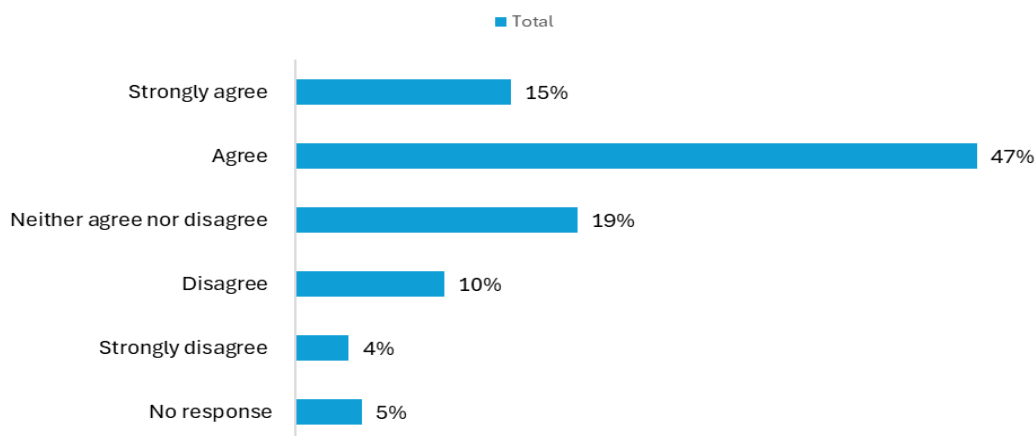
53% of respondents **agreed or strongly agreed** that the proposed standards were appropriate for their area, while **20% disagreed or strongly disagreed** and the rest neither agreed nor disagreed. The responses to each individual service proposal are broken down below.

Do the proposed service standards feel appropriate for your area?



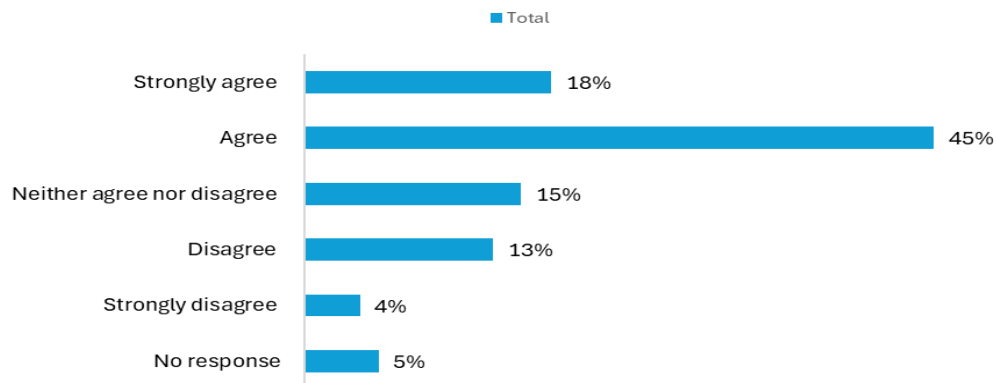
On hedge maintenance, **62%** of respondents **agreed or strongly agreed** with the proposed service standard, while **14%** **disagreed or strongly disagreed**.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to hedge maintenance?



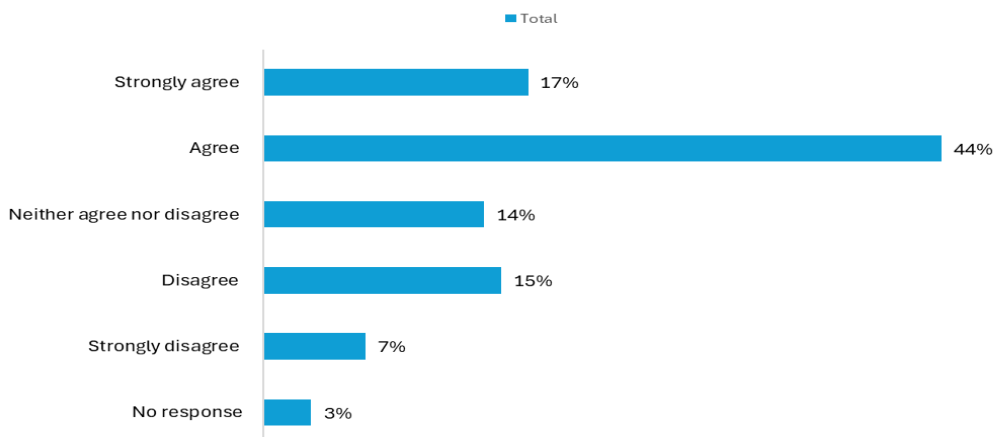
For weed and moss control, **63%** **agreed or strongly agreed** with the outlined service provision, while **17%** **disagreed or strongly disagreed**.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to weed and moss control?



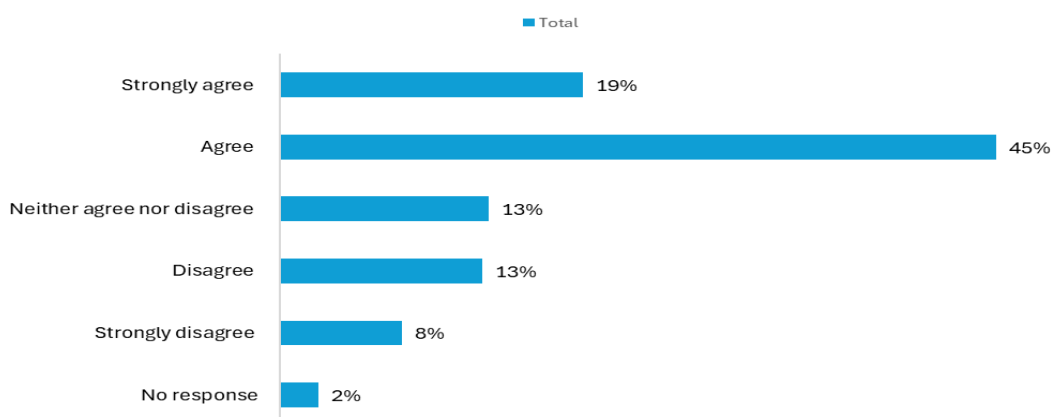
Regarding the proposed leaf clearance service, **61% agreed or strongly agreed** and **22% disagreed or strongly disagreed**.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to leaf clearance?



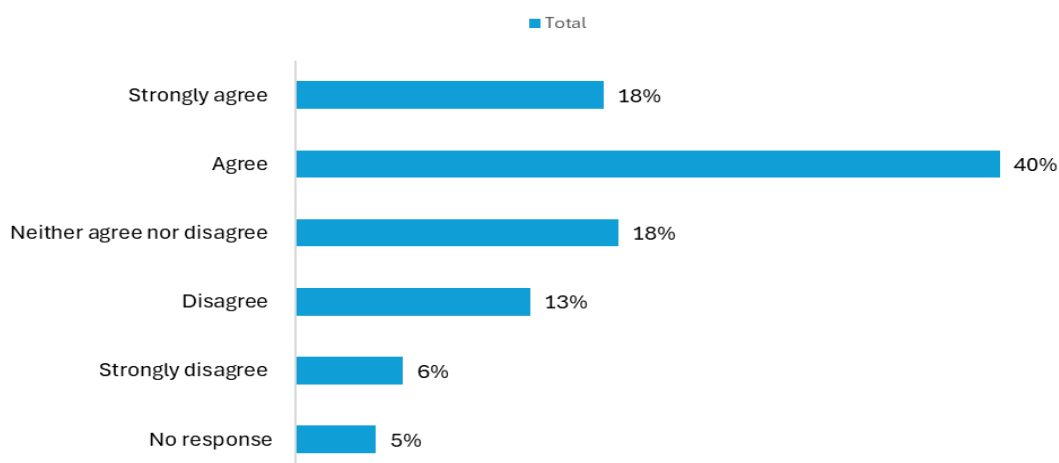
On grass cutting, **64% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed** with the proposed service standard, while **21% disagreed or strongly disagreed**.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to grass cutting?



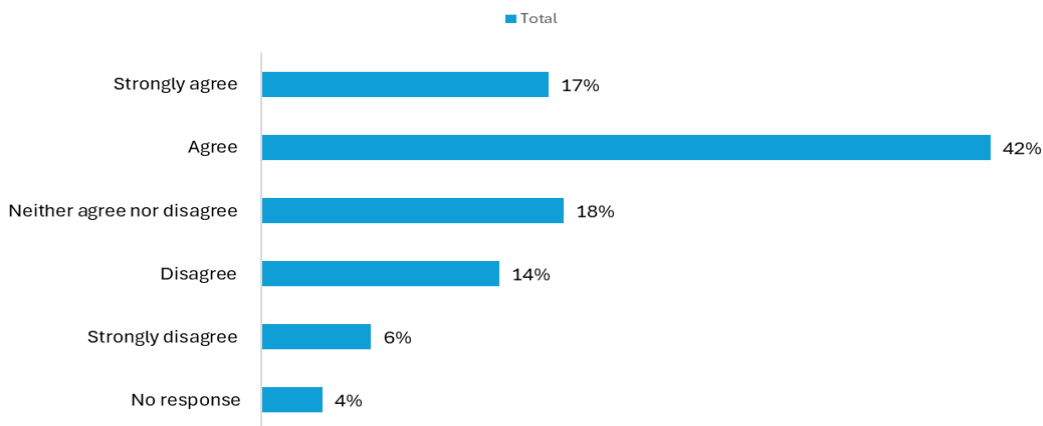
On the tree maintenance service, **58% agreed or strongly agreed** with the proposed service standard, compared to the **19% who disagreed or strongly disagreed**.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to tree maintenance?



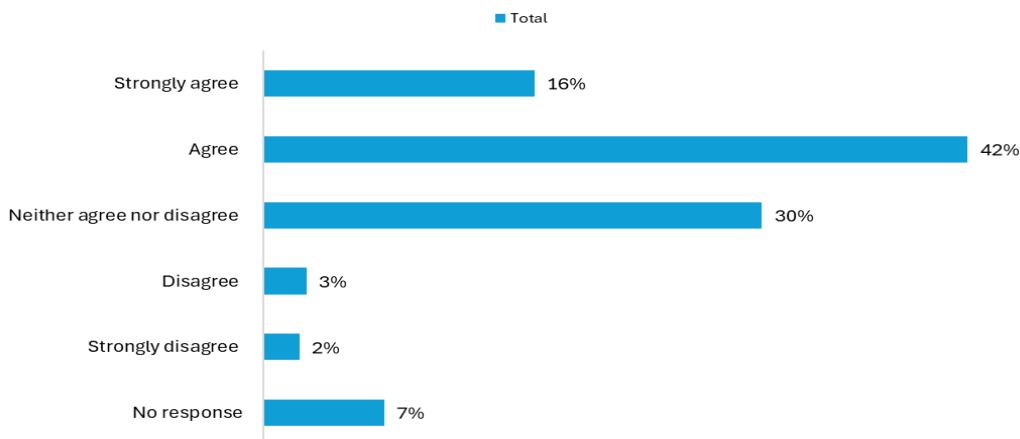
For winter maintenance activity, **59%** of respondents **agreed or strongly agreed** with the draft policy’s commitments, while **20%** **disagreed or strongly disagreed**.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to winter maintenance?



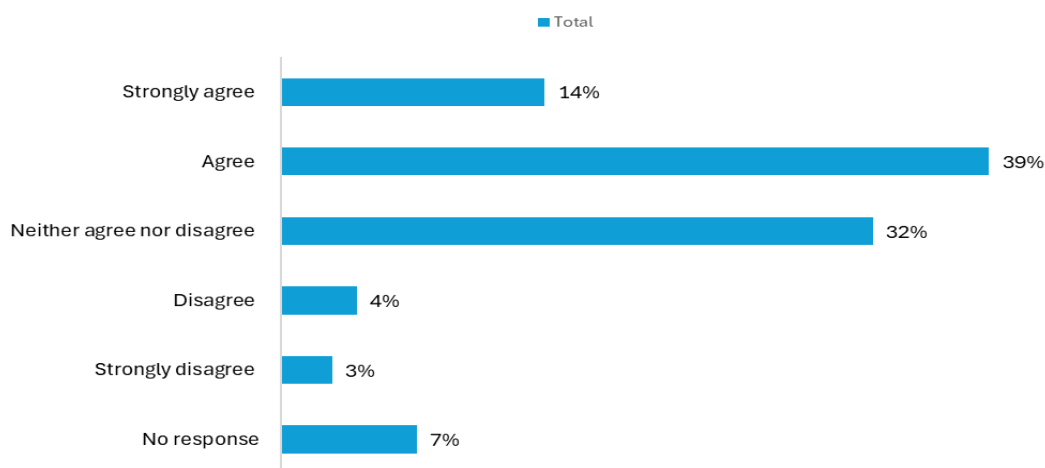
Regarding the biodiversity proposals in the draft policy, **58%** **agreed or strongly agreed** with the proposed service, while only **5%** **disagreed or strongly disagreed**. 37% offered no opinion.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to biodiversity?



53% of respondents **agreed or strongly agreed** with the proposals around the Annual Investment Fund, with **7%** **disagreeing or strongly disagreeing** and 39% offering no opinion.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to the Annual Investment Fund?



The most prominent theme across all comments was dissatisfaction with the current standard of grounds maintenance (25 comments). Respondents frequently referenced issues such as infrequent grass cutting, poorly maintained hedges and trees and inconsistent service delivery.

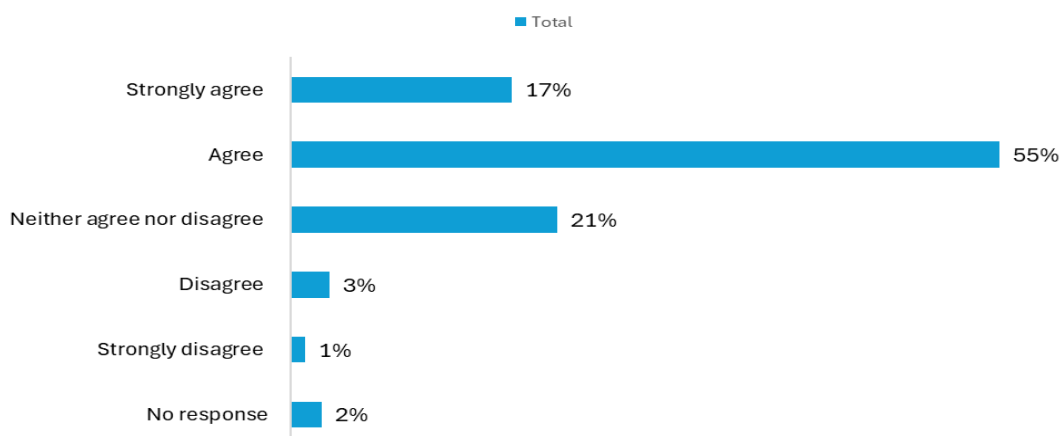
A further 12 comments expressed concern that the proposed policy represents a reduction in service levels, particularly in relation to cutting frequency and overall maintenance standards. In addition, respondents made specific comments about operational issues (15 comments), including damage to private gardens caused by grass cutting, missed communal areas (such as ginnels and car parks) and a lack of clean-up following works like grass cutting.

There were also 10 comments requesting higher service frequencies or improved standards, including more frequent grass cutting, more responsive winter maintenance in problem areas or where there are vulnerable tenants, and more proactive weed control. While requests for improvements were made across several service areas, no single element received a significantly higher volume of feedback than others.

Communication and Reporting

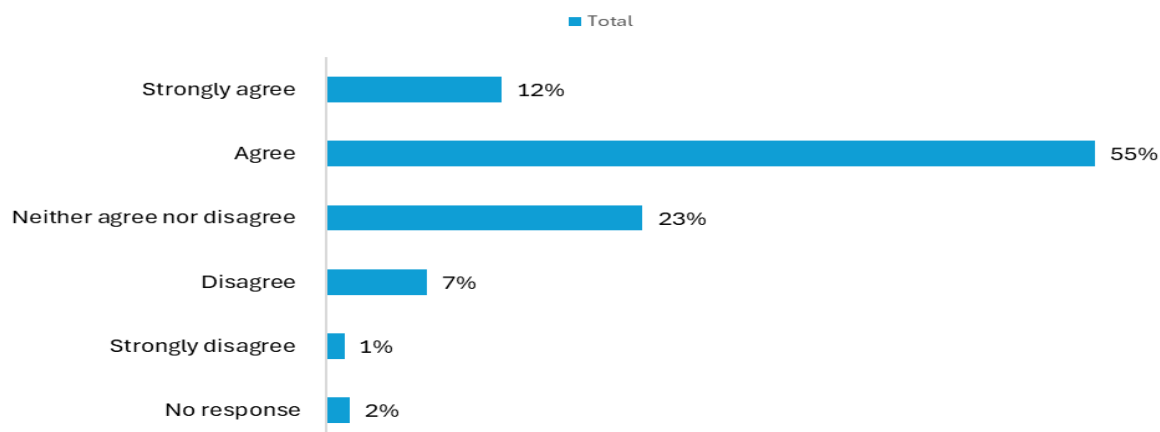
Responses to the proposed communication approach were largely positive, with **72% agreeing or strongly agreeing**. This is compared to only **4%** of respondents **disagreeing or strongly disagreeing** with the approach. 23% offered no opinion.

Do you find the proposed communication approach helpful?
(Website schedules, newsletter updates, clear welcome pack info)



Similarly, **67% agreed or strongly agreed** that the process for reporting problems was clearly explained, while **8% disagreed or strongly disagreed** and 25% had no opinion.

Do you feel the draft policy explains how to report problems and what will happen next?

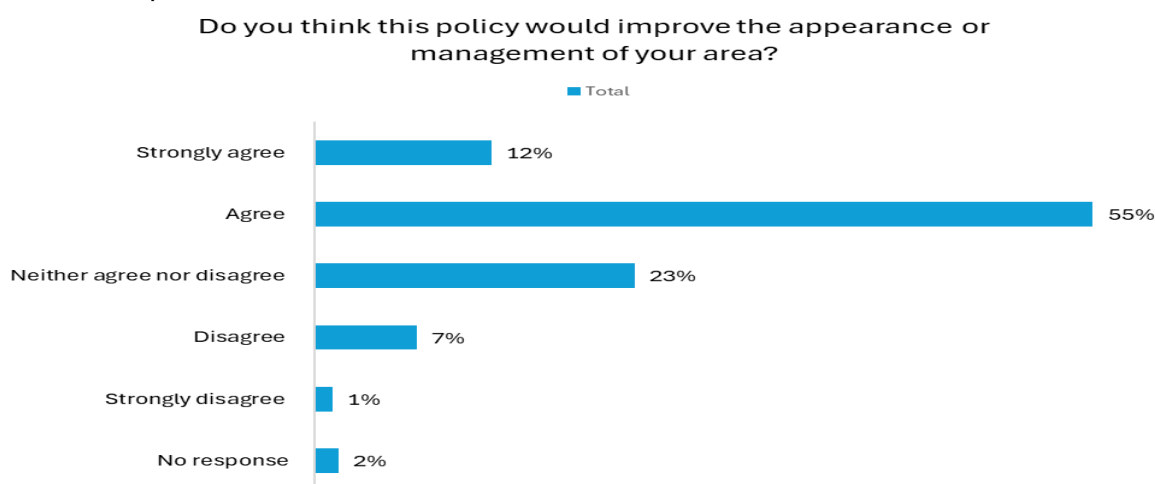


Comments under these questions highlighted some concerns, the most prominent of which is a lack of trust in the Council's ability to deliver services as described (12 comments), with respondents frequently referencing past experiences of missed or inconsistent maintenance. Several respondents (8 comments) expressed a desire for clearer and more proactive communication, including advance notice of maintenance visits, clearer points of contact, and improved access to information about service schedules for those lacking digital literacy. The final point was conflicted by some stating that leaflets would be a waste of money.

There were also 6 comments highlighting frustration with the current reporting process, particularly where residents felt complaints or service requests were not acted upon. A further 4 comments emphasised the need for greater transparency and accountability, including clearer reporting on performance and outcomes. This suggests that communication and reporting will be important for building confidence in delivery of the proposed policy.

Neighbourhood Impact

Finally, when asked whether they felt the policy would improve the appearance or management of their area, **67% agreed or strongly agreed**, **8% disagreed or strongly disagreed** and 25% offered no opinion.



A significant number of comments (18) described current neighbourhood conditions in negative terms, including references to overgrown areas, poor cleanliness and a general decline in upkeep. Some respondents (5 comments) also referenced wider issues, such as fly-tipping, poorly maintained communal spaces and the condition of paths and car parks. A further 10 comments expressed scepticism that the proposed policy would lead to meaningful improvements, often linked to concerns about delivery and resourcing.

By contrast, 6 comments indicated that the policy has the potential to improve neighbourhood appearance, provided it is implemented effectively.

These findings suggest that, while there is cautious optimism about the policy's potential impact, there remains a lack of confidence in consistent and effective delivery.

5. Equality and Inclusion Considerations

Analysis of responses by demographic group shows no significant differences in overall levels of agreement when considering age, gender, ethnicity, disability status, or property type. Across these groups, responses consistently show most respondents selecting Agree or Strongly Agree to each question.

The only notable variation relates to locality. Respondents in the Harrogate area were generally less positive about the proposed service standards compared with those in Selby and

Richmondshire. This is likely linked to differences in proposed service levels across these areas, with Harrogate residents experiencing a perceived reduction in service relative to their current provision.

While disabled respondents did not differ significantly in overall levels of agreement, they were more likely to raise concerns in the comments relating to safety, accessibility and service reliability.