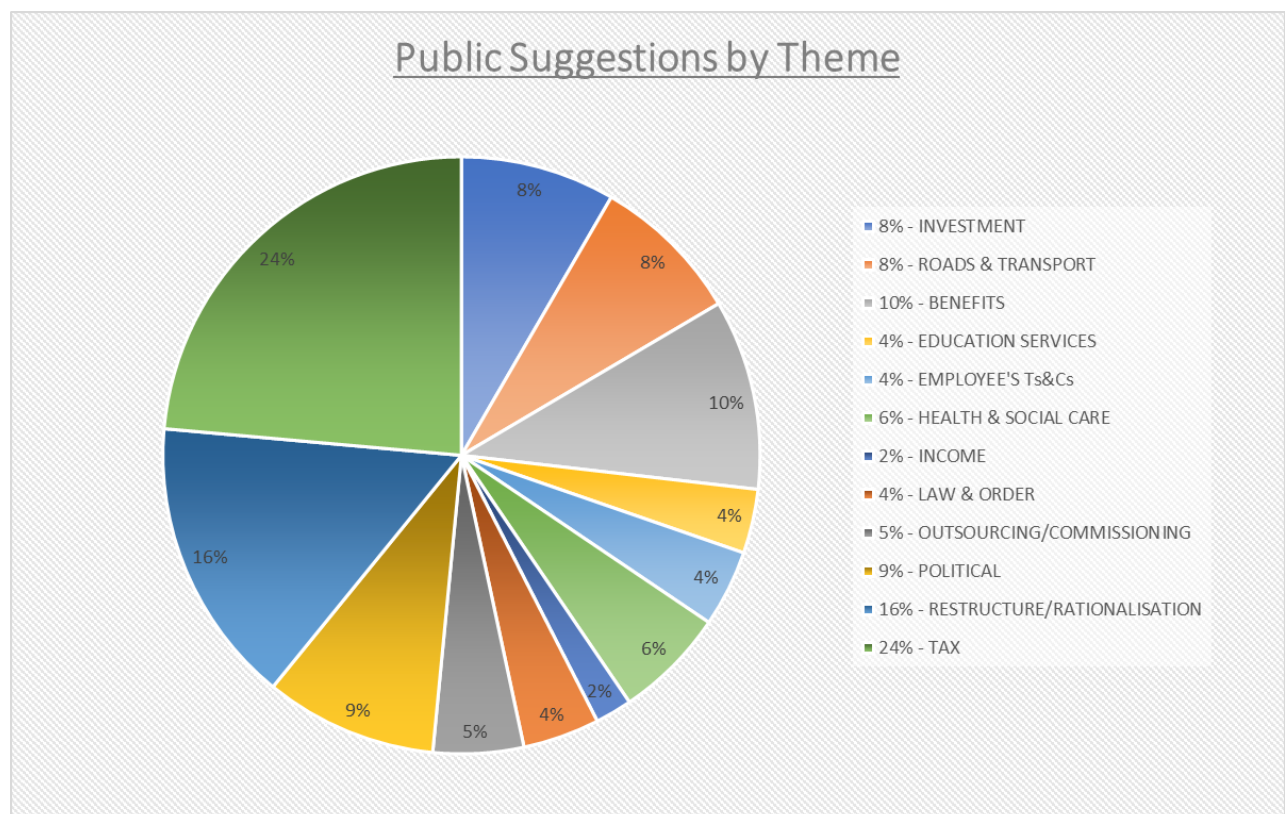


Reducing the Cost of Public Services – Initial survey insights

As part of its public engagement, the Reducing the Cost of Public Services Sub-Committee held a public survey which was open for three weeks, closing on 14 July 2023. Respondents were given a broad opportunity to provide any suggestions on how they believed the cost of public services should be reduced. Each respondent was able to submit up to three suggestions.

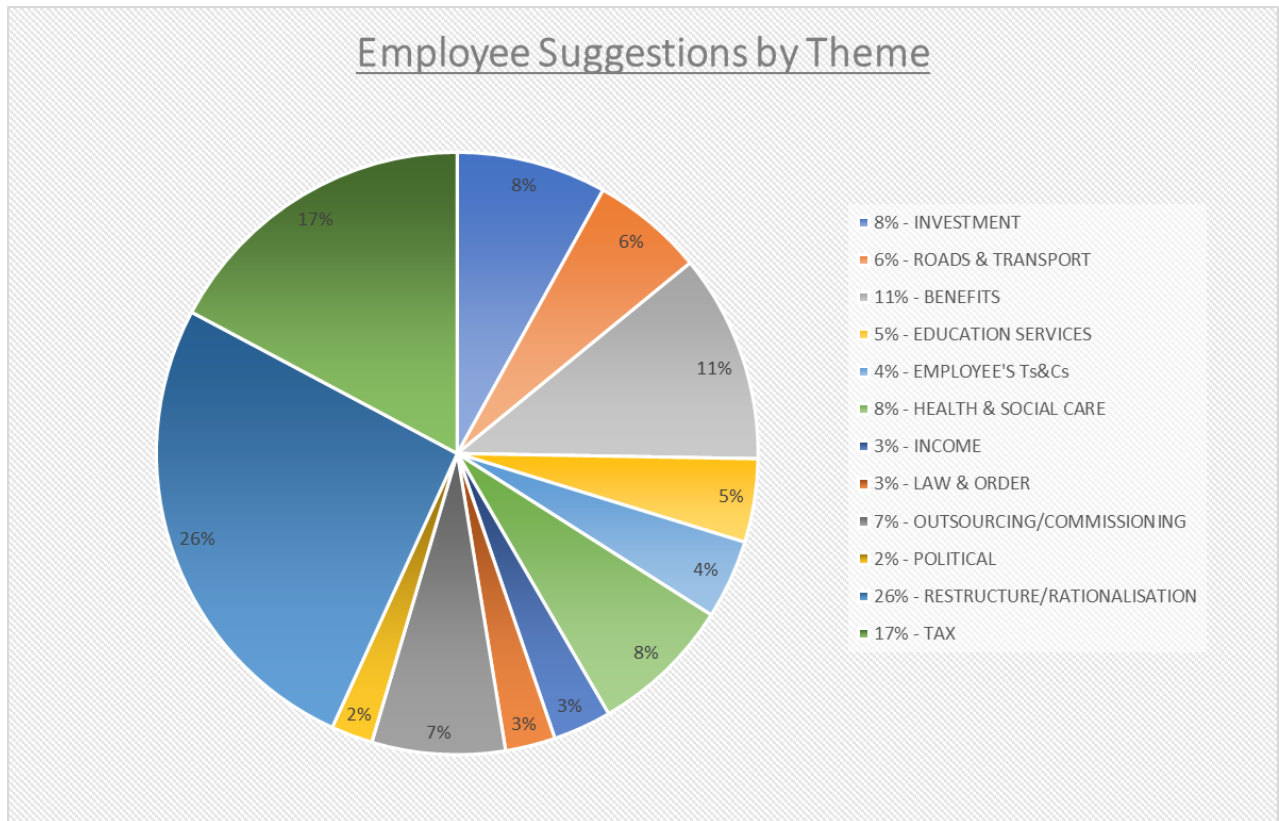
637 individuals responded, submitting 1,416 suggestions.

An initial review has identified that some of the suggestions are multi-faceted or contained more than one idea, and where appropriate these have been separated out further to assist in correctly categorising each idea. As a result, the suggestions have been separated out to 1,756 ideas categorised into twelve broad themes. A scoring matrix will be used to prioritise the ideas.



Alongside the public survey, a separate sister survey for public sector employees was also held during the same three week period. Again, they were each able to submit up to three suggestions. 196 individuals responded to this survey, with 394 suggestions received.

The initial review has also separated out some of the suggestions which contained more than one idea. In total, 447 ideas have been identified and again these have been categorised into the same twelve themes.



The surveys for the community and for the public sector were identical in format, and overall there is a lot of similarity in the prevalence of the different themes across both.

But the findings show some differences in which themes proved more prominent. 'Tax' related suggestions formed nearly a quarter (24%) of all suggestions from the community, and while it was also a frequent theme for the employees' survey (17%), it was second to 'Restructure/Rationalisation'-related suggestions (26%). This likely reflects the intimate knowledge employees have of individual service areas and how that would inform their ideas for reducing costs.

The employees' survey also saw fewer suggestions categorised under the 'Political' theme (2%) as a proportion, compared with the community survey (9%).

Guidance on the Survey themes

Tax

Of the themes, tax generated the highest number of suggestions, covering income tax, consumption taxes, property taxes, corporation taxes, and other taxes and duties, with a mix of suggestions both for raising or lowering, or restructuring these taxes, or introducing new taxes. This section also includes suggestions on how taxes are collected.

Tax is an area that was not the focus of the survey or the Reducing the Cost of Public Services Sub-Committee, however it will provide this information to the Policy & Resources Committee and Sub-Committee tasked with looking specifically at Tax.

Restructuring/rationalisation

This theme captures suggestions to do with the size and structure of the public sector and the States' property portfolio. It also includes the use of consultants and external experts. The States' relationship with its trading assets and States-owned companies is also included under this theme.

Benefits

This theme includes suggestions relating to income support, unemployment, family allowance, pensions and the structure and level of social security contributions. Introducing new forms of support, such as to enable more people to enter the workforce, is also included in this theme.

Political

This theme includes suggestions on the number of States Members and States Members' pay. It also includes suggestions around the cost implications of political decision-making.

Investments

This theme relates to suggestions for investing public funds in services or infrastructure to reduce costs elsewhere, and to support and grow the wider economy. It also includes suggestions for attracting private investment in certain areas to benefit the community.

Roads and transport

This theme includes paid parking, where suggestions were varied, with a mix of views on how it should be implemented. Like with the suggestions on tax, this falls outside of the focus of this Sub-Committee as this was an area already identified for further investigation, and so these suggestions will be valuable to share with that workstream.

It also includes suggestions to do with roadworks and public transport.

Health & Social Care

This theme includes suggestions for which health services are provided, preventative measures to reduce overall costs as well as means-testing or charging for certain services. It also included suggestions for the long-term funding of care, the role of health insurance, and the funding of prescriptions.

Outsourcing/commissioning

This theme captures responses to do with which services should or should not be outsourced, and suggestions to privatise services. It also includes suggestions to do with the provision of IT by a private provider.

Employees Terms & Conditions

This theme relates to suggestions on the pay, pensions, working hours and incentives for public sector employees.

Education services

This theme includes reviewing primary education, the transformation of secondary and post-16 education, as well as how education services are structured and managed. It also includes suggestions relating to grants for private colleges, for university students and for extra-curricular activities.

Law and Order

This includes suggestions on raising revenue through cannabis. It also includes suggestions for the level and management of various fines and penalties particularly around motoring, the cost effectiveness of prison services and rehabilitation, and certain court functions.

This theme also includes suggestions around population and immigration.

Income

This theme is to do with introducing or increasing fees and charges for various services.

Next Steps

Each idea will be reviewed and scored, and the Sub-Committee will then consider which should be taken forward. This process will take some time, but once the analysis is complete, the Sub-Committee will share further details. At the same time, the Sub-Committee is continuing its engagement with States Members and Principal Committees.

As has been identified already with some suggestions, such as those relating to tax or paid parking, there will be suggestions which fall outside the Sub-Committee's focus on the cost of public services. While these may not be taken forward for scoring through this process, they will be shared with the appropriate Committees so they can be considered.

The Sub-Committee is required to report to the Policy & Resources Committee to then return to the States Assembly during 2024 with recommendations for delivering overall cost reductions of at least £10m to £16m per annum, within five years. The Sub-Committee is confident it will be able to make its recommendations in the early part of that year.