

Finance Committee

Meeting date: 9 October 2013

Reference: FIN(4)-18-13 (paper 4)

Budget Scrutiny 2013-2014

Who holds the purse strings? An analysis

The attached paper from the Assembly's outreach service summarises the responses to a public consultation exercise conducted at this year's summer shows.

This paper attempts to draw some conclusions, and invites members to consider:

- a) How best to incorporate this work in our draft budget report;
- b) How best to respond to the desire for the public voice to be heard.

Methodology and sample size

Our survey had 48 responses. Given that it was quite a detailed survey, about finances, this is a reasonable number. But it does not allow us to draw firm conclusions – only to gauge impressions.

We estimate that half of those filling in the questionnaire would have been involved in a discussion with a member of the outreach team.

Conclusions

Q1. There was a fairly even split between those who knew the Assembly 'polices' the Welsh Government's spending plans, and those who didn't.

Q2. There was some recognition of the Assembly's role in assessing value for money.

Q3. 62% of respondents thought the Assembly's work had an impact on the WG spending plans.

Q4. How does the Assembly scrutinise the work of the Government? Email questionnaire was the most popular, followed by special events. (but none of the options scored more than 8, which suggests there isn't a widespread public knowledge of how we do scrutiny).

Q5. When told how, there was a split in to thirds of those who thought this was more, less or pretty much what they expected.



Q6. A majority thought the public voice wasn't heard enough in the process. Although a third thought it was!

Q7. Better press coverage and public engagement through social media were the most popular ways to engage that public voice.

Q8. When asked would they like their views heard 38% said no. and 15% weren't sure. This suggests that around half the population has no great interest in actively participating in the budget process.

Summary

Our survey reinforces the Silk Commission's finding that the public's knowledge of the Assembly's process of scrutinising the Welsh Government's annual budget is neither deep nor widespread.

It also suggests that a up to half the country have no interest in doing so. Among those who were interested, email questionnaires were their preferred means of being consulted.

Chamber and Committee Service

October 2013



Finance Committee

Budget Scrutiny 2013-2014

General Summary of Outreach Work

Background

The Outreach team promoted a questionnaire which sought to find out what people think about the Assembly's role in scrutinising the Welsh Government's budget, and if and how they would like to get involved in the future.

The survey was aimed at the general public visiting the Assembly bus during the summer in various locations across Wales. The engagement exercise consisted of one questionnaire in paper format.

The questionnaire concentrated on the key aspects of budget scrutiny and the public's participation in it, namely:

- Raising awareness of the fact that the Assembly has a role in "policing" the way that the Welsh Government spends public money;
- Highlighting how the Assembly examines these spending plans on behalf of the people of Wales;
- Discovering whether the people of Wales think this is enough, especially in relation to capturing the public voice in scrutiny;
- Asking whether the public would like to have a say in the scrutiny process; and
- Finding out if the public think that the Assembly's scrutiny has an impact on the Welsh Government's budget, financial spend and accountability.

Methodology

As part of the Finance Committee's Welsh Government Budget Scrutiny for 2013-2014, the Outreach team produced a questionnaire on the public knowledge of the Assembly's budget scrutiny, and how the Assembly can help promote and get members of the public involved in the process.

The questionnaire was open to members of the general public, who were targeted through:

- **Summer engagement events;** and
- **Tour groups and visitors to the Senedd**

Key Statistics

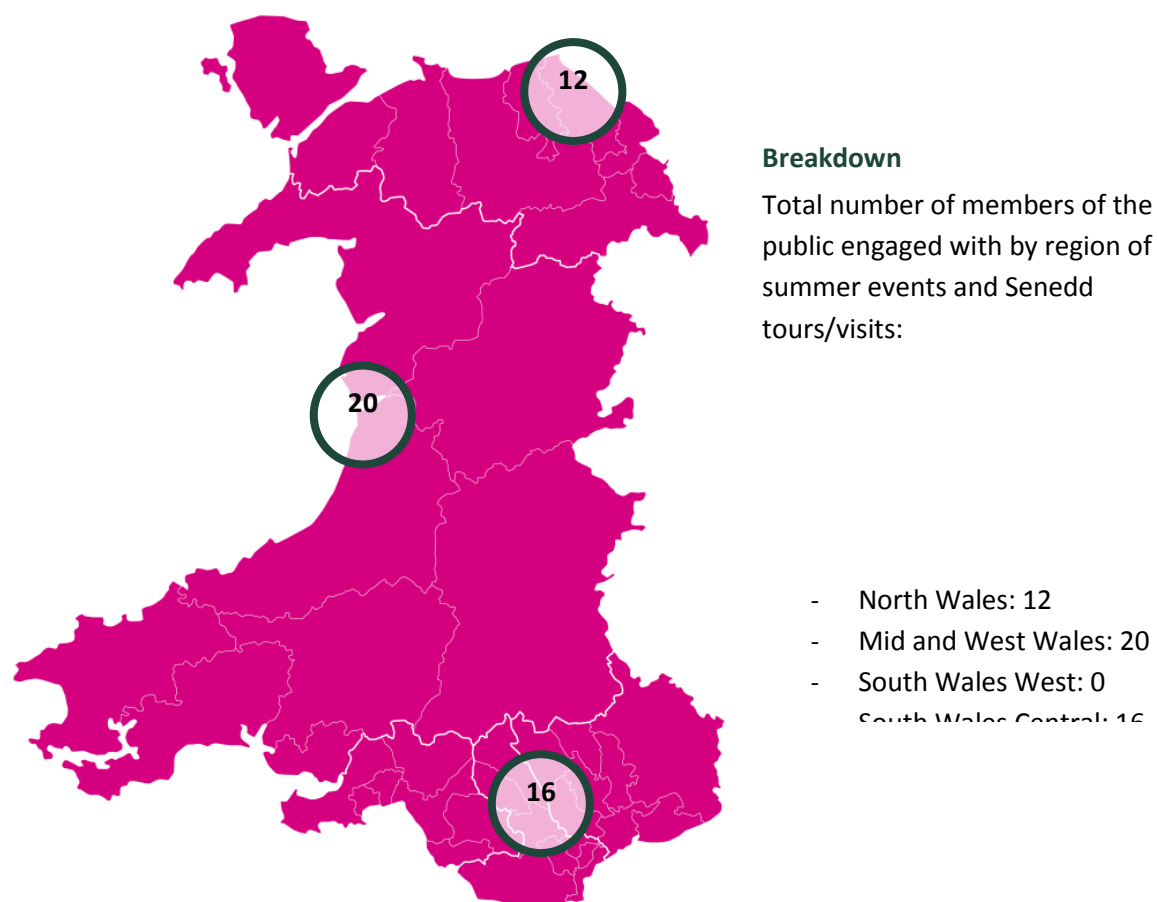


48 Total number of survey responses received

13 Total number of regional and national events where the survey was promoted

Total Number of Participants by Region

This diagram shows the **total** number of people **engaged with directly** as part of the project.



Budget 2013-2014 Activity



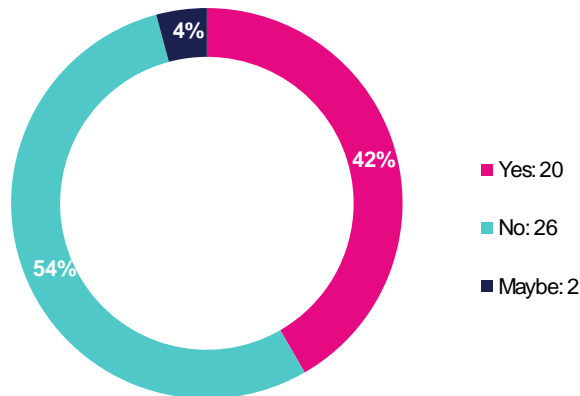
Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Question 1 – Did you know that the Assembly "polices" the Welsh Government's spending plans in this way?

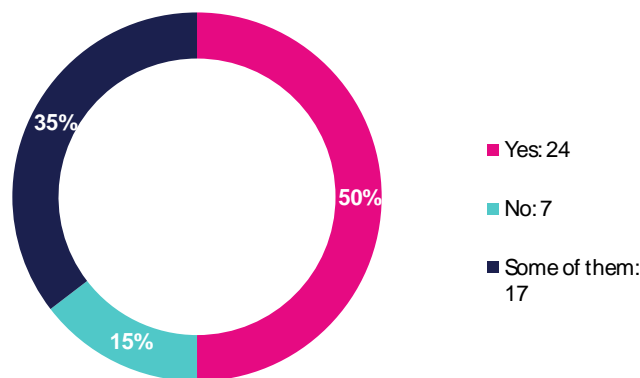
For the purposes of question one, participants were provided with background information on the budget process, that namely:

- The Government sets out how it plans to spend public money in the coming year;
- The Assembly examines these plans on behalf of the people of Wales; and
- The Assembly decides whether or not to agree with the Government's spending plans.



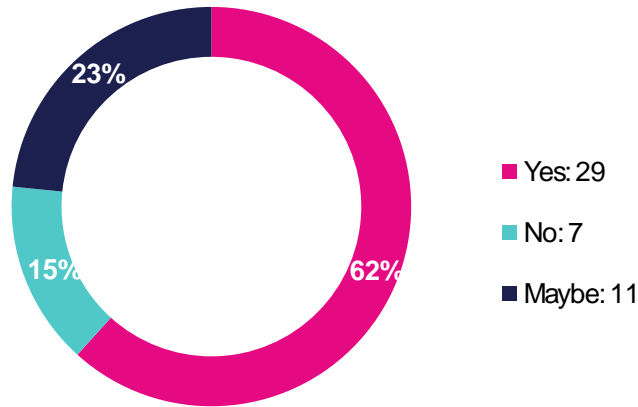
Question 2 – Do you think they measure whether public money is being spent effectively?

For the purposes of question two and three, participants were provided with background information on what values the Assembly looks at when scrutinising the Welsh Government's budget plan, namely: affordability; prioritisation; value for money; and the budget process.



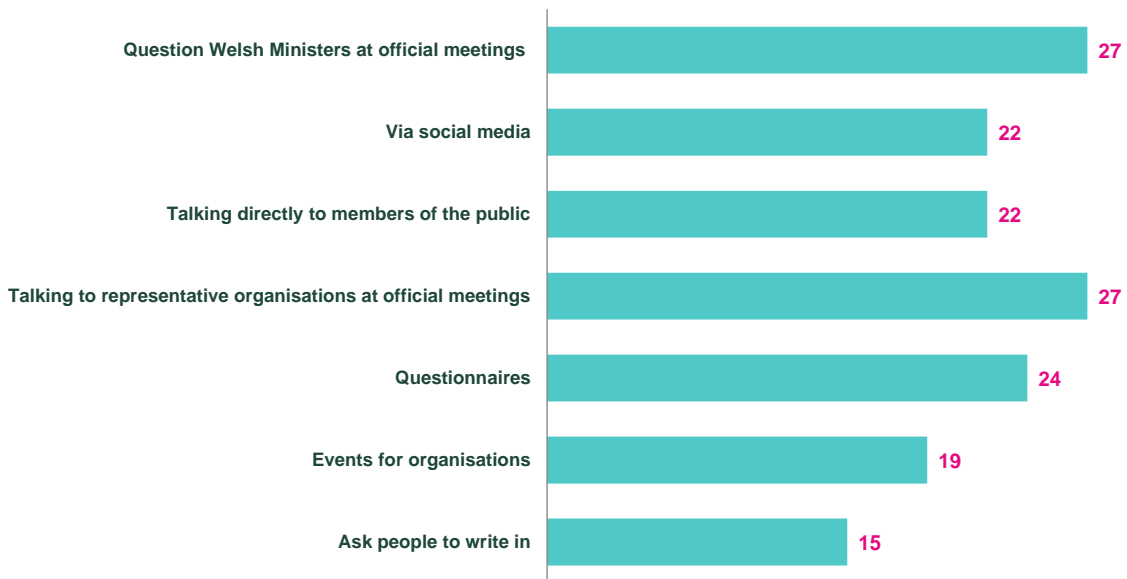
Question 3 – Do you think that the Assembly's work has an impact on the Welsh Government's spending plans and accountability for public money?





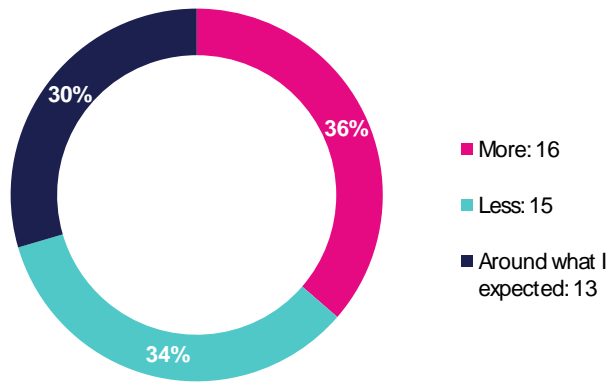
Question 4 – How do you think the Assembly does this?

For the purposes of the remaining questions, participants were asked to choose how they thought the Assembly currently scrutinises the work of the Government by picking from a list, some of which the Assembly does, some of which it doesn't.

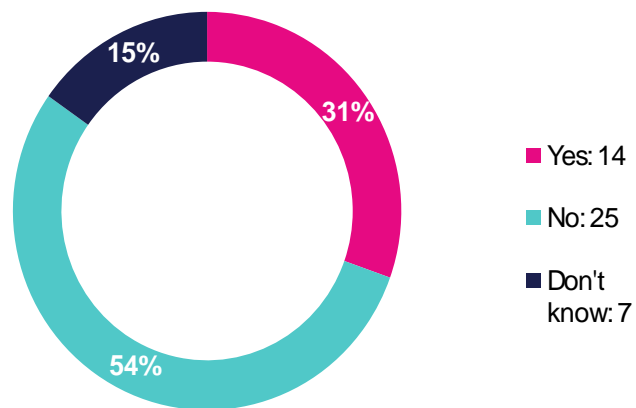


Question 5 – Was this more or less than you expected?

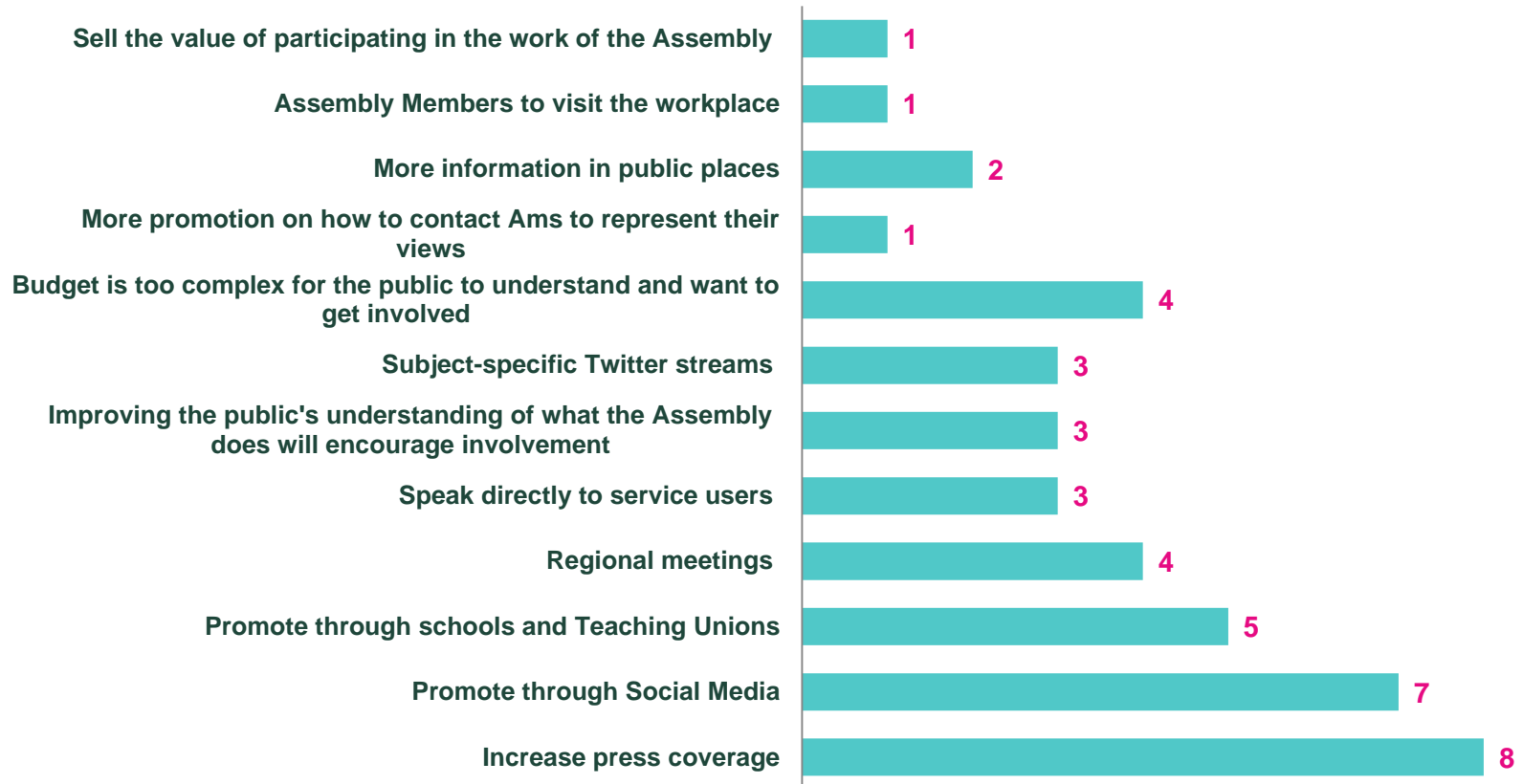




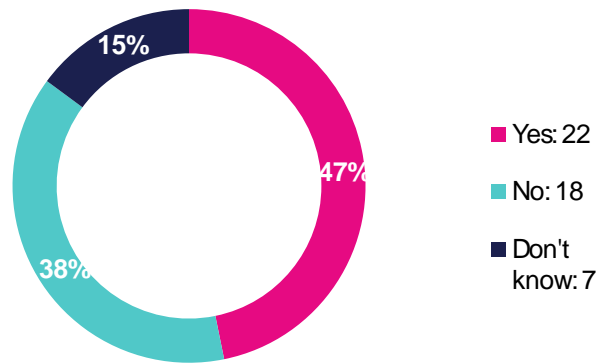
Question 6 – Do you think that the public voice is heard loudly enough in this process, for example through representative organisations?



Question 7 – If you answered no, what do you think the Assembly could do to better make the views of the public heard?



Question 8 – Would you like to have your views heard in this process?



Question 9 – If you answered yes, how?

