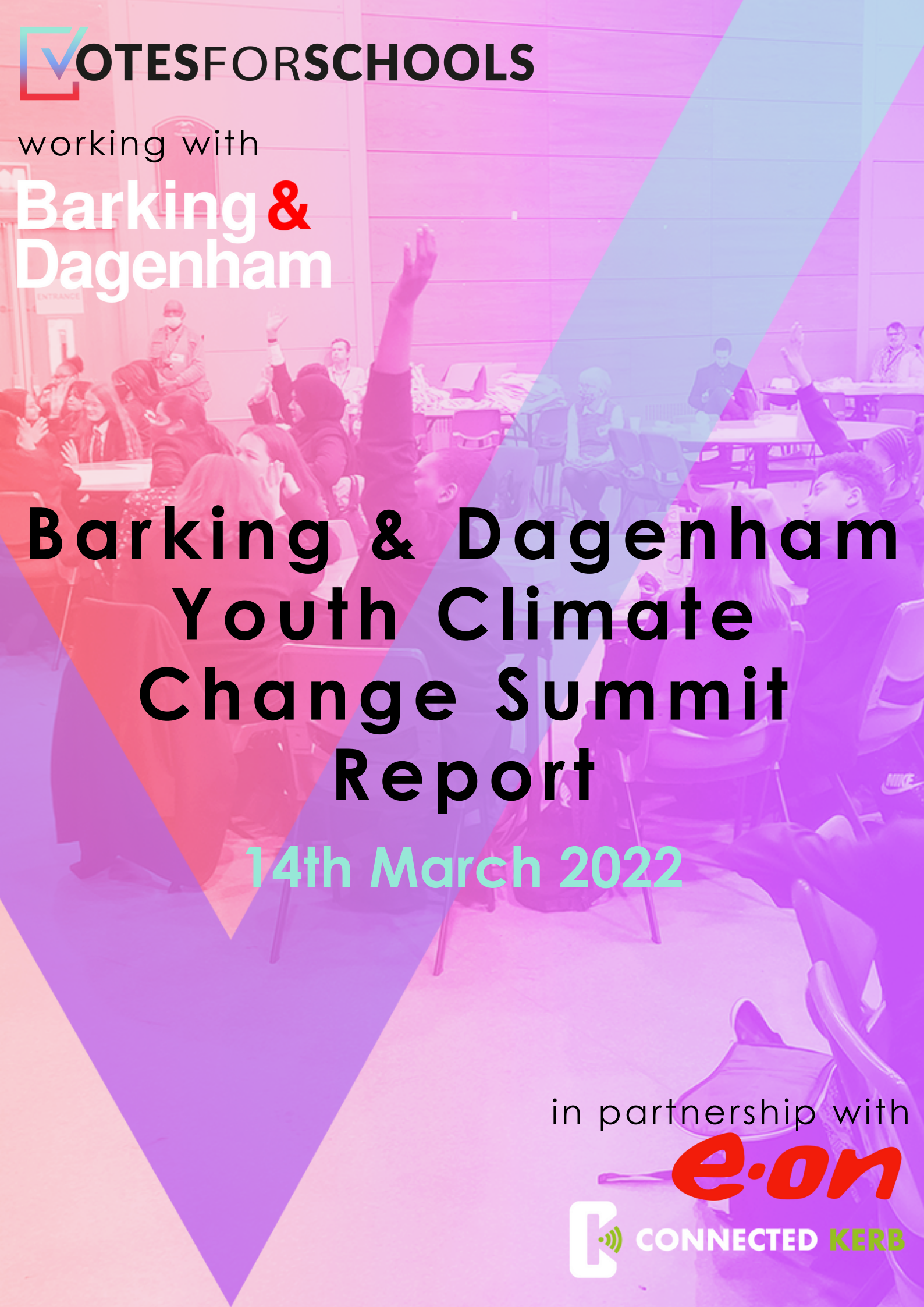




VOTES FOR SCHOOLS

working with

**Barking &
Dagenham**



**Barking & Dagenham
Youth Climate
Change Summit
Report**

14th March 2022

in partnership with

e-on

 **CONNECTED KERB**

On 14th March 2022, the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham (LBBD) hosted their inaugural Youth Climate Change Summit.

Facilitated by VotesforSchools and with the support of



over **200 children and young people** came together to discuss the **most pressing climate concerns affecting the area**, and to explore the steps LBBD Council are taking to become the **green capital of the Capital**.

Held at **Jo Richardson Community School**, the Conference included a welcome video from



Cllr Rodwell

and speeches from



Cllr Ashraf



Cllr Carpenter



Cllr Achilleos

as well as from VotesforSchools CEO Kate Harris, and LBBD's Head of Participation, Opportunity & Wellbeing, Erik Stein.



The attendees were also treated to a **guest appearance from Martin Offiah** MBE, who is a brand ambassador for Connected Kerb. He spoke to children and young people about his work around - and passion for - **electric vehicles**, and fielded questions from the audience about his views on climate change (as well some about his illustrious rugby career!).

The Conference began with a **session for Primary children**, with **129** children from **24** schools in attendance during the morning. In the afternoon, **75 Secondary young people** from **7** local schools then had their chance to contribute and talk about their **understanding of climate change in the area**. Throughout both sessions, members of the VotesforSchools Team recorded their responses, ideas and opinions, which are outlined in this Report.

We hope that these insights will provide the Council with ideas of how to keep this crucial conversation going, and will **inspire the young people of LBBD (and beyond) to continue to make their voices heard and take meaningful action on climate change.**

1 | KICKING THINGS OFF

In the **Primary** session, children had the opportunity to refamiliarise themselves with what climate change is and the impact it is having on the world. During this introduction, they were invited to **highlight what they understood climate change** to be. Here is what they had to say:

Deforestation

Rising
sea
levels

Irreversible
impact

Ice
caps
melting

Meanwhile, **Secondary** young people had the following contributions:

Plastics

Extreme
weather

Deforestation

CO2
emissions

SDGs

Ice caps
melting

Fast fashion

Pollution

Renewable
energy

Waste

Conservation

Ozone layer

Carbon
footprint

2 | MINDING THE GAP

In the next part of the session, both Primary and Secondary attendees explored some of the **actions being taken globally, nationally, and locally** to tackle climate change.

When asked to reflect on this information, some of them cited **pleasant surprise that LBBD Council was aiming to be carbon neutral by 2030**, a whole two decades ahead of the UK's goal (which was generally thought to be too slow).

However, another child said that they were **worried LBBD would not have enough time to put the necessary measures in place** to meet their ambitious targets.



3 | CLOSER TO HOME

Before finding out about the Borough's plans, attendees were asked to **give their perspectives on climate change in the area**. They were tasked with making a note of the biggest issues they felt Barking & Dagenham is currently facing.

Primary Session



75%

said litter and a lack of bins & recycling is one of the biggest issues.



1 / 3

of all comments referred to pollution as the biggest issue.



40%

cited the amount of cars and lack of electric alternatives as the main cause.

During the Primary session, children said their biggest perceived concern is the **waste in the area**. 75% of all young people in attendance expressed worry about **littering in the area** and a **lack of bins and recycling facilities**.

When looking at the comments referring to waste as one of the biggest issues, 58% directly referred to the amount of **littering**, 39% mentioned the importance of **recycling**, and 22% emphasised the impact of **single-use plastic**.

— “

The biggest climate change problem in B&D is litter/waste. I can see lots of rubbish on the streets every day.

” —

— “ —

One of the biggest impacts of climate change is the amount of rubbish we aren't recycling every day.

— ” —

— “ —

Add recycling bins in the parks.

— ” —

The second-most common concern voiced by Primary attendees was **pollution** in the area and the effect it is having on the environment, with many saying they think **both air and water pollution is an issue.**

Many cited the number of cars on the roads as the biggest contributor to local pollution and voiced that there **need to be more electric cars and the infrastructure to support this.**

— “ —

Pollution is the biggest problem in B&D as there are thousands of cars and almost all release carbon dioxide.

— ” —

— “ —

There are not enough electrical cars.

— ” —

— “ —

Not enough charging points for electric cars.

— ” —

Several children also pointed out that there are **companies and factories in the area** that also contribute to overall pollution levels.

— “ —

I think the biggest climate change issue in B&D are carbon emissions coming from cars, industrial factories and motorcycles.

— ” —

Secondary Session



81%

said pollution is one of the biggest issues.



1 / 5

link this directly to the amount of carbon emissions.



27%

directly cited the amount of waste and littering as one of the issues.

During the Secondary session, attendees put **pollution** as their top concern for LBBD. 80% of all young people in attendance cited being **worried about pollution caused by vehicles, plastic, general waste, and companies**.

When looking at the comments referring to pollution as one of the biggest issues, 24% directly referred to **cars as one of the core problems**.

— “

Lots of cars running on petrol.

” —

Some pointed out that there is a **lack of electric cars as well as charging points**, with two young people suggesting that schools in particular should offer more charging points.

— “

Electric charging points in schools.

” —

When asked **what Barking & Dagenham could do to help with these issues**, attendees had a wealth of ideas and suggestions.

Primary Session

Plastic Usage
Awareness
Month

Insulate
all homes

Create space
for more trees

Increased
use of
sustainable
materials

Make electric
cars more
affordable

Install more
solar panels

Upcycle
existing waste
products

Encourage
residents
to walk or
cycle more

Introduce
weekly recycling
collections

Utilise low-
emission
machinery

More bins in
public areas

Develop hydrogen-
powered vehicles

Organise
litter picking
sessions

Secondary Session

Insulate
homes

Penalise
big-emitting
businesses

Improve general
energy-
efficiency locally

Incentivise
eco-friendly
changes

Make owning
electric cars
easier

Carbon-
free homes

Encourage
recycling
amongst
residents

More electric
public transport
options

Encouragingly for both the Council and the children and young people, many of these ideas are part of the future plans for the Borough.

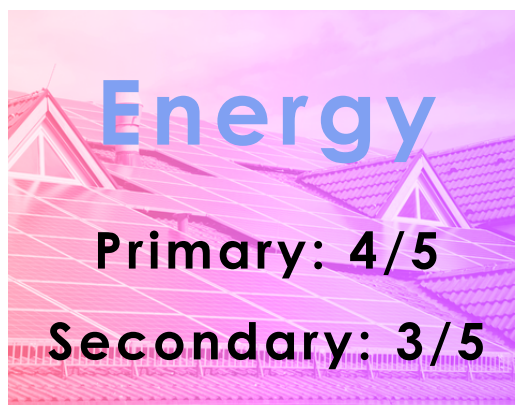
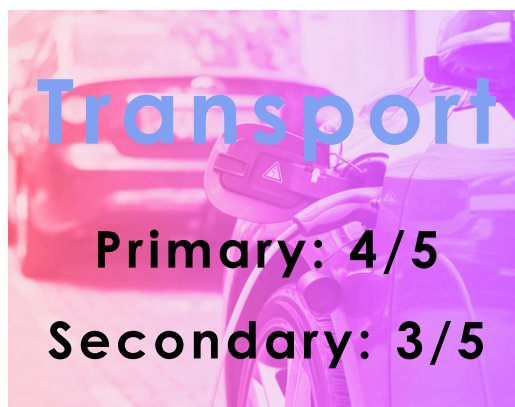
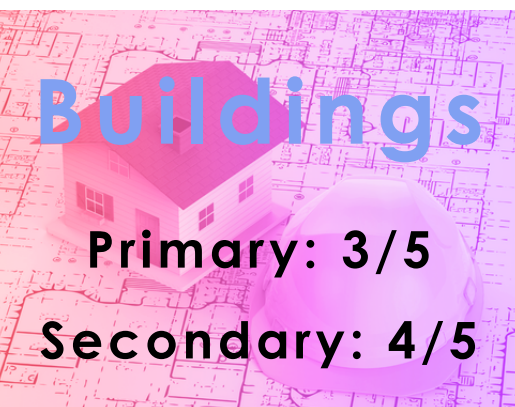
4 | THE ROAD TO CARBON NEUTRAL

The overall aim of the Conference was to **enlighten children and young people from the Borough about the Council's aims** for tackling climate change.

In this part of their sessions, attendees explored the **six key areas** in which LBBDD are focusing their efforts and how these aligned with their previous suggestions and concerns.

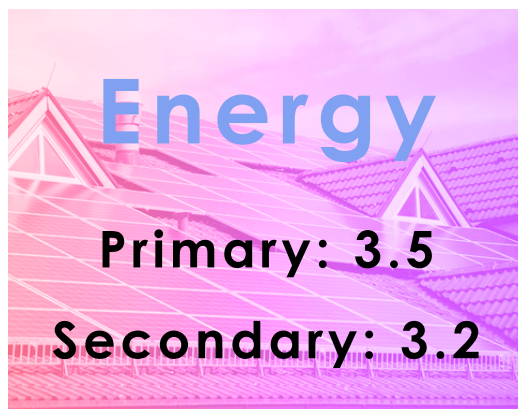
These areas were: **Buildings, Transport, Waste, Nature, Energy, and Companies/Industry**. As attendees read about each one, they used their fingers to show how much of an effect they felt each action would have on slowing down climate change.

A summary of their thoughts (based on the average response in the room on the day) are outlined below. 5 indicates it will have the biggest effect and 1 indicates it will have no effect:



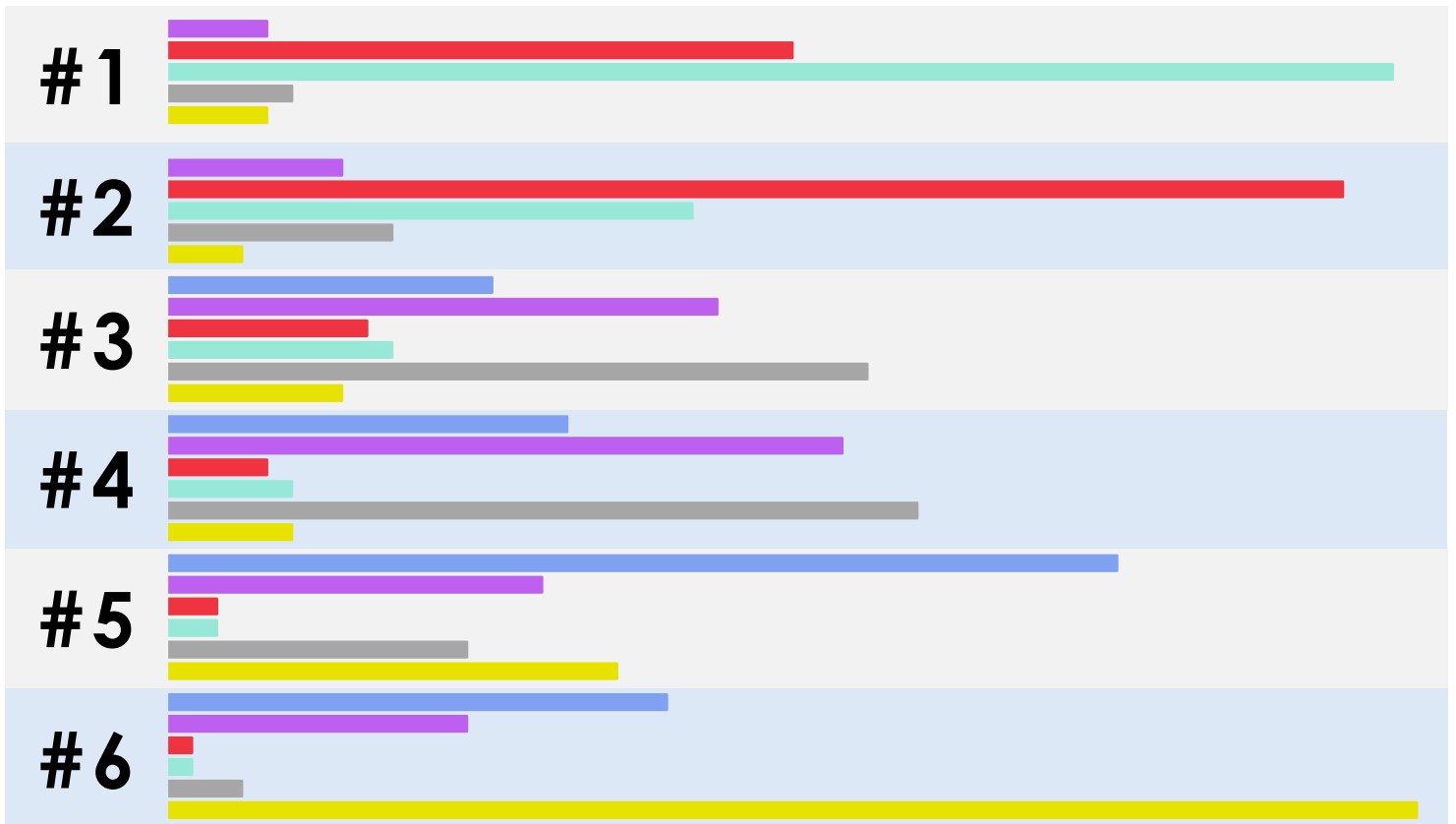
Across both Primary and Secondary, the **average score these actions received was 3.75**, and LBBD's proposed actions in the area of **Nature** received the most positive response overall. However, attendees stressed that the most significant reasons that these actions were not guaranteed to make a significant difference were **(in)convenience and cost**.

With all the Council's actions in mind, attendees were asked to **put these areas in order of priority for themselves**, ranking them from 1 to 6. Below are the average rankings each area received, with 1 being the top priority.

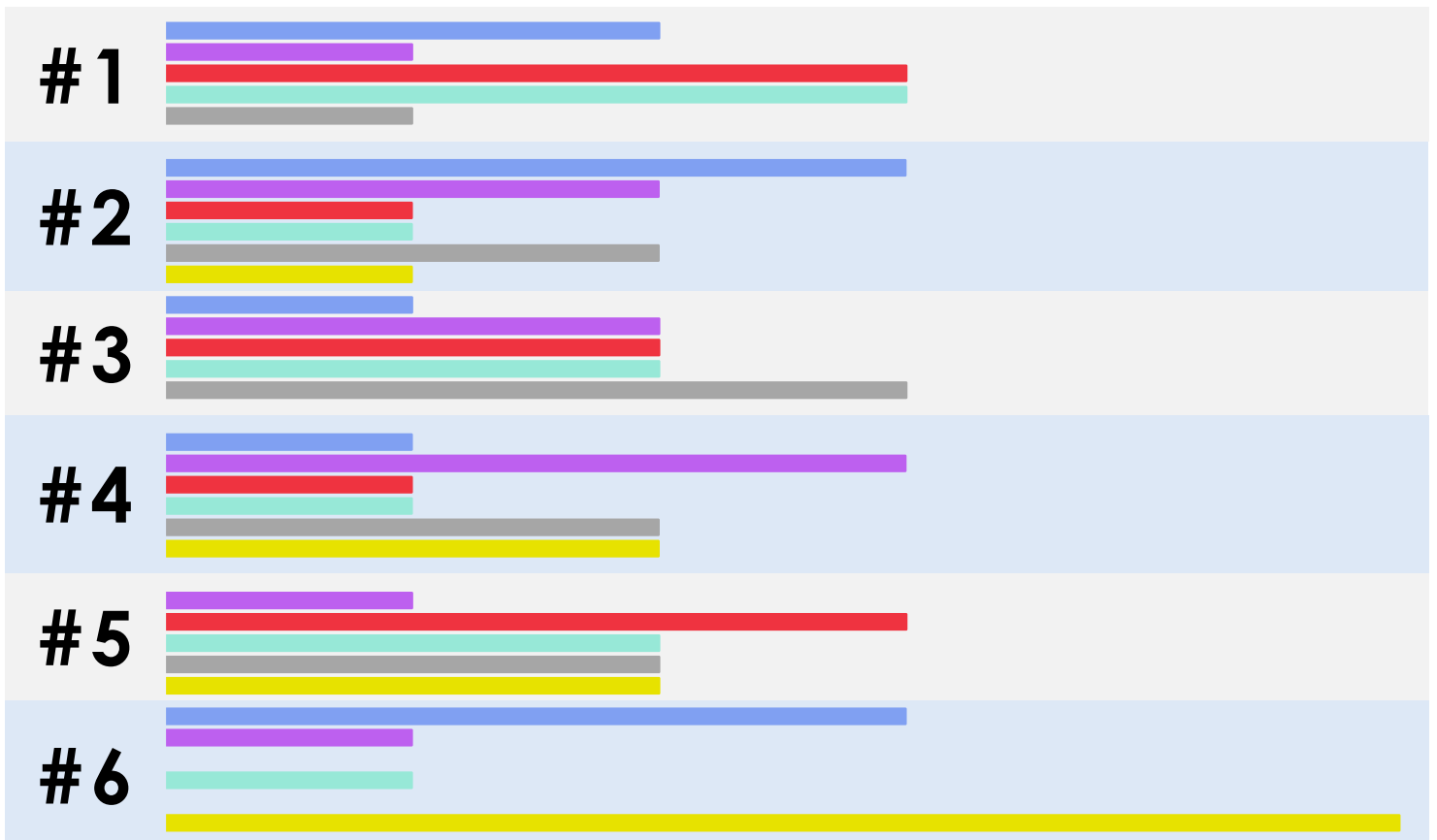


The aggregate data of this task further emphasises that there were **clear frontrunners across both levels**, with attendees making what they believed the Council's priorities should be very clear. Their collective rankings are visualised in the following graphs.

Primary Session



Secondary Session





5 | A BLOCK IN THE ROAD

In addition to learning more about what the Council is doing, Secondary attendees also **considered the obstacles that could stand in the way of the Borough achieving its goals** in these six key areas. In summary, they felt that the following factors posed potential barriers:

- **Attitudes:** these are key for gaining co-operation and “buy-in” from locals
- **Financial implications:** many people may want to do better for the planet, but this may come at a personal cost
- **Personal circumstances & priorities:** there are many other things that individuals and families have to put first
- **Motivating people:** making people feel encouraged and empowered to “do better”, rather than being penalised
- **Businesses in the local area:** more support is needed for them to be eco-friendly, and bigger companies need to be held to account for their inaction or bad practices
- **Sustaining sustainability:** in a bid to use sustainable materials such as paper in the future, will we just end up cutting down all the trees we planted?

Ultimately, Secondary attendees concluded that **tackling climate change requires community support and a sense of collective empowerment**. A good place to start would be by **consulting children and young people**, as they are often offered up as “the solution” to climate change, but are then **not listened to by decision-makers**. These conclusions are echoed in the comments shared by some of the attendee schools on social media following the event:



Riverside Primary
@RVSPPrimary

...

We had a fantastic morning at the [@votesforschools](#) Barking and Dagenham Climate Summit today. It was brilliant to hear from [@AndyAchilleos](#), [@CllrECarpenter](#), [@CllrAshraf](#) and, of course, [@martinoffiah](#). Our school councillors have lots to share with our Eco Committee on Thursday!



MJS
@ManorJuniors

...

✨ ST in year five says, "I can't believe the council is actually listening to children and asking for our opinions!"

We could have a regular non car days, community litter picking, stop usage of plastics so that there is no need to recycle. [#Pupilvoice](#)



MJS
@ManorJuniors

...

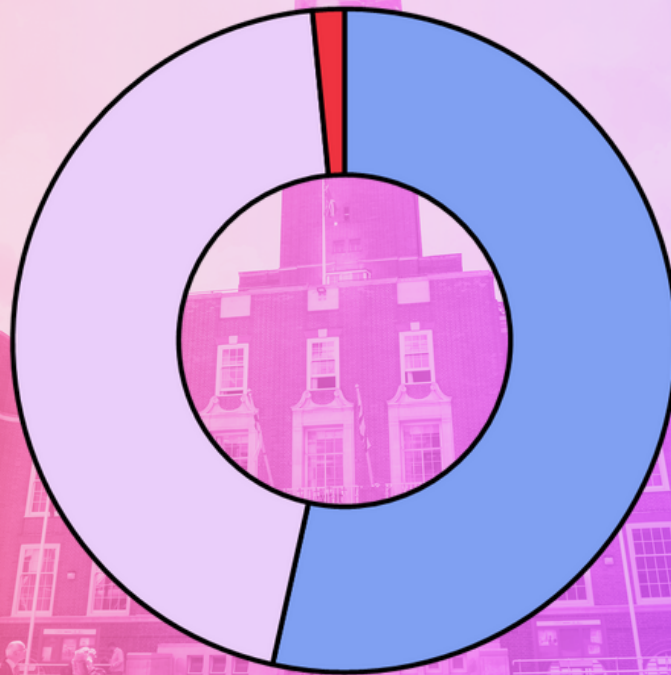
✨ We were able to share our opinions as to whether we thought LBBD's plans would work to create a greener, cleaner society.

6 | THE BIG QUESTION

To conclude both sessions, attendees were asked to vote on the question:

“Do you think these plans will work?”

Primary Session



53.5% Yes

As long as we are patient, we will see successful changes! People are now making an effort to look for things they can do to help the planet.

45.0% Unsure

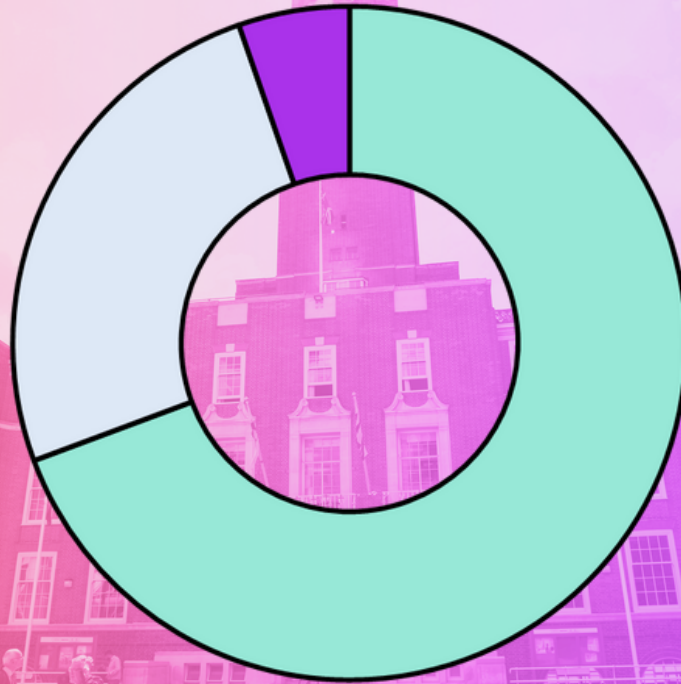
Some of the actions being taken will work and have a clear impact (e.g. recycling), whereas others may not. For these plans to work, everyone has to be on board.

1.5% No

There is so much else happening in the world, so these actions are not people's priority. People are demotivated by the fact they haven't seen change yet.

“Do you think these plans will work?”

Secondary Session



69.3% Yes

There is strength in numbers, and we can do it together. We just need to get the message out there to everyone!

25.3% Unsure

Some plans will work, but some will not. Time will tell!

5.3% No

Attitudes will stand in the way of change; some people do not want to change or do not see the benefit of it.

7 | MAINTAINING THE MOMENTUM

In order to **sustain this vital conversation in Barking & Dagenham**, VotesforSchools would like to propose the following **action points for consideration**:

1 | Highlight any actions or decisions prompted directly by the results of this report.

Keep children and young people talking through school visits, communications or online platforms.

2 |

3 | Continue to consult children and young people about prospective changes by holding votes, polls or further events such as youth town halls or conferences.

