



Budget 2026 What We Heard

OCTOBER 20, 2025

COMMITTEE OF THE
WHOLE



Phase One of a Continuous Engagement Cycle



Timeline: June–
September 2025



Engagement begins when
residents are paying
property taxes —
connecting cost to value



Early listening helps shape
priorities before budget
drafting



Continuous cycle: each
year builds on the last



Ongoing input throughout
the year informs new
survey topics and
engagement themes



The Budget Process

The District's budget process is continuous and community-informed.

Each stage builds on the last, linking resident input to planning, decision-making, and implementation.



1. ENGAGE & LISTEN

(JUNE –SEP 2025)

GATHER COMMUNITY
FEEDBACK THROUGH SURVEYS,
POP-UPS, AND
CONVERSATIONS.



2. SERVICE AREA OVERVIEWS

(NOV 2025-JAN 2026)

DEPARTMENTS PRESENT
CURRENT SERVICES,
CHALLENGES, AND EMERGING
NEEDS.



3. PRELIMINARY BUDGET

(FEB 2026)

FINANCIAL SERVICES
CONSOLIDATES COSTS AND
SCENARIOS FOR COUNCIL
DIRECTION.



4. BUDGET OPEN HOUSE

(MARCH 2026)

SHARE PROPOSED
INVESTMENTS, TAX IMPACTS,
AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS.



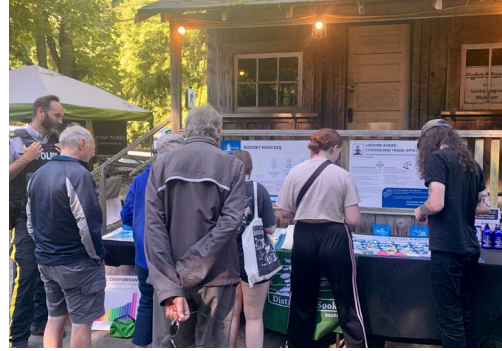
5. BUDGET ADOPTION

(TARGET: MARCH 2026;
LEGISLATIVE DEADLINE: MAY
15)

FINAL APPROVAL ENABLES
PROJECT DELIVERY WITHIN THE
FISCAL YEAR.



Engagement Reach



Timeline: June – September 2025

Budget Surveys: 197 responses – online and random household sample

Pop-Up Booths: More than 1,500 unique interactions at markets and parks

Focus: Accessible, inclusive, and representative engagement

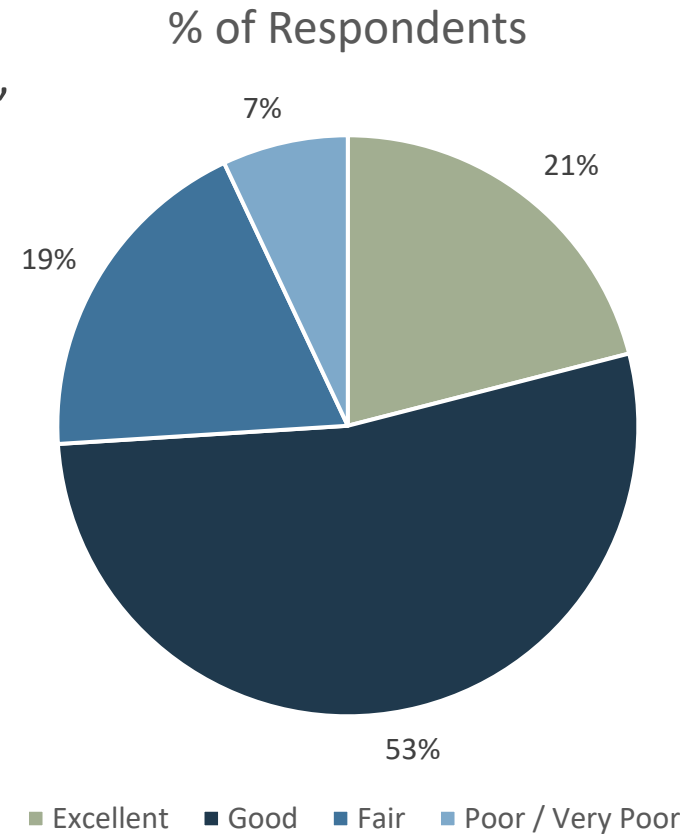
Participants: Residents (survey + pop up), youth (pop up), and visitors (pop-up)



Overall Quality of Life

Survey Question:

“How would you rate the overall quality of life in Sooke?”



Themes:

What adds to quality of life:
natural beauty,
parks and trails,
community spirit

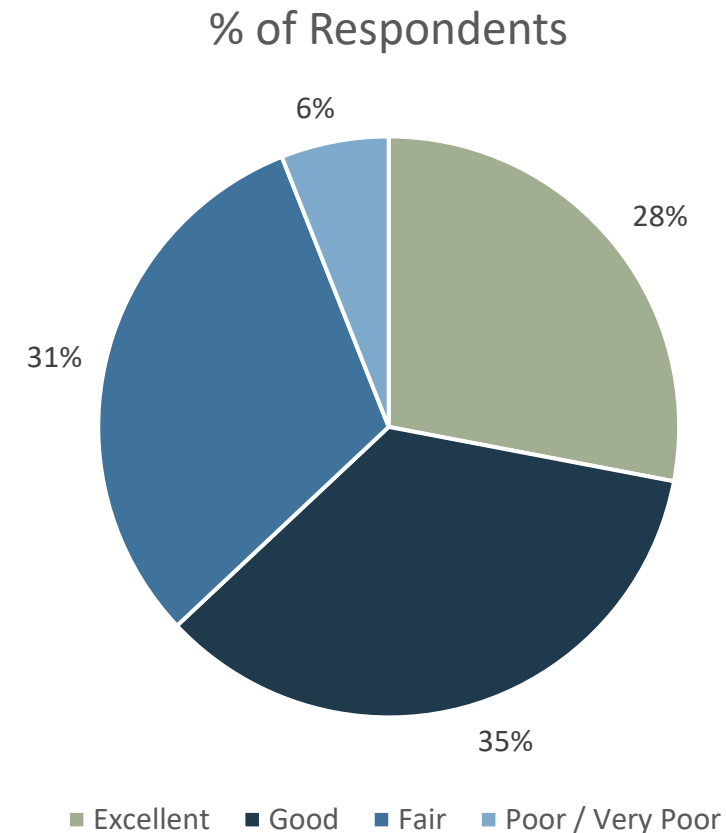
What detracts:
traffic congestion,
limited local
services



Access to Parks, Trails, and Outdoor Recreation

Survey Question:

“How satisfied are you with access to parks, trails, and outdoor recreation in Sooke?”



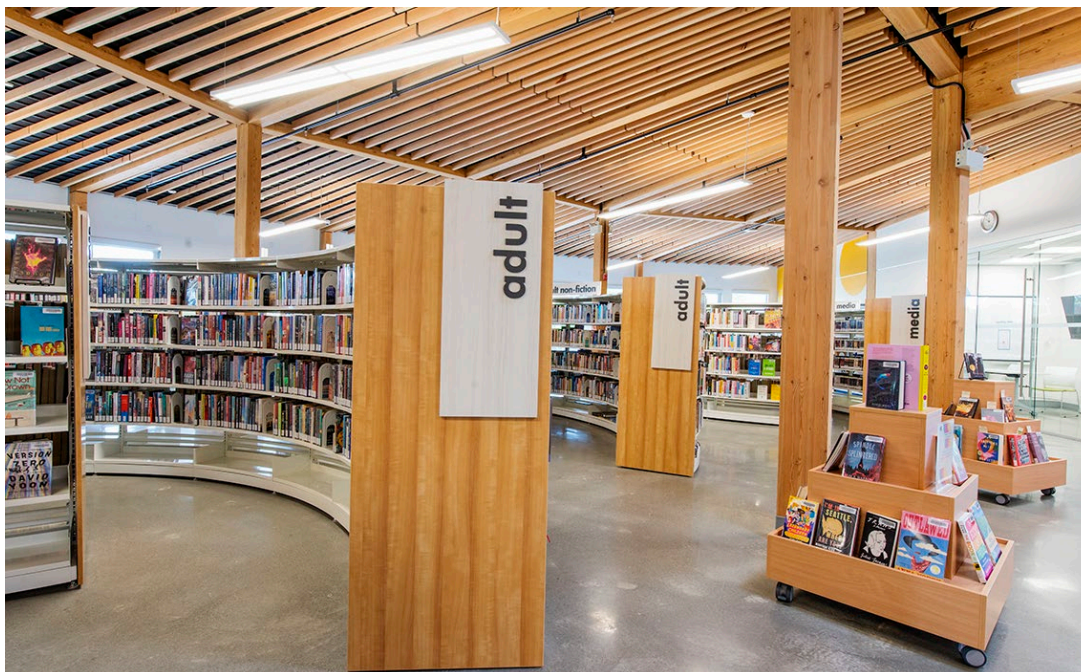
Key Theme:
Consistently rated as one of Sooke's greatest strengths



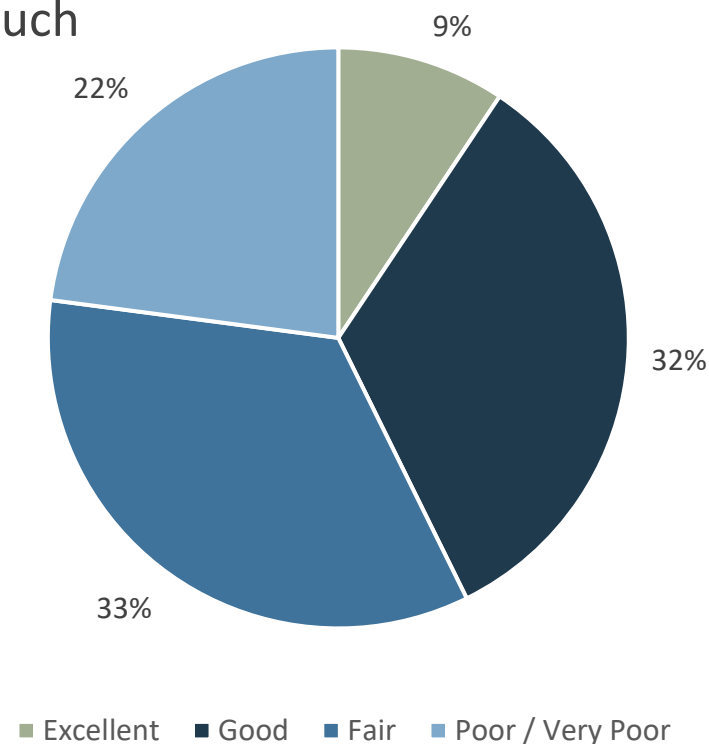
Access to Community Services

Survey Question:

“How would you rate access to community services such as libraries, recreation, and health services?”



% of Respondents



Key theme:

Mixed satisfaction — reflects growing service demand and limited local amenities



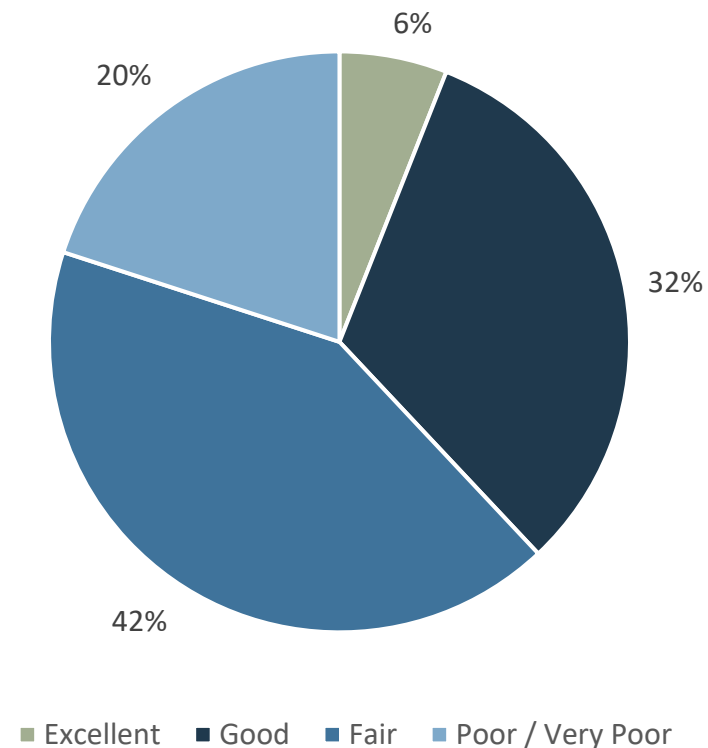
Access to Local Shopping, Dining, and Business Services

Survey Question:

“How would you rate access to local shopping, dining, and business services?”



% of Respondents



Key theme:

Limited variety and service availability — residents often travel outside Sooke for daily needs



Neighbourhood Safety – Day and Night

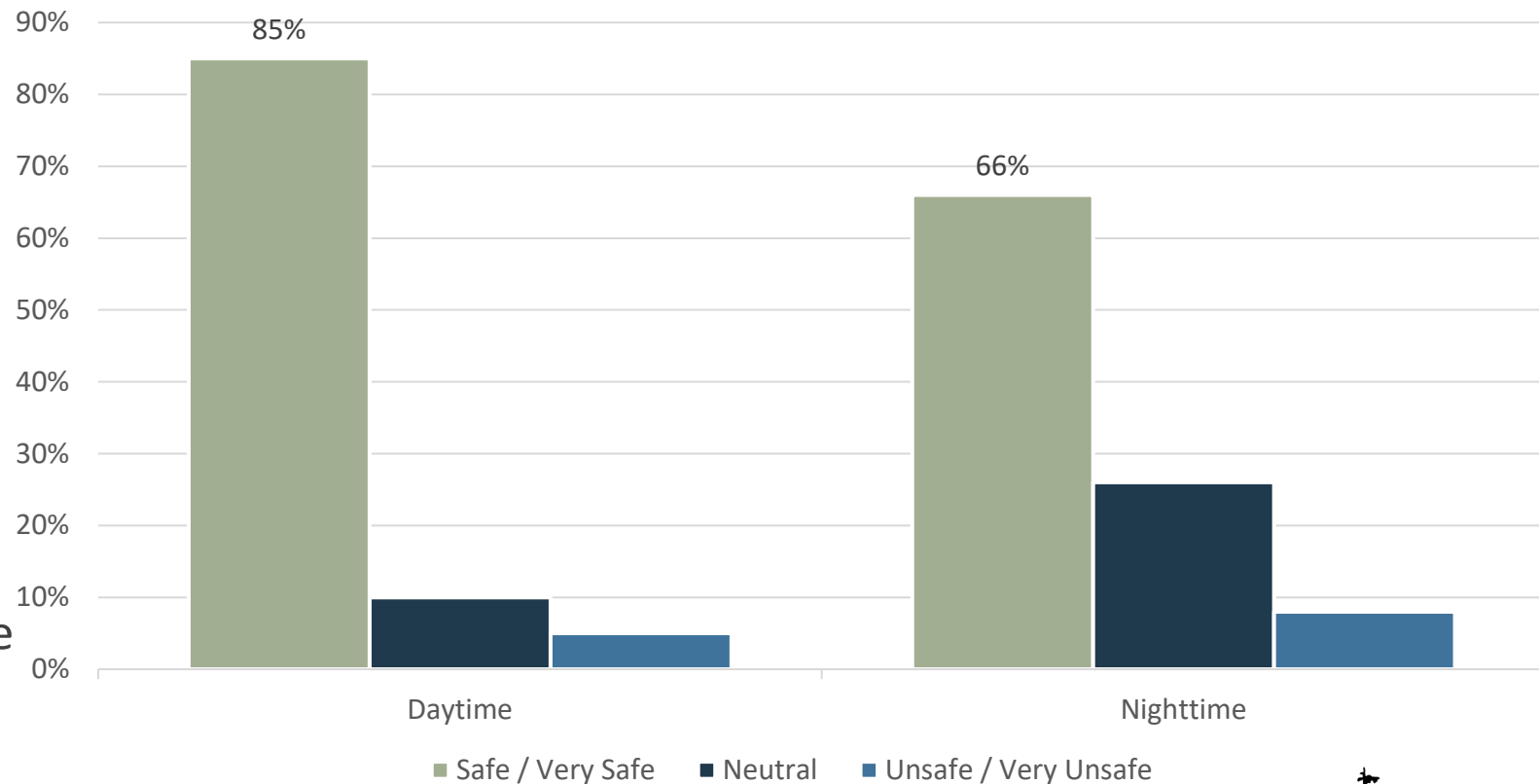
Survey Questions:

“How safe do you feel in your neighbourhood during the day?”

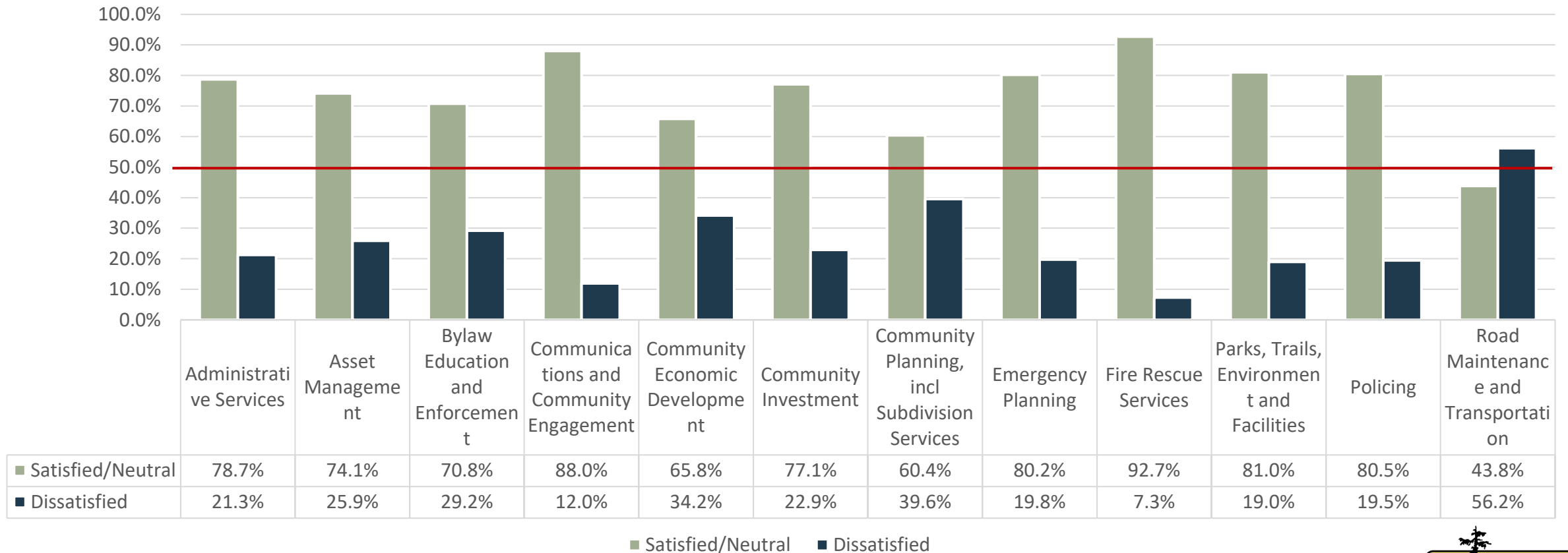
“How safe do you feel after dark?”

Key themes:

Strong sense of safety during the day; perceptions decline after dark — influenced by lighting, visibility and presence



Satisfaction with District Services



Transportation and Mobility, and the Upcoming Referendum



Transportation remains the lowest-rated service area
– 44% satisfied, 56% dissatisfied



Themes: congestion, road maintenance, and travel safety, with an increased emphasis on multimodal travel options



Survey explored how residents want to be supported in making an informed decision about the upcoming borrowing referendum on the Throup Connector and Phillips Corridor Project



Borrowing Referendum: Throup Road and Phillips Road Corridor Project

- October 17, 2026 (alongside the general election)
- Builds on prior engagement from the 2025 Budget phase one results, which showed strong public support for a borrowing referendum



Financial Sustainability and Revenue Diversification

The District recognizes that the recent rate of property tax increases is not sustainable over the long term

This year's survey asked residents to share perspectives on revenue diversification — how the District can reduce reliance on residential taxes

Strong support for:

- Shared revenues with other levels of government (e.g., cannabis and cell service taxes)
 - Attracting new businesses to expand the commercial tax base
 - Hosting community events to generate local revenue

Mixed support for:

- Increasing user fees (38%-49%)



Trade-Offs and Service Efficiencies

Balancing Affordability and Service Delivery

Residents recognize the need for fiscal responsibility but do not support reducing service levels

40% of respondents said they trust the District to find effective, responsible ways to manage trade-offs

Community priorities:

- **Expand staff cross-training** to improve flexibility
- **Share services** with neighbouring governments and nonprofits
- **Use technology and automation** to improve efficiency

Residents emphasized that cost-saving measures should:

- Maintain service quality and responsiveness
- Avoid over-stretching staff or reducing community access



Service Investment Outcomes

Investments Driving Improved Satisfaction

Fire Rescue Services: Transition to **24/7 staffing model** — now **92.7% satisfaction**, highest of all service areas

Policing: Enhanced local presence and coverage — satisfaction at **80.5%**

Bylaw Services: Expanded team from **2 to 3 officers**, improving reliability and weekend coverage

Connection between **targeted investment** and **higher service satisfaction**



Next Step: Service Area Overviews

Connecting Engagement to Planning

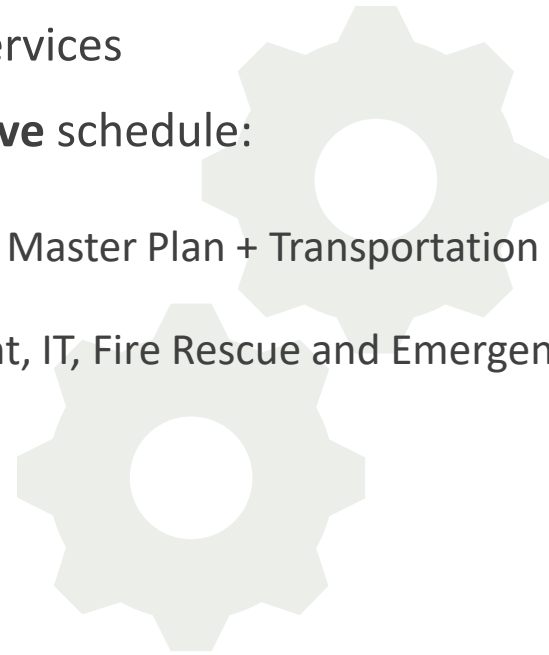
Purpose: To provide Council with a clear understanding of current services

Timing: Various meetings from November 10 to January 26 – **tentative** schedule:

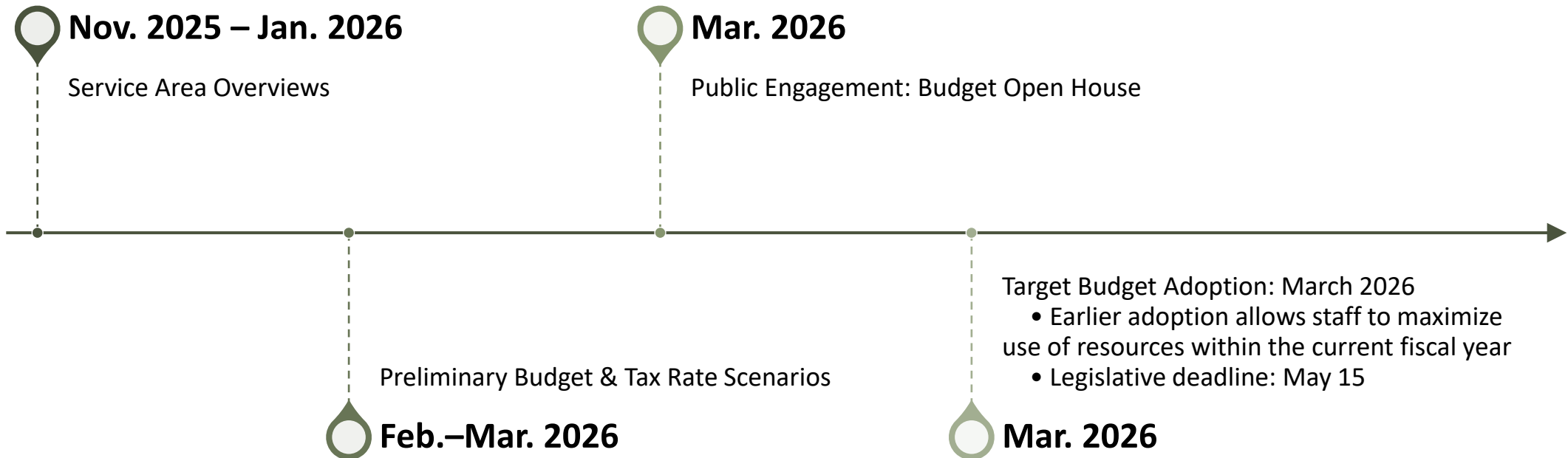
- November 10: Administration, Council and Corporate Services
- November 17: Operations, alongside mid-point review of Parks and Trails Master Plan + Transportation Master Plan
- January 12: Community Planning incl Building and Economic Development, IT, Fire Rescue and Emergency Planning
- January 26: RCMP

Focus:

- Aligning service delivery with community priorities
- Reviewing where investments are working — and where gaps exist
- Building the foundation for the **2026–2030 Five-Year Financial Plan**



What's Next





Closing Summary

- Engagement results provide a **data-informed foundation** for responsible decisions
- Themes reflect Sooke's vision of an **inclusive, healthy, and self-sufficient community**
- Consistent with our mission to provide **compassionate, engaged, and effective public service**
- Priorities align with **core values**:
 - Community well-being and safety
 - Long-term thinking
 - Inclusive and respectful engagement