Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Residents' Survey results 2023

Data gathered from 12 June to 23 July 2023

Date of publication – 14 August 2023
Revision: 1026

Contents

1. Research context

The purpose of the survey is to gauge respondents' satisfaction with the borough as a place to live, services provided by the Council and to guide future priorities in line with their needs. The survey will form a baseline for future planning and engagement.

The survey is based on the 'Focus on Five' priorities, while also using questions lifted from or adapted from the LGA (Local Government Association) standard residents' survey format. Consideration was also given to the previous residents' survey conducted for TWBC by Lake Market research in 2015.

The themes of the survey were:

- Local services
- Our priorities
- Funding our services
- Places and spaces
- Your environment
- Housing and homes
- Accessing the Council
- Looking ahead

Thirty-eight questions were divided between these themes, with a range of different formats including drop downs, multiple choice, and free text.

While it is possible to compare some of the data with the 2015 survey, the difference in format between that survey (representative sample responses obtained in person) and the 2023 survey (invited and self-selected responses obtained online and via post) combines with the 8-year gap between surveys to make a comparison difficult to reconcile.

2. Methodology and resident profile

The survey was delivered online, in person at engagement events and via post. Respondents were able to collect copies of the survey from drop-in events, the Town Hall and The Amelia Scott. Respondents were also able to telephone to request a survey be posted to them. Respondents were invited by post and email to take part, as well as notified via Local Magazine, e-newsletter and social media.

Engagement activities were designed to make the survey accessible to everybody and to increase engagement across the borough. Comments from previous surveys and engagement were considered when designing this survey.

Throughout the survey, monitoring of demographics took place which prompted some tailored engagement (contacting faith groups, running an Instagram competition).

The comparison of the demographic split of the 2023 survey with the latest census data, is below.

Table 1 Age demographics of responses compared to census data

AGE	SURVEY*	CENSUS
16-34	6%	20%
35 – 54	22%	28%
55+	38%	31%

Table 2 Ethnicity demographics of responses compared to census data

ETHNICITY	SURVEY*	CENSUS
WHITE	95%	90%
BAME	4%	10%

Table 3 Gender demographics of responses compared to census data

GENDER	SURVEY*	CENSUS
MALE	47%	49%
FEMALE	51%	51%

*figures for the survey will not total 100% as there was a prefer not to say option.

Representation of demographics

Older age groups are over-represented in comparison to census data, with 38% of all responses coming from over 55s. Historically, it has been difficult to engage young people with consultations. It is also possible that younger residents did not provide demographic information and therefore do not appear in the demographic figures above.

Representation of wards

The following table details the representation of wards within the survey responses, compared to the number of households within each ward. The index score highlights where a ward is under-represented (index score <90) or over-represented (index score >110) within the survey responses.

Table 4 Representation of wards in responses compared to number of households in that ward

WARD NAME	PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS IN BOROUGH	NUMBER OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS	PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS	INDEX SCORE
BENENDEN AND CRANBROOK	6%	56	6%	95
BRENCHLEY AND HORSMONDEN	4%	32	3%	75
BROADWATER	4%	39	4%	103
CAPEL	2%	21	2%	118
CULVERDEN	9%	92	10%	112
FRITTENDEN AND SISSINGHURST	2%	15	2%	82

GOUDHURST AND LAMBERHURST	4%	31	3%	84
HAWKHURST AND SANDHURST	6%	47	5%	86
PADDOCK WOOD EAST	4%	41	4%	103
PADDOCK WOOD WEST	3%	38	4%	115
PANTILES AND ST MARK'S	6%	80	8%	129
PARK	7%	97	10%	135
PEMBURY	5%	40	4%	88
RUSTHALL	4%	47	5%	114
SHERWOOD	7%	40	4%	59
SOUTHBOROUGH AND HIGH BROOMS	6%	59	6%	98
SOUTHBOROUGH NORTH	4%	20	2%	55
SPELDHURST AND BIDBOROUGH	5%	48	5%	107
ST JAMES'	6%	51	5%	93
ST JOHN'S	6%	68	7%	123

Invited respondents

10,000 households were selected at random and sent an invitation to complete the survey, with a unique code to enter.

369 out of our 1507 responses were submitted with a unique code.

This ‘control’ sample can help us identify anomalies in the overall survey responses.

Definitions

Where free text comments have been tagged and counted according to theme, the definitions of these themes are included below:

Green spaces comments related to parks, countryside and open spaces in the borough.

Roads, pavements and parking anything related to road surfaces, traffic, pavements and parking spaces.

Transport links comments that refer to public transport including trains, buses and taxis.

Events and culture comments related to culture and events in the borough, including libraries, museums, theatres, cinema and music.

Sports and leisure centres comments on the availability and quality of sports and leisure facilities in the borough.

Education comments related to school facilities, pre-schools and adult education.

History comments related to heritage and history, including architecture.

Food and drink comments related to restaurants, bars, cafes and other hospitality businesses within the borough.

Shops comments related to retail businesses within the borough.

Upkeep comments related to maintenance and upkeep of the area, including street cleaning and maintenance of public facilities.

Safety comments related to public safety, crime and policing.

Community and atmosphere comments related to the feel of the area in terms of people and community spirit.

Housing and development comments related to housing and development, including building of new houses, affordable housing and development of existing sites.

Towns comments related to towns in the area.

Young people comments related to young people, families and children.

Older people comments related to the elderly population.

Villages comments related to rural areas and smaller villages in the borough.

Quiet comments related to the pace of life and noise pollution.

Infrastructure comments related to health services, availability of resources and utilities.

Governance comments related to the way the Council operates and interacts with national government and other governing bodies.

Council services comments related to council services and the way they are delivered.

Job opportunities comments related to employment opportunities in the area.

Carbon reduction comments related to climate change.

3. Executive summary

Local services

Satisfaction with services

The services with the highest satisfaction scores were Parks and Open Spaces (20% very satisfied, 48% satisfied), Elections (8% very satisfied, 41% satisfied) The Amelia Scott (18% very satisfied, 23% satisfied) and Household waste recycling centres (11% very satisfied, 42% satisfied).

The services with the lowest satisfaction scores were Roads and public rights of way (37% dissatisfied, 41% very dissatisfied), Parking (36% dissatisfied, 21% very dissatisfied) and Council Tax (32% very dissatisfied, 17% very dissatisfied).

For services like Trading Standards, Housing Benefits and Licensing a high proportion of respondents indicated that they don't know enough about this service (Housing Benefits 48%, Trading Standards 43%, Licensing 35%).

The services which respondents ranked as most important were Recycling and refuse collection (45% of respondents selected this as one of their top three services), Parks and open spaces (40%) and Council Tax (32%). The least important services according to this ranking system were Licensing (1%), Housing Benefits (2%) and Crematorium and Cemetery (4%), though these are services that are not universally used.

Satisfaction with TWBC

31% of respondents were either somewhat or very satisfied with the way TWBC runs things, with 43% of respondents dissatisfied (31%, 467) or very dissatisfied (12%, 181).

35% of respondents responded that TWBC acts “a great deal” (2%) or “a fair amount” (33%) on the concerns of local respondents. 51% responded “not very much”.

Our priorities

When asked to rank the Focus on Five, respondents put these priorities in the following order:

- Vibrant and safer towns and villages
- Genuinely affordable housing and social rental
- Safeguarding council finances
- Carbon reduction
- Digital access, transparency and local democracy

When asked to suggest additional priorities, 266 respondents (18%) suggested priorities related to roads, 122 (8%) suggested prioritising upkeep and infrastructure, and 116 (8%) suggested prioritising planning.

Funding our services

Value for money

We asked:

9% of your Council Tax (around 9p in the pound, per resident) is used to provide our services. Considering the range of services we provide, do you believe that represents value for money?

Only 45% (673) of respondents felt that TWBC provides value for money. There was a significant number of respondents who gave a Don't know response 31% (153).

Of those respondents who did not feel TWBC provided value for money, 261 commented on the quality of services provided, while 103 felt that TWBC had the wrong priorities and 63 felt that they needed more detail on how budget is allocated across services.

We asked those respondents who responded “Don’t know” to explain what information they would need to answer yes or no. 160 requested a costing breakdown, 95 needed more information on the services we provide, and 42 asked for comparisons of TWBC’s budget with other authorities.

Balancing our budget

When asked how they would balance our budget, 42% (640) of respondents suggested charging fees to those who use a service (user pays). 17% (256) of respondents indicated that they didn’t know how to balance our budget. Only 13% (203) of respondents felt that reducing or cutting services would be appropriate.

24% (364) of respondents suggested other ways of balancing the budget, which included reducing waste within the council (124), reducing staff and wages (95) and improving council priorities and processes (79).

Places and spaces

Living in the borough

We asked respondents what they liked most about living in the borough. 52% (786) provided answers related to parks and green spaces, 18% (281) mentioned transport links and the location of the borough, 14% (219) mentioned the community and atmosphere in the borough.

Respondents were asked to select the top three things which make an area a good place to live. 48% (719) selected Access to countryside, 34% (518) selected the level of crime and anti-social behaviour, and 25% (324) selected Clean and litter-free streets.

16% (244) of respondents suggested other things which would make an area a good place to live. Of these respondents, 76 made suggestions related to roads, pavements and parking.

62% (933) of respondents felt there was a strong sense of community in their local area. This increased to 78% in the rural wards, against 59% in the urban wards.

45% (671) of respondents considered their local area to be vibrant. Again, a higher proportion of the rural wards (66%) considered their local area to be vibrant versus the urban wards (40%).

Safety

When asked how safe their local area was, 18% (270) felt Very safe. 54% (818) of respondents felt that their area was Quite safe. 8% of respondents felt that their area was either Quite unsafe (7%, 108) or Very unsafe (1%, 22). The ward where respondents felt safest was Speldhurst. The ward where respondents felt the most unsafe was Paddock Wood West.

When asked if there was anything else that concerned them about their local area, 18% (266) of respondents commented on Roads, pavements and parking, 8% (122) commented on Upkeep and infrastructure, and another 8% (116) commented on Housing and development.

Your environment

Climate change

66% (999) respondents felt well informed about the actions they could take to address climate change.

When asked what actions they were prepared to take in the next 2 years to address climate change, 65% (973) said that they would reduce waste (especially food), 58% (875) indicated that they would reduce energy consumption and 44% (656) would change their diet.

When asked if they would pay more to address the challenges of climate change, 58% (876) of respondents said no.

Travel

For journeys of less than one mile, 79% (1183) of respondents would travel on foot, 13% (195) by car and 3% (46) by bus.

For journeys of 1 to 3 miles, 54% (809) said they would travel by car, 28% (425) would travel on foot and 10% (151) would travel by bus.

For journeys of 3 to 5 miles, 79% (1196) would travel by car, 9% (131) would travel by bus and 4% (55) would travel on foot.

For journeys of 5 to 10 miles, 82% (1237) would travel by car, 7% (100) would travel by train and 5% (79) would travel by bus.

For journeys of more than 10 miles, 70% (1050) would travel by car, 21% (314) would travel by train and 3% (39) would travel by bus.

75% (1133) of respondents felt that their local area was accessible on foot or by bicycle, while only 49% (741) felt comfortable travelling on foot or by bicycle in their local area, with 30% (447) indicating they felt comfortable travelling on foot but not by bicycle.

Housing and homes

Affordable housing

When asked to rank a range of factors which might contribute to the perceived affordability of an area, respondents rated the costs of commuting the most significant factor, and the quality of employment opportunities the least significant factor. When asked which other factors might impact this, 6% (97) made comments related to housing and development in the area, specifically focusing on the number of houses relative to the infrastructure available and the cost and quality of houses.

When asked about their own plans, 55% (829) said they had no plans to change property. 19% (290) indicated that they needed a smaller property and 18% (286) said that access to open spaces and parks would influence their decision about the type of housing they would need.

Young people

49% (740) of respondents felt that Tunbridge Wells was not somewhere they could see young people remaining when they left home. When asked why they did not think young people would remain here, 53% (395, 26% of all responses) of those respondents cited cost of living as a reason for this, and 42% (314, 21% of all responses) commented on housing and development, while 30% (222, 15% of all responses) commented on job opportunities in the borough.

Accessing the Council

Council communications

78% (1173) of respondents confirmed that if they had a question about a council service, they would know how to get in contact.

71% (1062) of respondents felt that the Council kept them up to date on changes and news in the borough.

The most common method by which respondents currently find out about council news is the weekly email newsletter (48%, 729) followed by Local Magazine (47%, 704) and the Council website (30%, 406). In the previous survey, 2015, the most frequently used methods of accessing council information were the Council Website (37%), the local newspaper (25%) and Local magazine (18%).

Respondents would prefer to find out about Council news via the email newsletter (57%, 865), Local Magazine (35%, 530) and the Council website (35%, 378).

Online services

86% (1302) of respondents have used our online services, a big increase compared to the 2015 survey where only 57% of respondents indicated that they had visited the TWBC website.

Of those who have not used online services, 48% (99) didn't use them by choice.

When asked how they would contact the Council, 79% (1197) would contact via email, 67% (1004) would contact by phone and 65% (975) would contact via the website.

Looking Ahead

When asked what one thing they would change to make the borough a better place, 31% (474) of respondents made comments related to roads, pavements and parking. 19% (285) made comments related to housing and development, and 14% (213) made comments related to infrastructure, services and governance.

When we asked if there was anything else which needs to change over the next three years to improve the borough, 30% (446) of respondents commented on roads, pavements and parking, 23% (341) commented on infrastructure, services and governance and 17% (253) commented on housing and development.

4. Detailed Analysis

The remainder of this report provides graphs, charts and commentary with the detail of the responses for questions in each theme.

Local services

Satisfaction with services

The following chart shows the proportions of respondents offering a satisfaction rating for each of the following services.

The services that the most respondents offered a rating for are at the top of the chart. Less frequently used services towards the bottom of the chart had a greater proportion of ‘Don’t Know’ ratings from respondents.

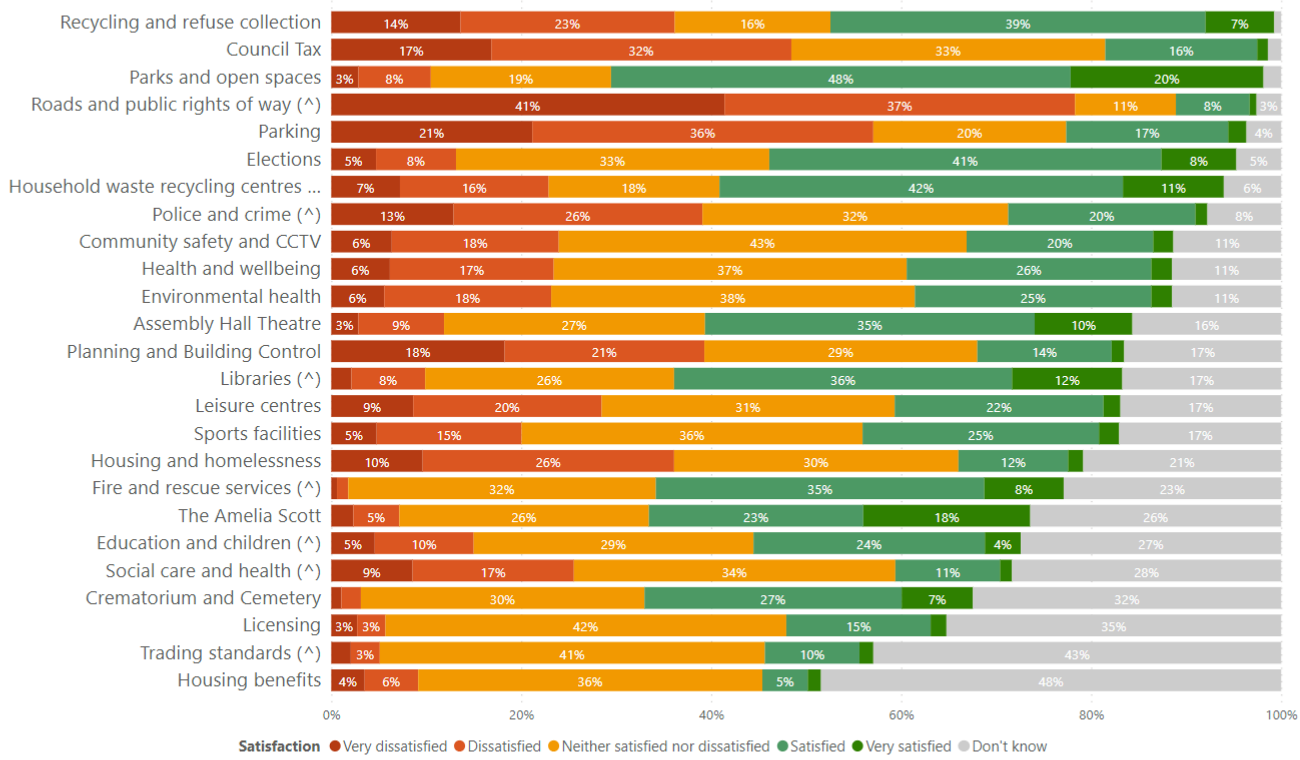

Figure 1 Level of satisfaction with individual services, including services provided by Kent County Council.

Services marked with a (^) are not provided by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

The ratings for services were scored 1 (very dissatisfied) through to 5 (very satisfied) and an average rating calculated and displayed on the following chart.

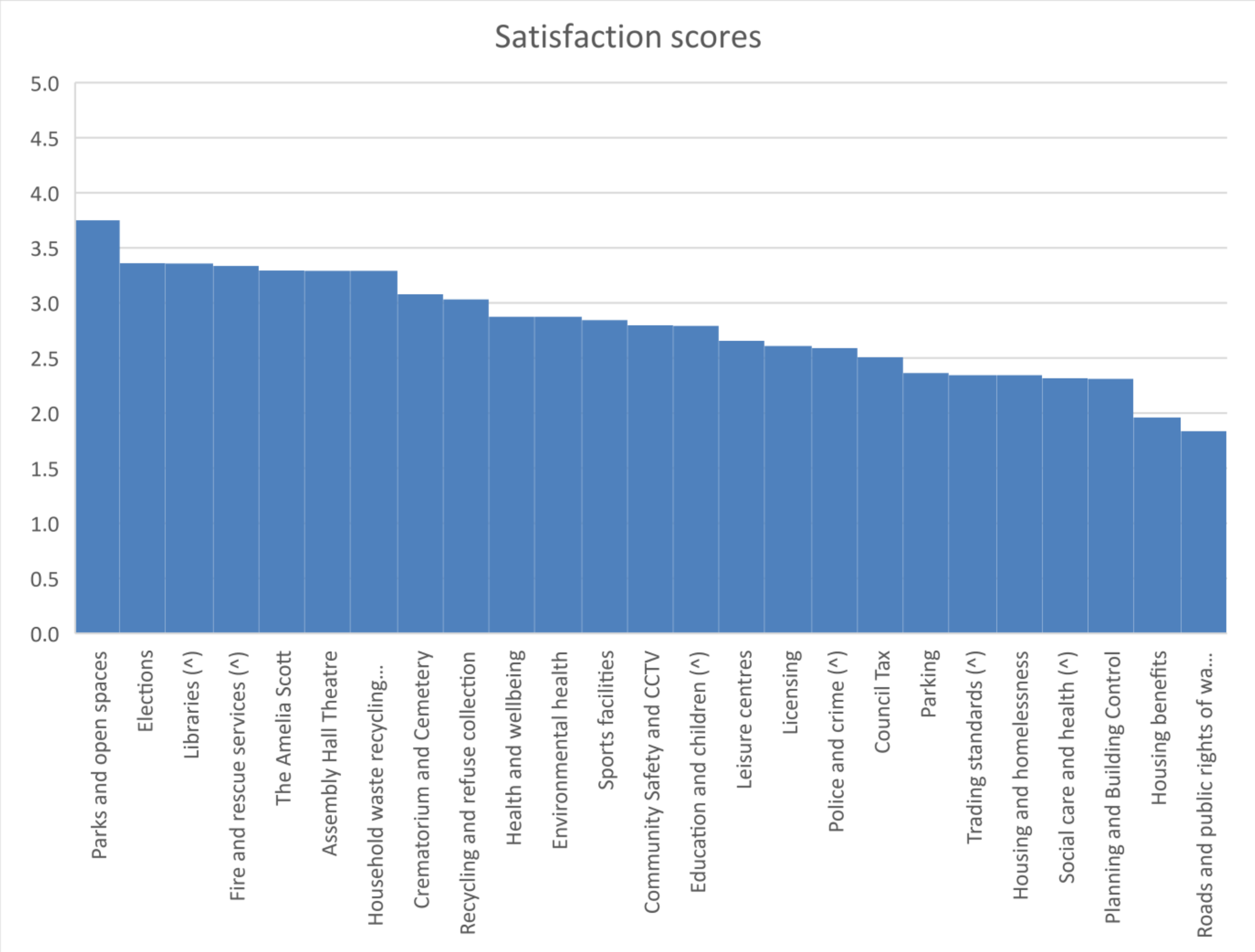

Figure 2 Satisfaction scores for different services including those provided by Kent County Council

Respondents were asked to select the three TWBC services which were most important to them. Overall, universal services used by the vast majority of respondents featured as the most important.

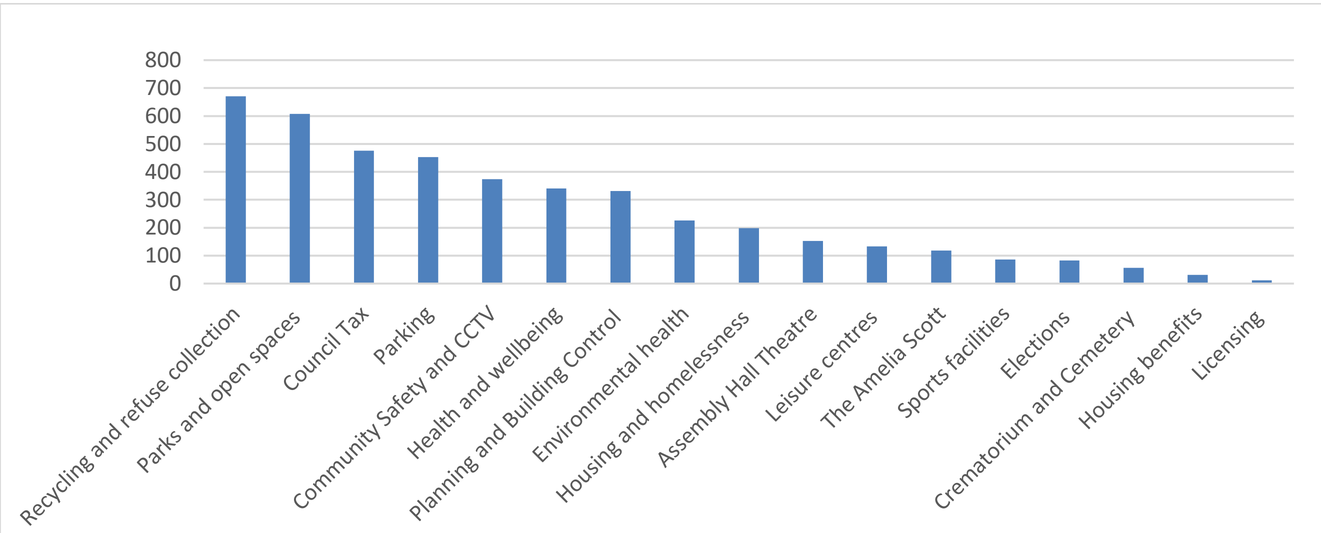

Figure 3 Which services were considered most important by respondents

Satisfaction with TWBC

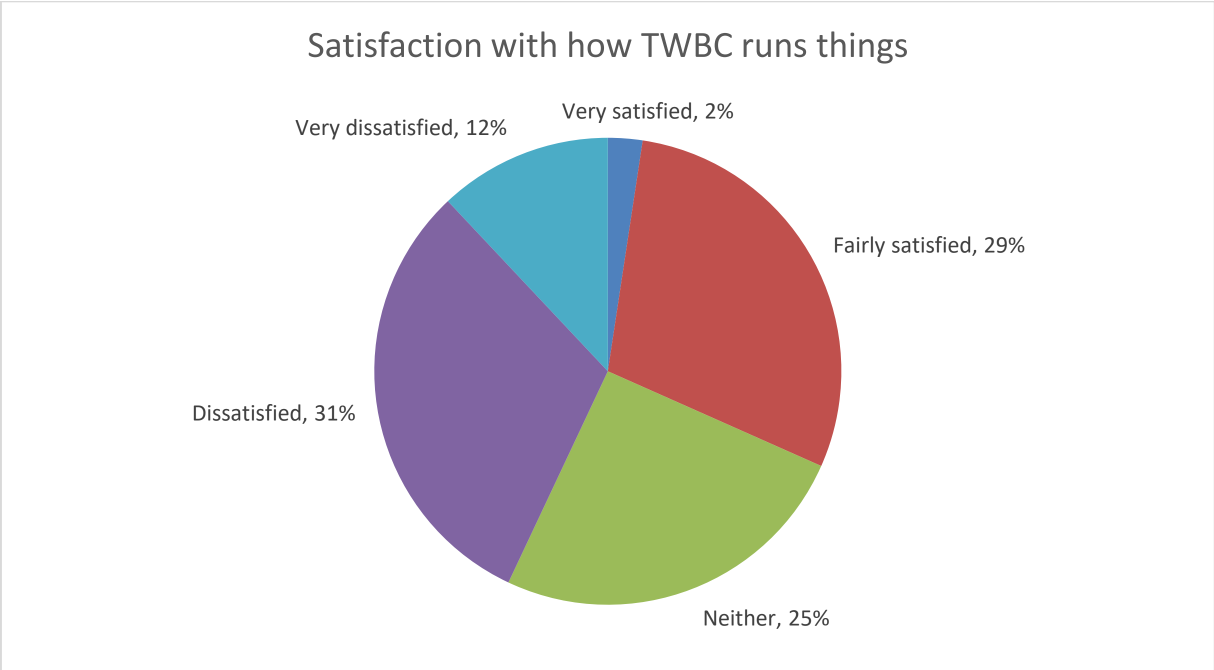

Figure 4 Satisfaction levels across respondents.

Slightly more respondents are dissatisfied with how TWBC runs things. When responses were weighted by age group to be more representative of the make up of the borough, satisfaction was as follows. Weighting was carried out by calculating the difference between the proportion of responses represented by each age group and the proportion of the borough population. Responses were then multiplied by the difference, and the resulting chart is shown below.

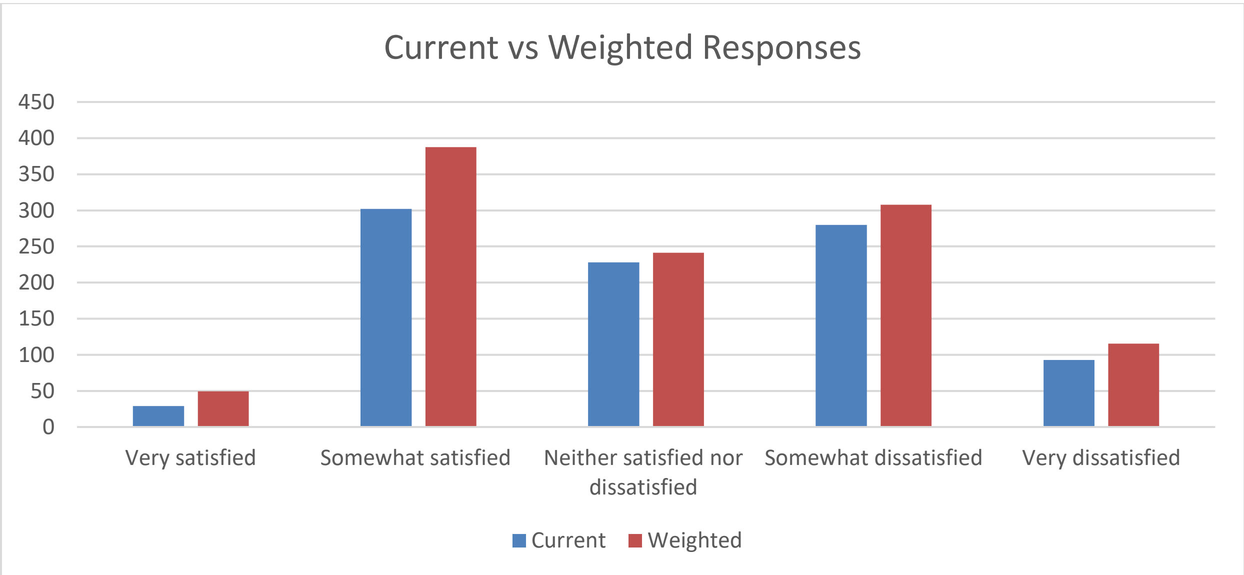

Figure 5 Weighted vs current responses.

It is important to remember that weighting of responses inflates the scores of underrepresented groups, for example, as we only had one response from the under 16 age group, this response is significantly inflated by the weighting process.

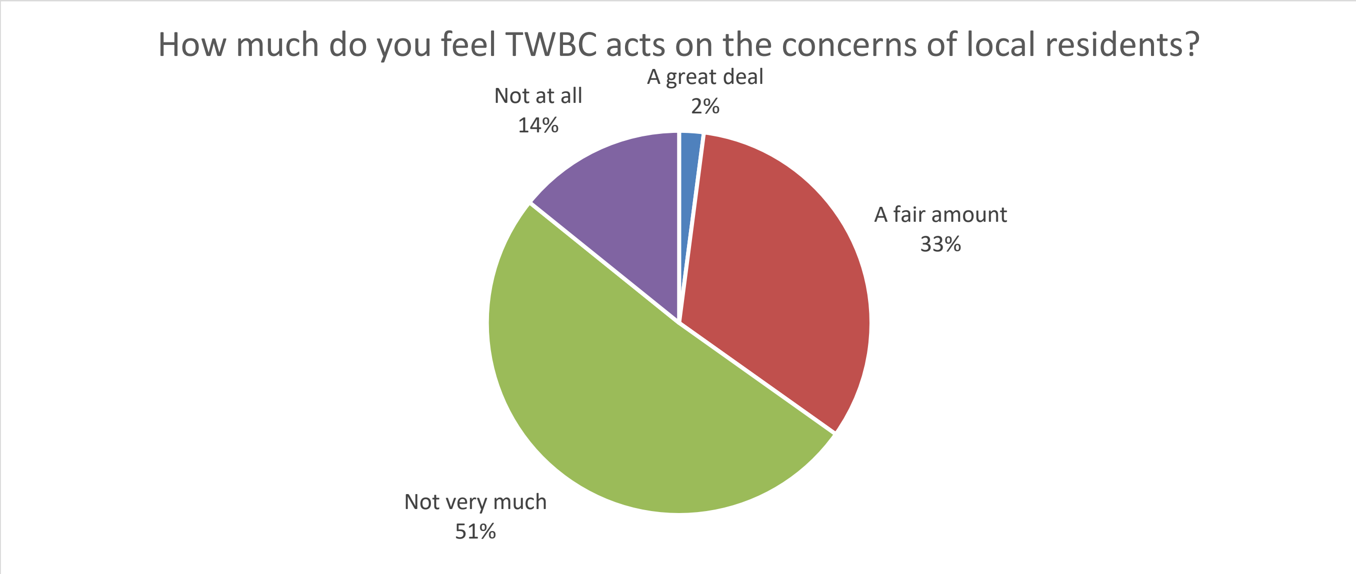

Figure 6 The percentage of respondents who felt that TWBC acts on the concerns of local residents.

The majority of respondents do not feel TWBC acts on the concerns of local residents.

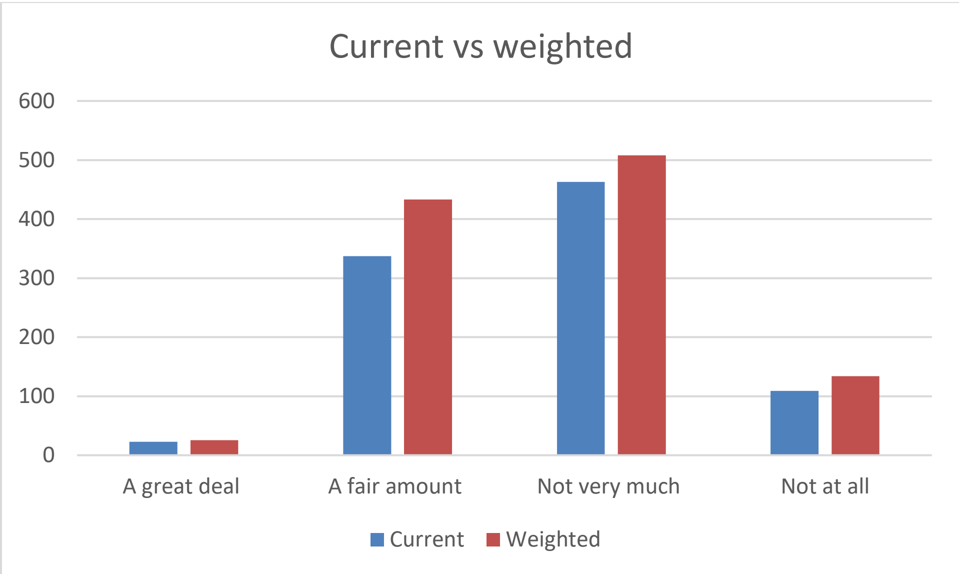

Figure 7 Current vs weighted responses

Once again, once weighting was applied to the responses the figures changed slightly, with the number of responses saying Tunbridge Wells Borough Council acts on concerns “A Fair Amount” increasing from 36% (337) to 40% (433).

Breakdown of results by subgroups

Satisfaction levels with the way TWBC runs things among under 35s are more positive, with 44% (7) of 17 to 25-year-olds and 51% (35) of 26 to 35-year-olds describing themselves as somewhat satisfied. Those in the 36 to 45 age group were least satisfied, with 36% (43)

indicating that they were somewhat dissatisfied. The 75+ age group was also more positive, with 38% (35) very satisfied.

Female respondents were slightly more satisfied overall (3% (14) very satisfied, 33% (184) satisfied) than male (3% (16) very satisfied, 30% (151) satisfied).

Our priorities

We asked respondents to rank the Focus on Five priorities in order of importance, where 1 was most important and 5 least important. Their rankings placed the priorities in the following order:

1 Vibrant and safer towns and villages

2 Genuinely affordable housing and social rental housing

3 Safeguarding Council finances

4 Carbon reduction

5 Digital access transparency and local democracy

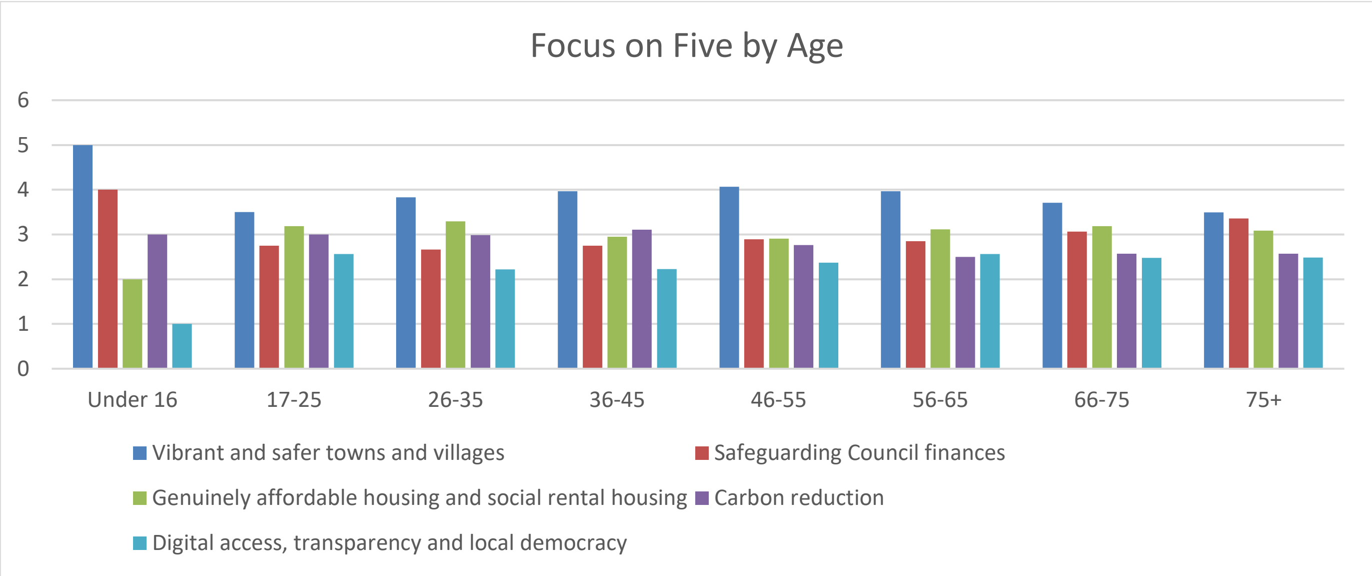

Figure 8 The way that different age groups rated the Focus on Five priorities

Across age groups, the focus on five were prioritised slightly differently. While all age groups placed Vibrant and safer towns and villages at the top end of the scale, those under the age of 55 were more likely to place Genuinely affordable housing ahead of Safeguarding Council finances.

When asked to suggest additional priorities, 25% (370) of respondents commented on issues related to infrastructure, council services and governance. 24% (363) commented on roads, pavements and parking. 11% (112) commented on safety.

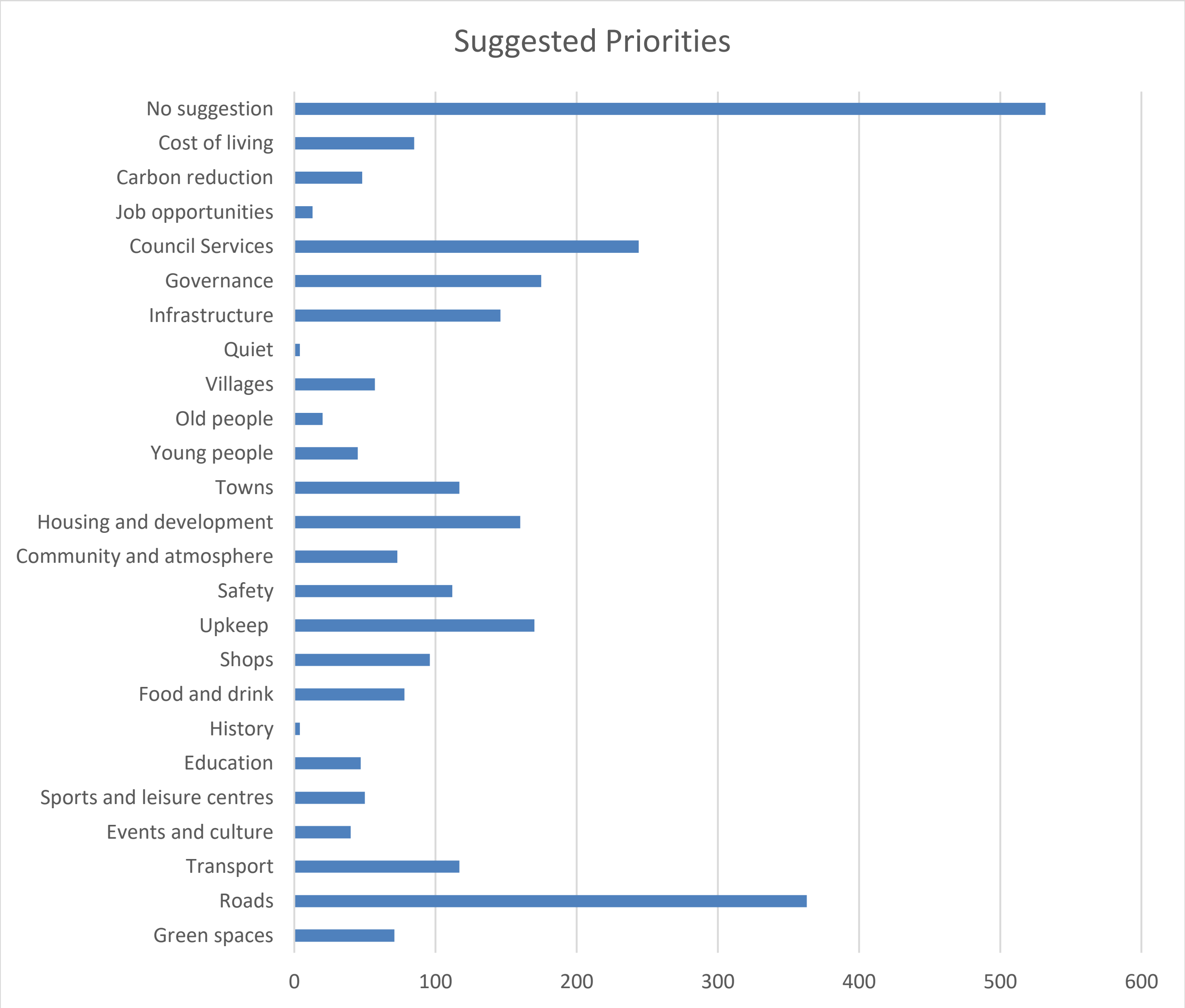

Figure 9 Themes that respondents' suggested priorities fell into

Breakdown of results by subgroups

The wards most concerned about roads, pavements and parking were: Speldhurst (40%, 19), Southborough North (38%, 9) and St Johns (37%, 25).

Female participants were more likely to suggest priorities related to young people and families (26F, 6M), while male participants were more likely to prioritise roads, pavements and parking (155M, 110F) or transport (48M, 45F).

Funding our services

Value for money

45% (673) of respondents felt that TWBC services represent value for money, while 24% (368) responded “Don’t Know” to this question, and 31% (466) disagreed that TWBC services represent value for money. This contrasts with answers to the same question posed in the 2023 Budget survey, where 68% of residents agreed that TWBC provides value for money. This may be because the format of the Budget Survey encouraged residents to think in depth about the way services are provided and included a costing breakdown. There was also no “Don’t Know” option provided in the Budget Survey.

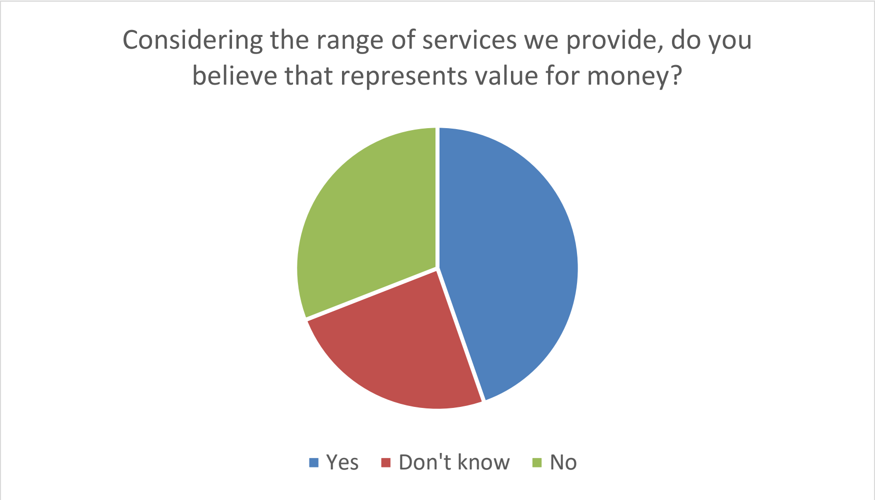

Figure 10 The percentage of respondents who felt that TWBC provides value for money

Those who responded “Don’t Know” were asked what further information they would need to give a yes or no answer. Their responses were divided across five areas:

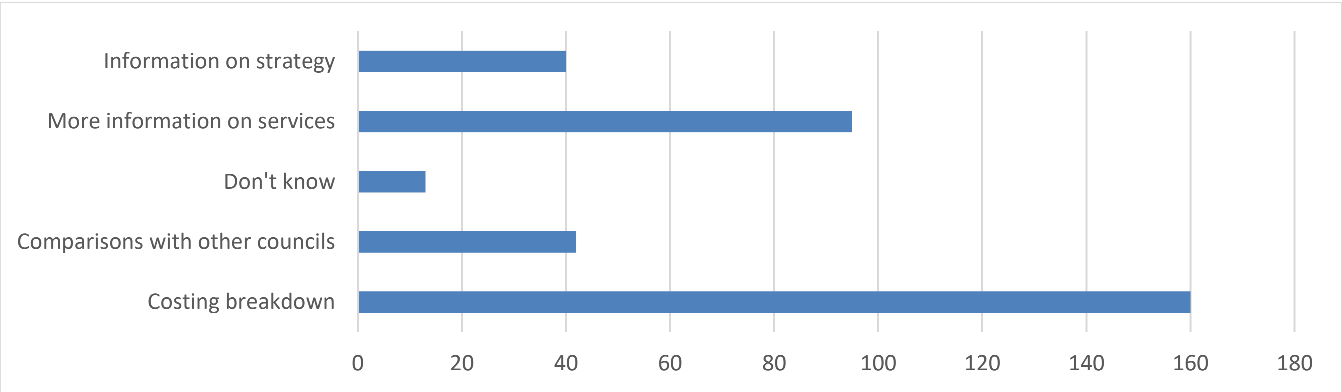

Figure 11 Which factors influenced residents to answer "Don't Know" when asked whether TWBC provides value for money

When those respondents who responded “No” were asked why, they gave responses across the following range of themes.

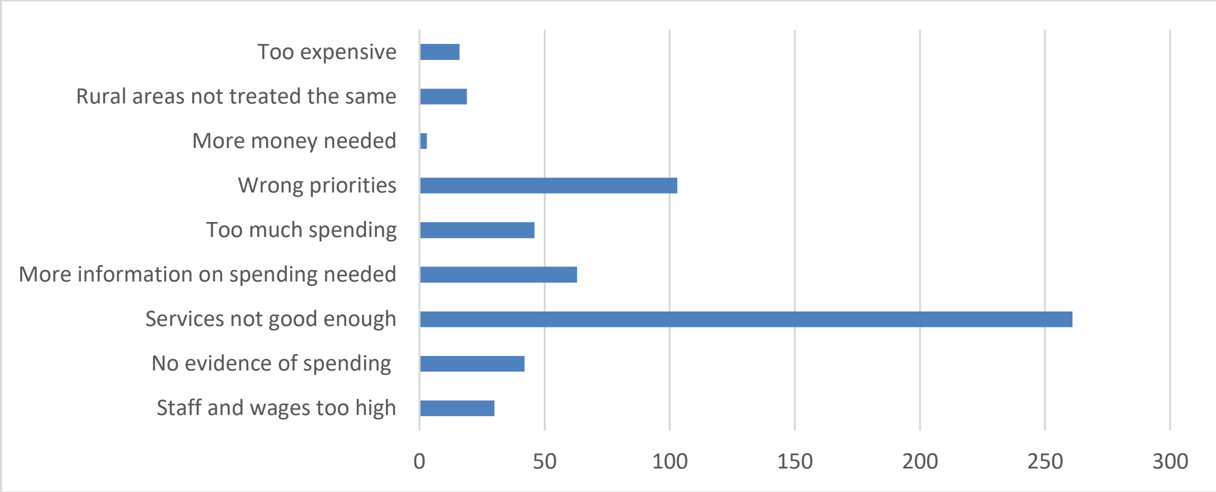

Figure 12 Which factors influenced residents to answer "No" when asked whether TWBC provides value for money

Balancing our budget

When asked how to balance our budget, and presented with three options, along with "Don't know" and "Other", respondents gave the following responses:

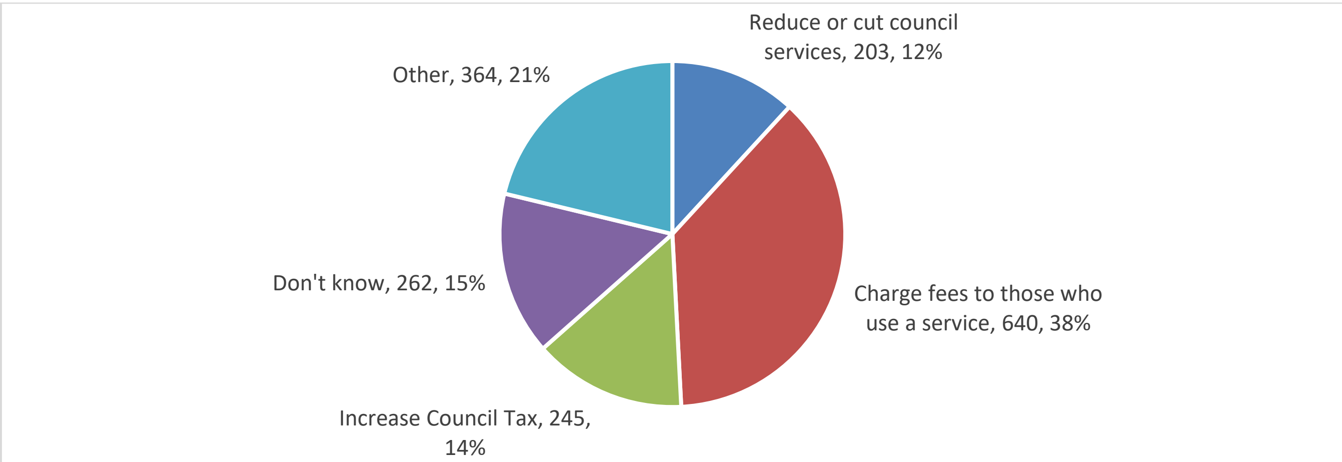

Figure 13 Which options residents felt were most appropriate ways to balance our budget

21% (364) of respondents suggested other options, which ranged across the following categories:

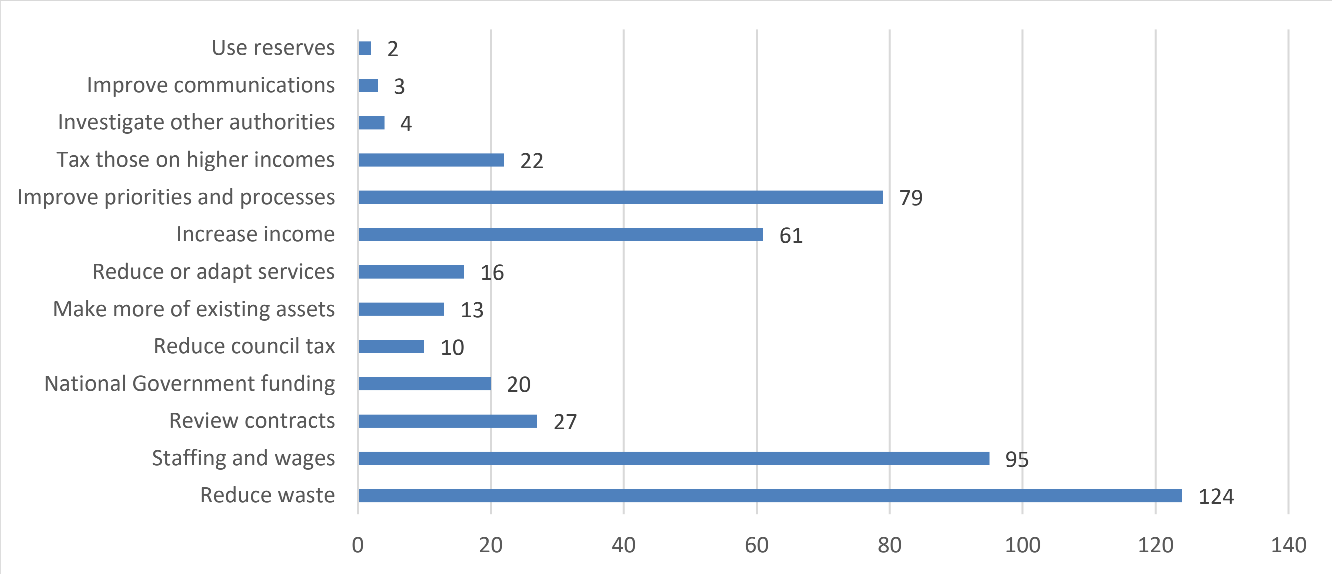

Figure 14 How suggestions for other ways to balance the budget were divided across a range of categories

The high quantity of responses related to Reducing waste (124), Staffing and wages (95) and Improving priorities and processes (79) reflects those respondents' concern with efficiency in the Council.

12% (203) of respondents suggested cutting services. When presented with a list of services, they suggested making cuts to The Amelia Scott (27%,55), Council Tax (14%, 29) and Housing Benefits (11%, 23). This needs to be set within the context of 1304 respondents choosing not to cut services at all.

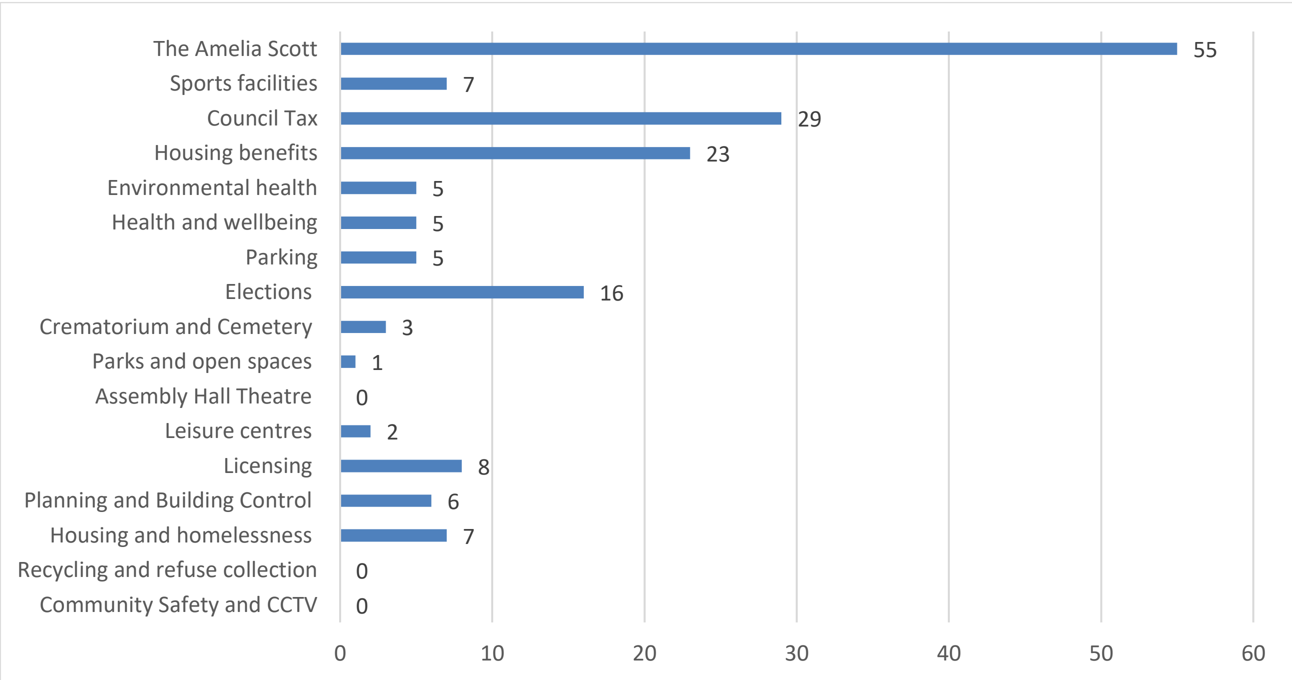

Figure 15 The services those respondents who favoured cutting services would have reduced

Breakdown of results by subgroups

There were no significant differences in male/female responses to the value for money question. Nor was there any particularly remarkable distinction between age groups, other than the 56-65 age group having the highest number of "yes" answers (54%, 125) and the 17-26 age group having the highest quantity of "Don't know" responses (38%, 6).

Places and spaces

Living in the borough

Asked to describe in a few words what they liked about living in the borough, 52% (790) of respondents commented on green spaces, 19% (291) commented on transport links and 15% (230) commented on community and atmosphere.

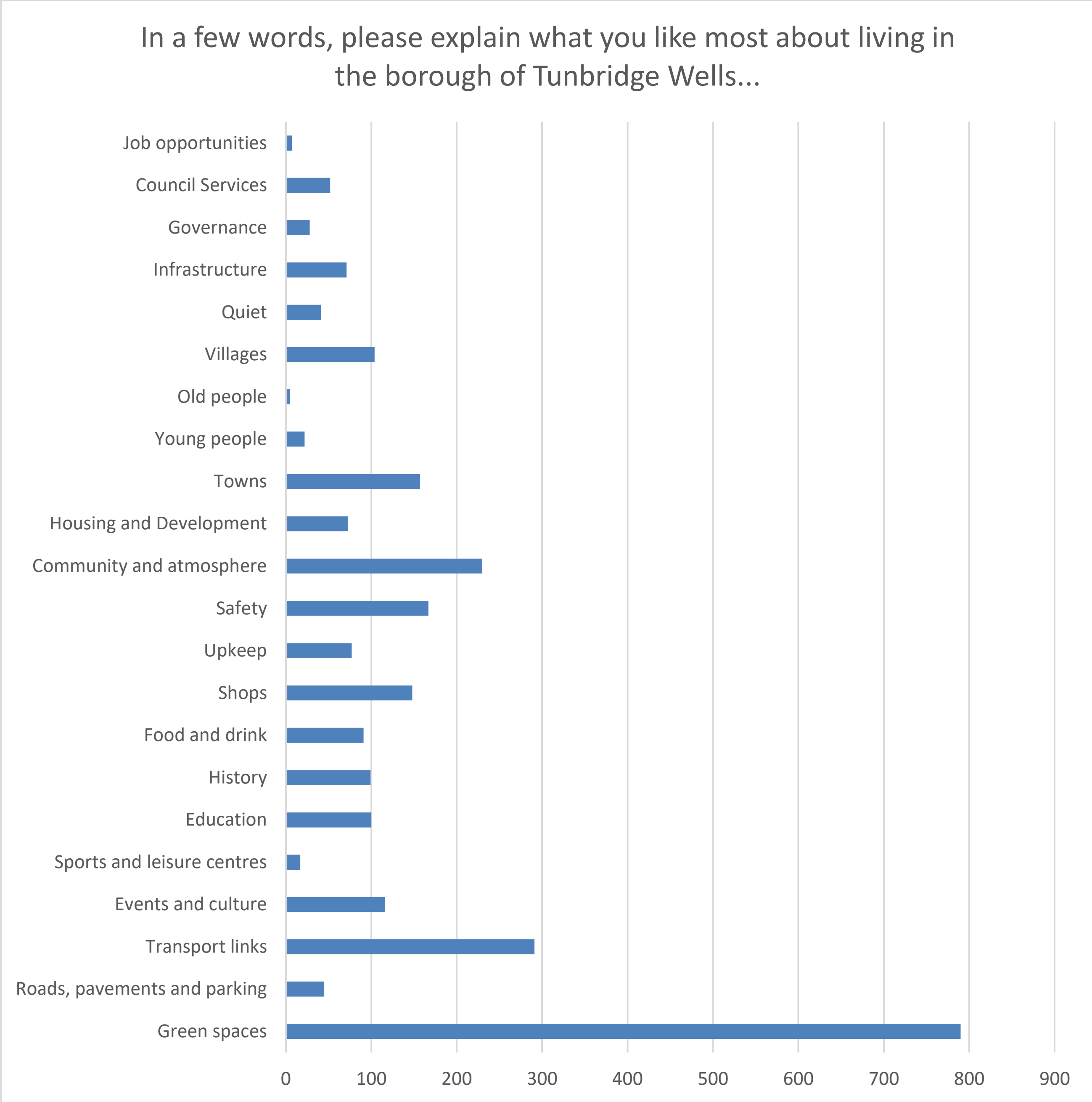

Figure 16 The themes into which responses explaining what respondents like most about living in Tunbridge Wells were divided

Some respondents did use this question to convey negative responses (12%,296). Comments were split between negative and positive as below:

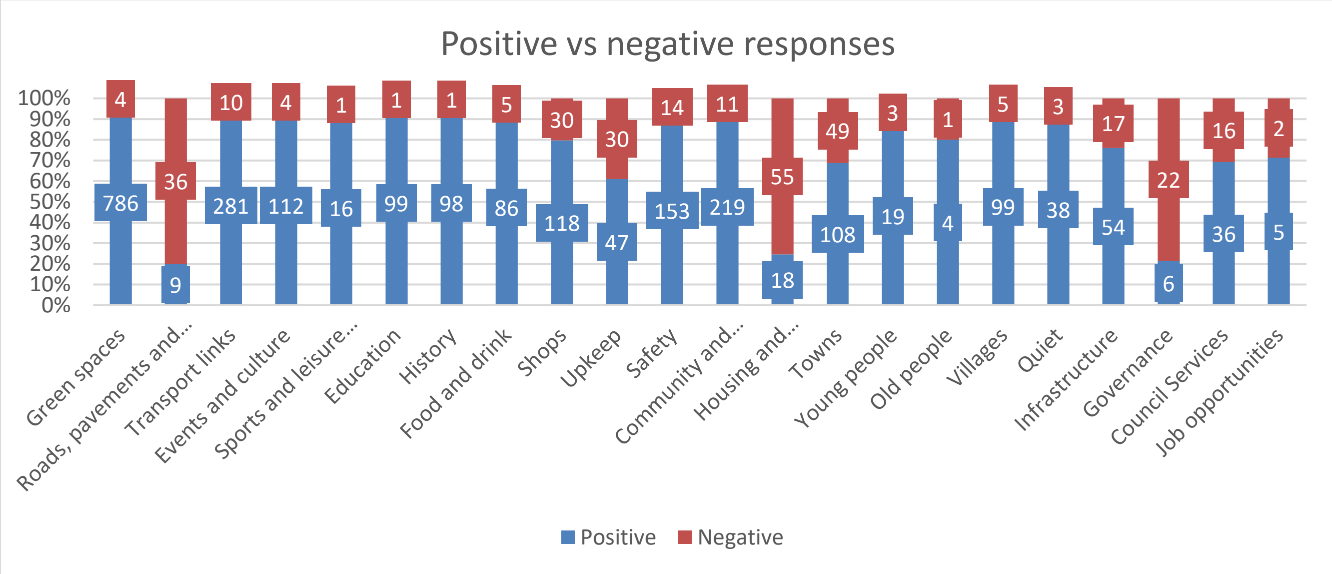

Figure 17 The proportion of responses to the question which were positive compared to those which were negative

The main area where there were more negative than positive comments was Housing and Development, (55-, 18+). These comments were predominantly from Paddock Wood West (7) and Paddock Wood East (8). There were also a significant number of negative comments on the topic of “Towns” (49-,108+) and Roads, pavements and parking (36-, 9+).

We asked respondents what made an area a good place to live and provided a range of options. The most popular response was “Access to the countryside” which 48% (719) of respondents selected. The options are listed below:

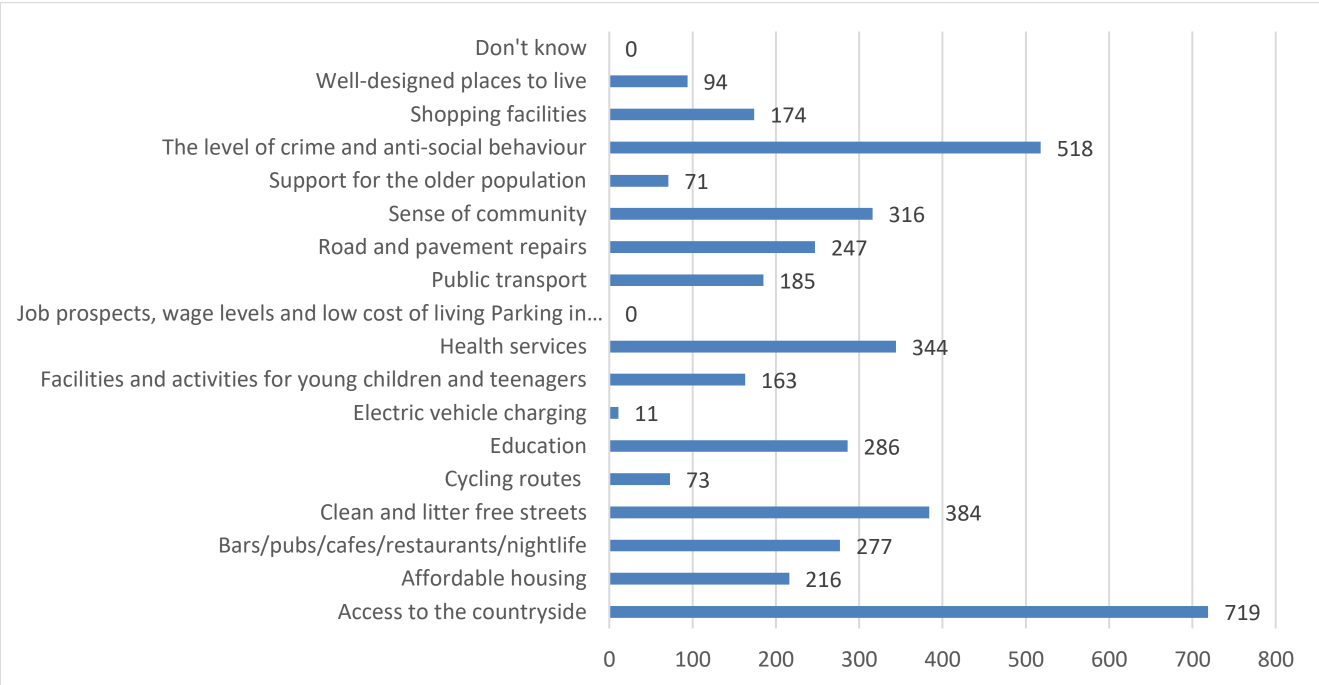

Figure 18 The proportion of respondents who commented on what made an area a good place to live, divided into themes

We used existing research to ask respondents what they would like to see more of, providing a list of options, the most popular of which was Free parking (53%,802), followed by Activities for young people (51%,771) and Farmers' markets (42%, 627).

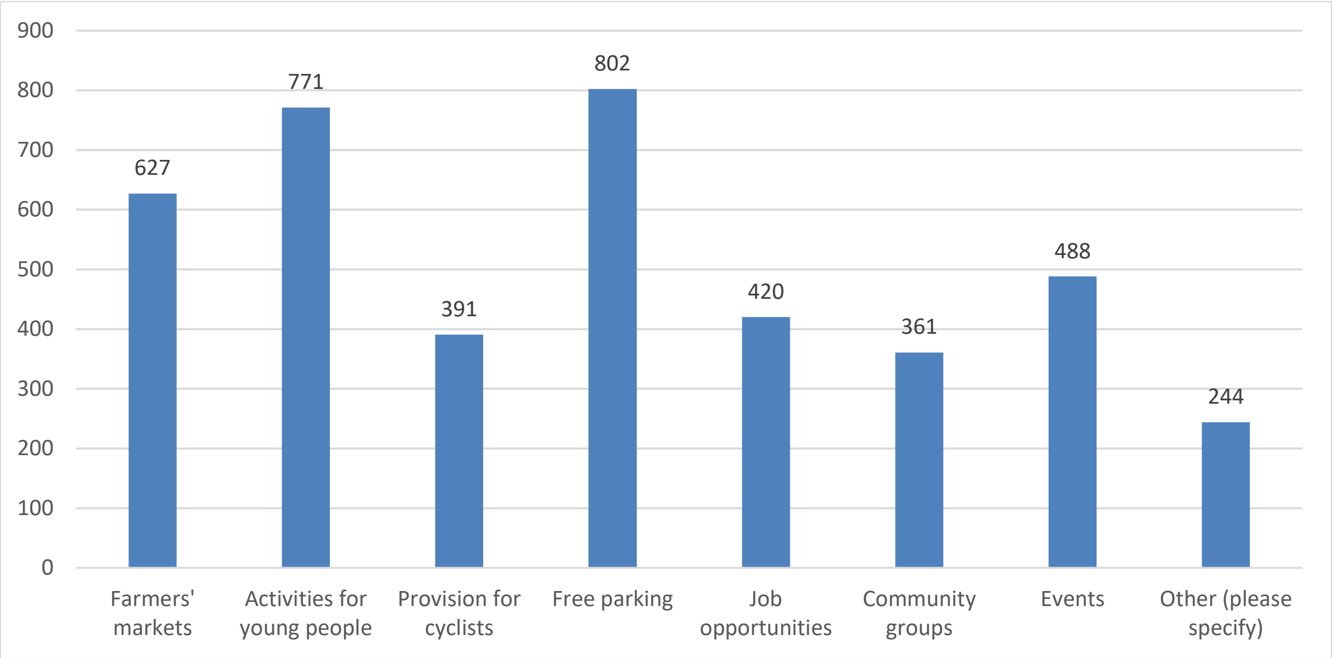

Figure 19 What respondents would like to see more of

When respondents were asked whether they felt there was a strong sense of community in their area, 62% responded Yes.

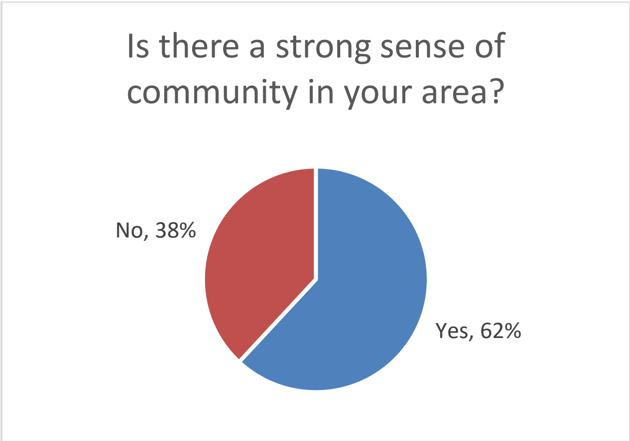

Figure 20 Responses to the question "Is there a strong sense of community in your area"

Responses vary by ward as follows, with the rural wards more likely to say there is a strong sense of community in their local area.

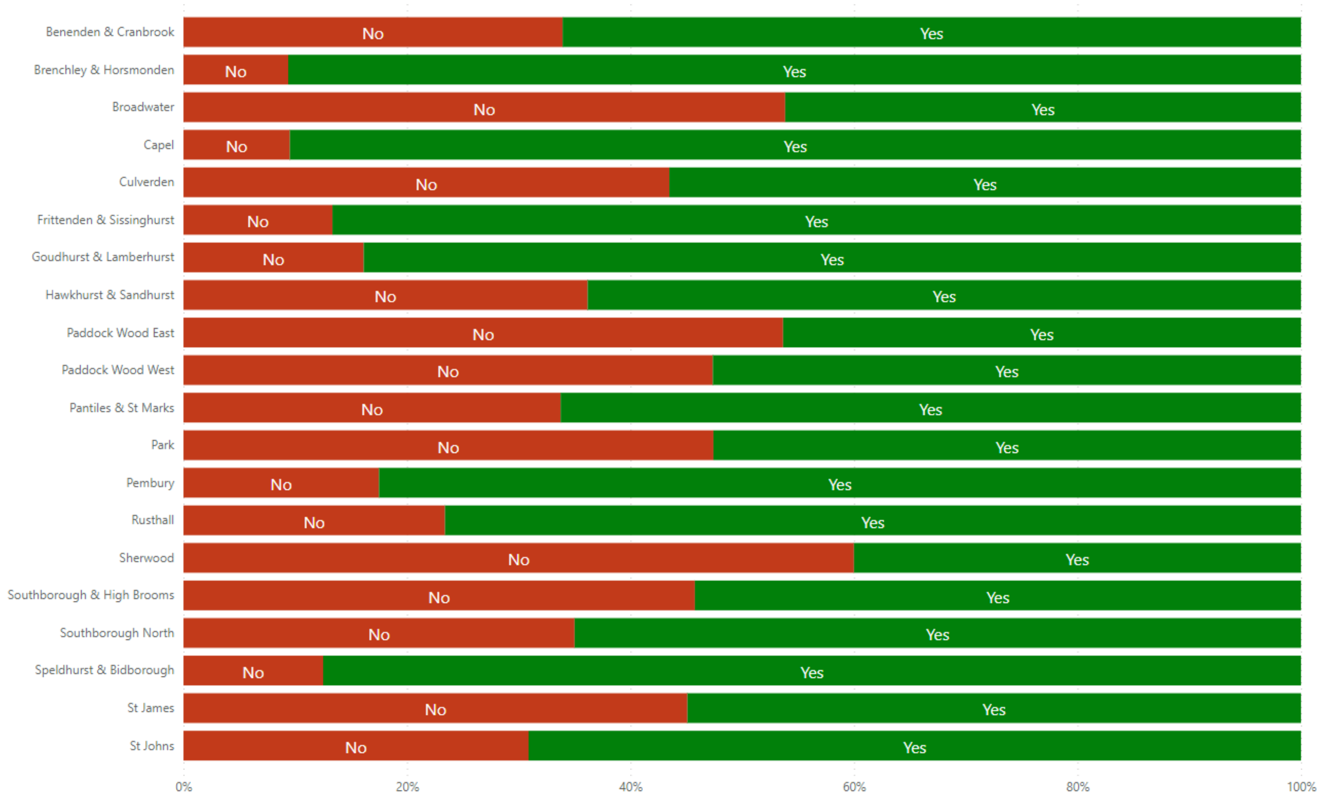

Figure 21 Which wards felt there was a sense of community in their local area

We also asked respondents whether they felt their nearest town or village was vibrant. 55% (836) of respondents did not consider their nearest town or village to be vibrant.

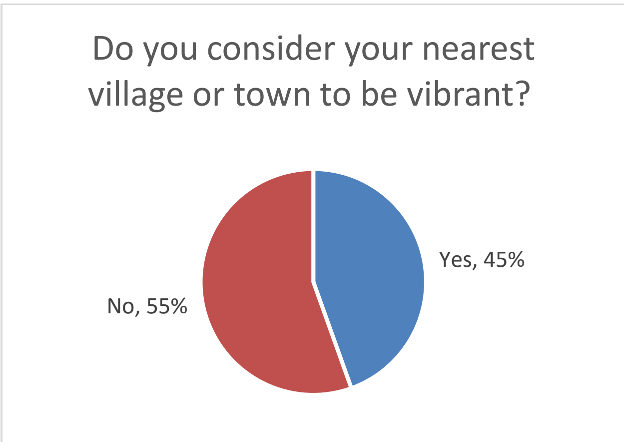

Figure 22 Whether or not residents felt their nearest village or town was vibrant

Again, responses vary by ward as follows, with the rural wards more likely to say their local town or village is vibrant.

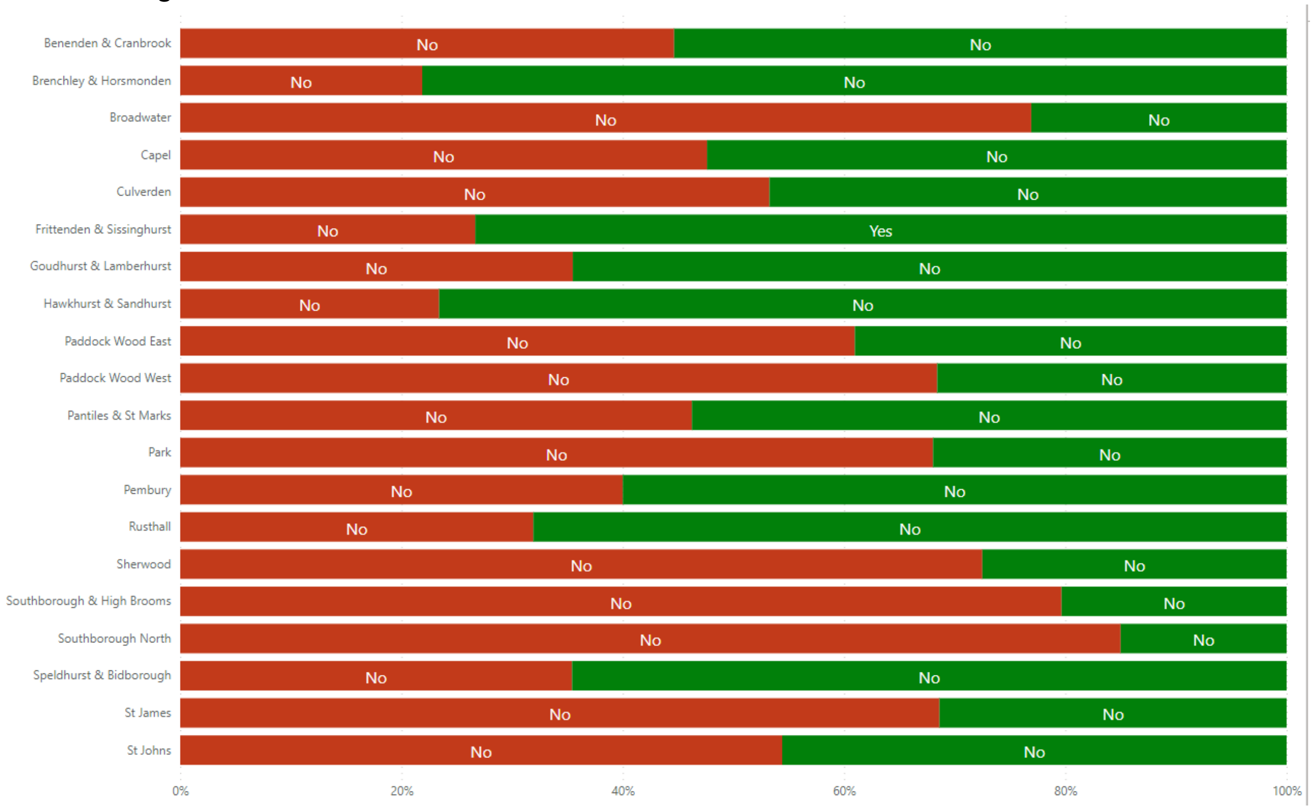

Figure 23 Which wards felt their nearest village or town was vibrant

Safety

We asked respondents how safe their local area was. 54% (818) of respondents felt that their area was Quite safe.

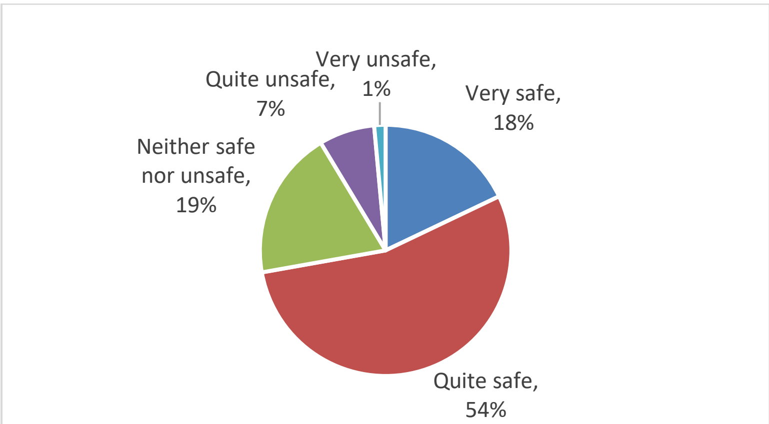

Figure 24 How safe residents felt their local area was

Results by ward were as follows:

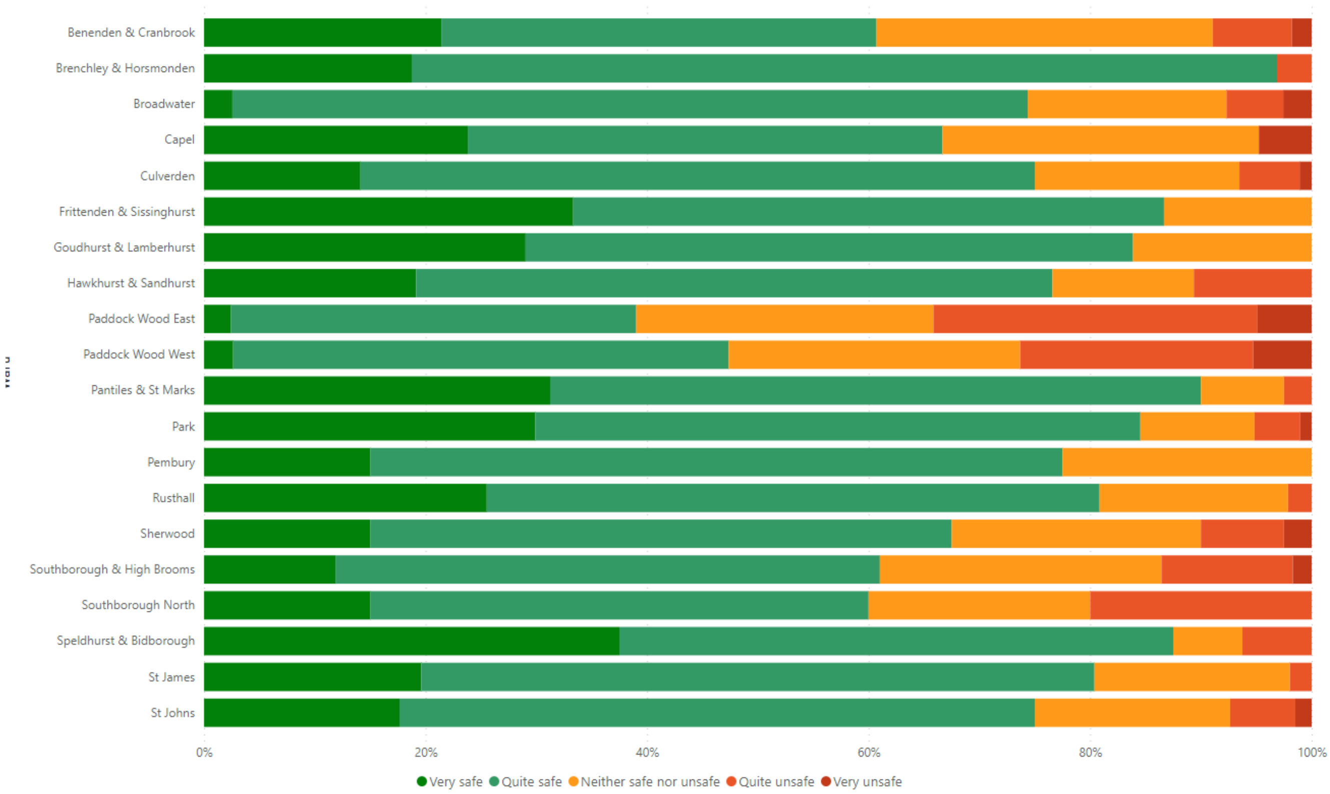

Figure 25 How safe respondents felt they were, split by ward

We also asked respondents what other concerns they had about the area they lived in. Chief among these were Roads, pavements and parking (37%, 557), Safety (20%, 301) and Housing and development (14%, 217).

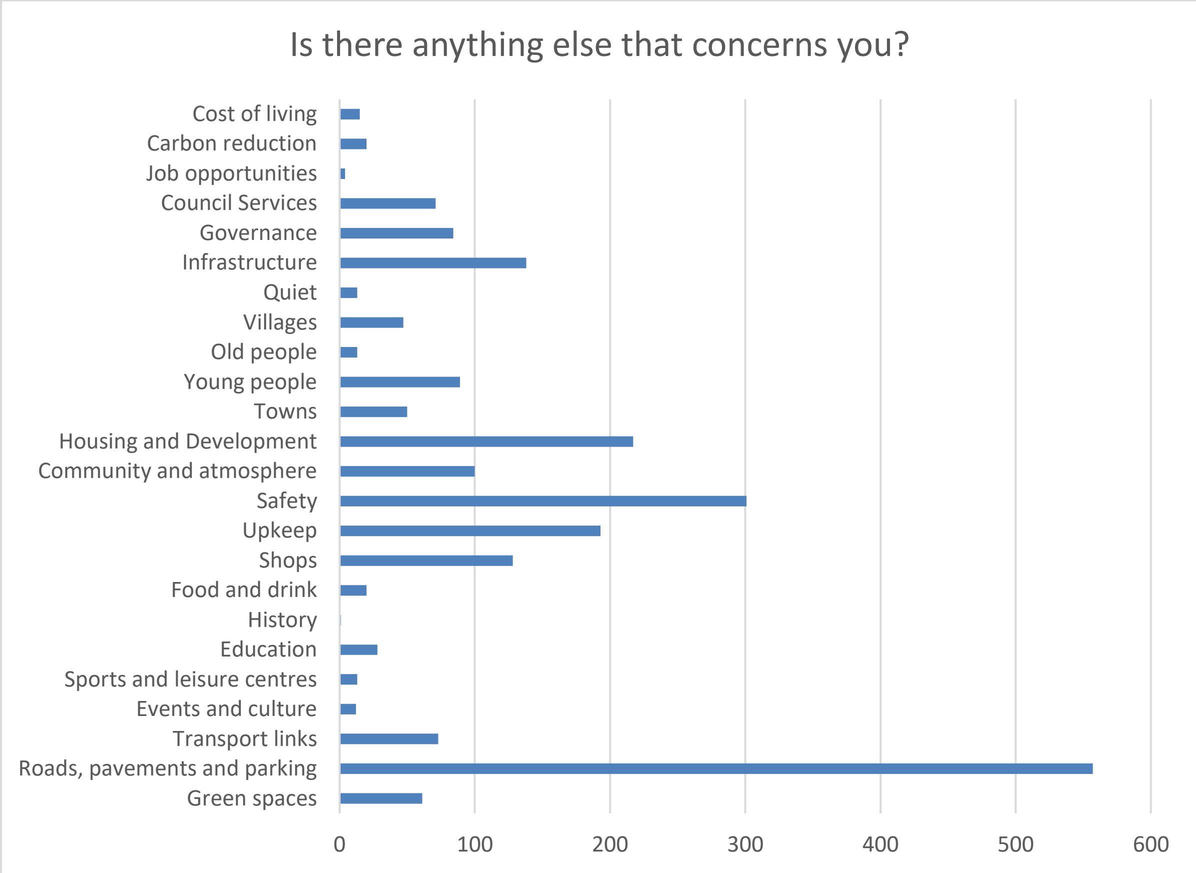

Figure 26 How respondents' concerns were divided between a range of categories

Breakdown of results by subgroups

When asked what they would like to see more of, it is interesting to note that Activities for young people was a more popular response with the older age groups (36-45, 50%,79, 45-65, 45%, 99) than with younger age groups (17-25, 20%,4, 26-35, 28%, 23). Those in the 17-25 age group favoured Farmers' Markets (50%, 10) and those in the 26-35 age group favoured both Farmers' Markets (45%, 38) and Events (37%,31).

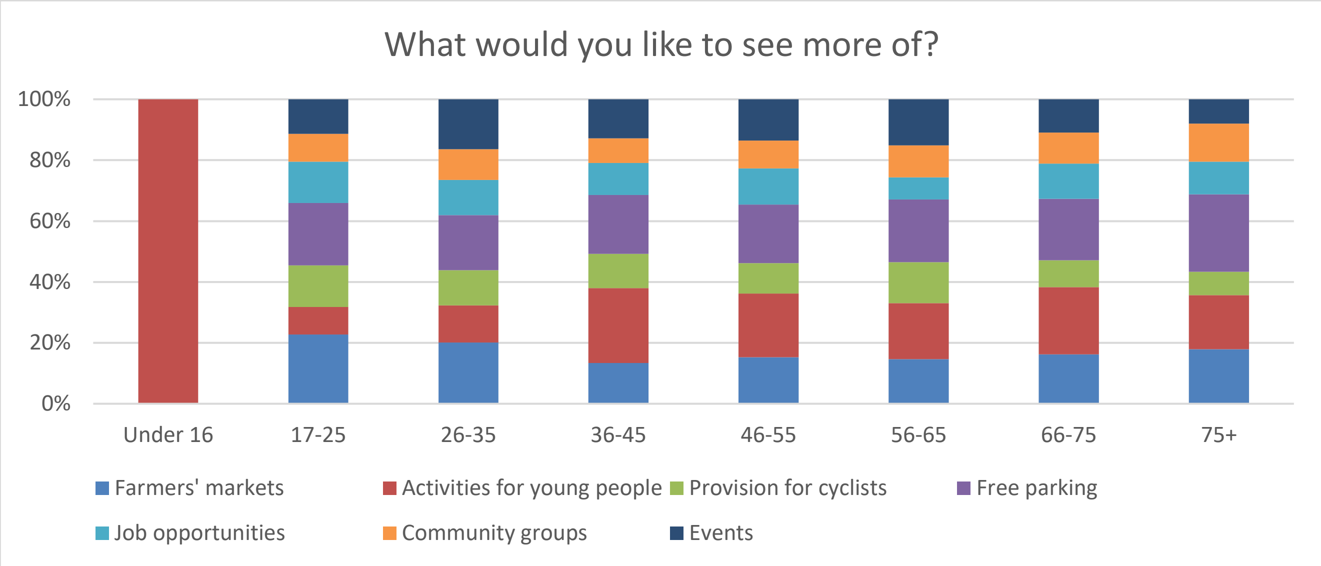

Figure 27 Respondents' answers to "What would you like to see more of" divided into age group

Your environment

Climate change

Two thirds of respondents (66%, 999) were confident that they were well informed about actions they could take to combat climate change.

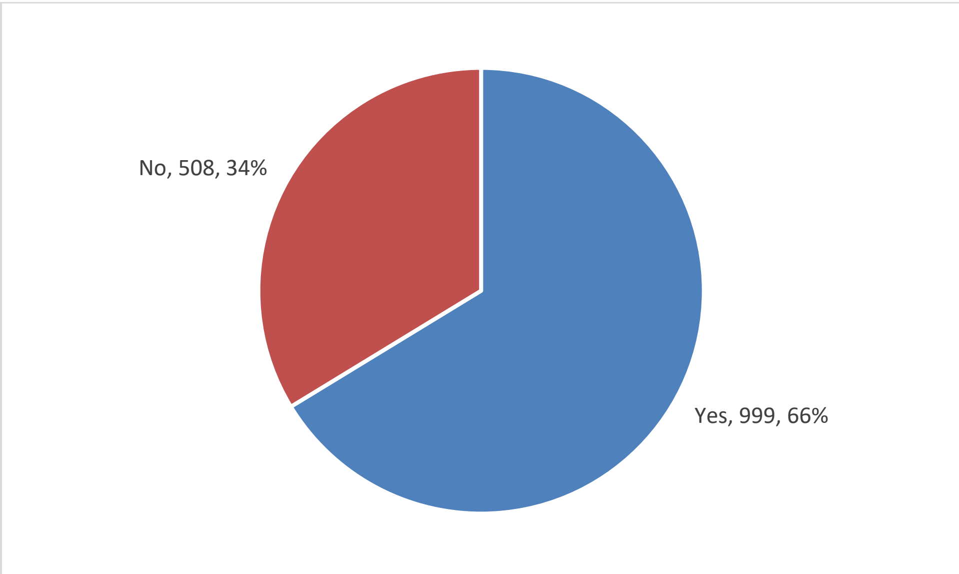

Figure 28 How many respondents felt they were well informed about climate change

Respondents were provided a list of options for ways they might combat climate change on an individual level. 65% (973) said they would Reduce waste (especially food), 58% (874) said they would Reduce energy consumption and 44% (656) said they would Change their diet.

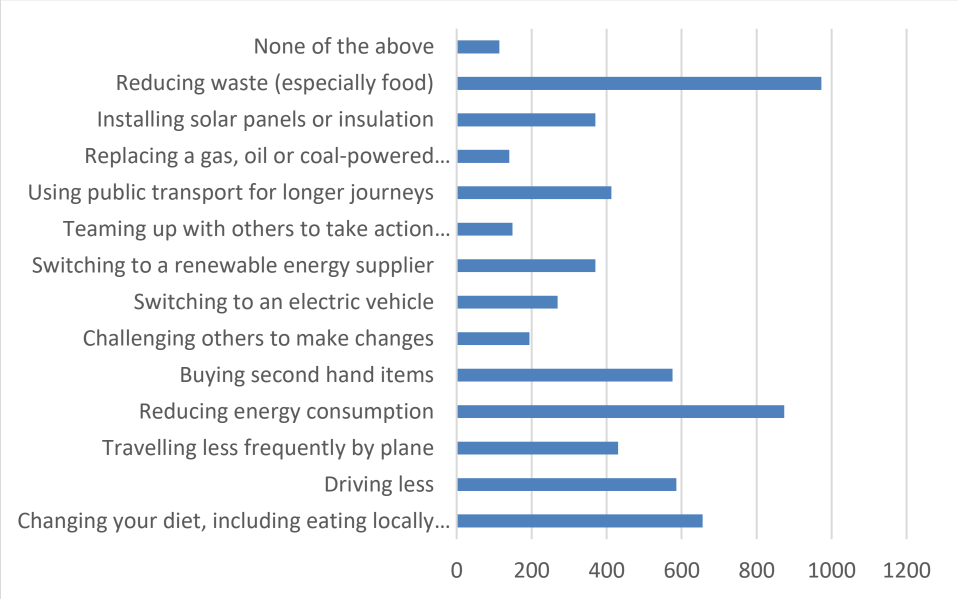

Figure 29 What actions respondents were willing to take to combat climate change

We asked respondents if they would be willing to pay more to address the challenges of climate change. 58% (876) responded No.

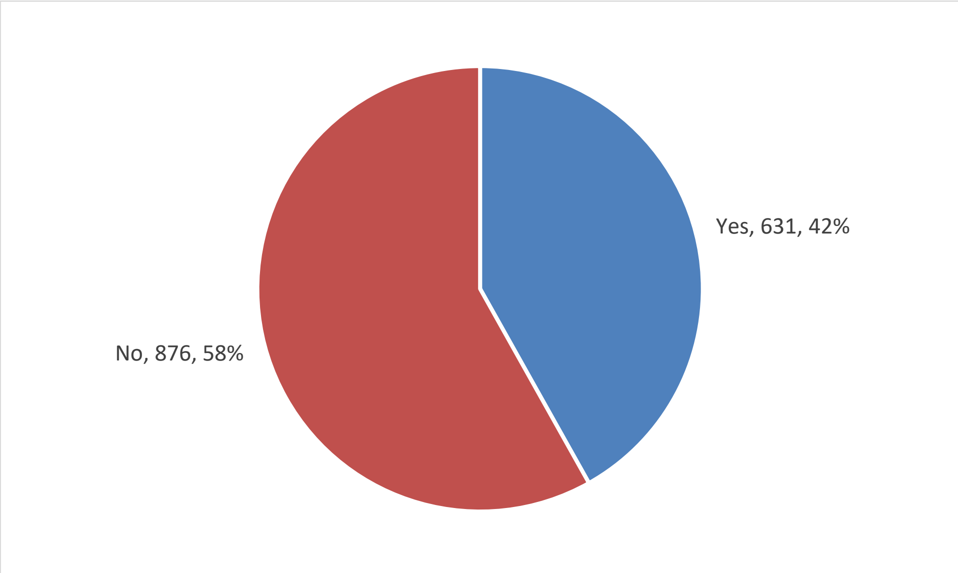

Figure 30 How many respondents would or would not pay more to address the challenges of climate change

Travel

In terms of travel, respondents said they travelled more on foot for journeys of less than one mile (78%,1183), but for all other lengths of journey, respondents travel predominantly by car (1 to 3 miles, 54% (809), 3 to 5 miles, 79% (1196), 5 to 10 miles, 82% (1237), More than 10 miles, 70% (1050).

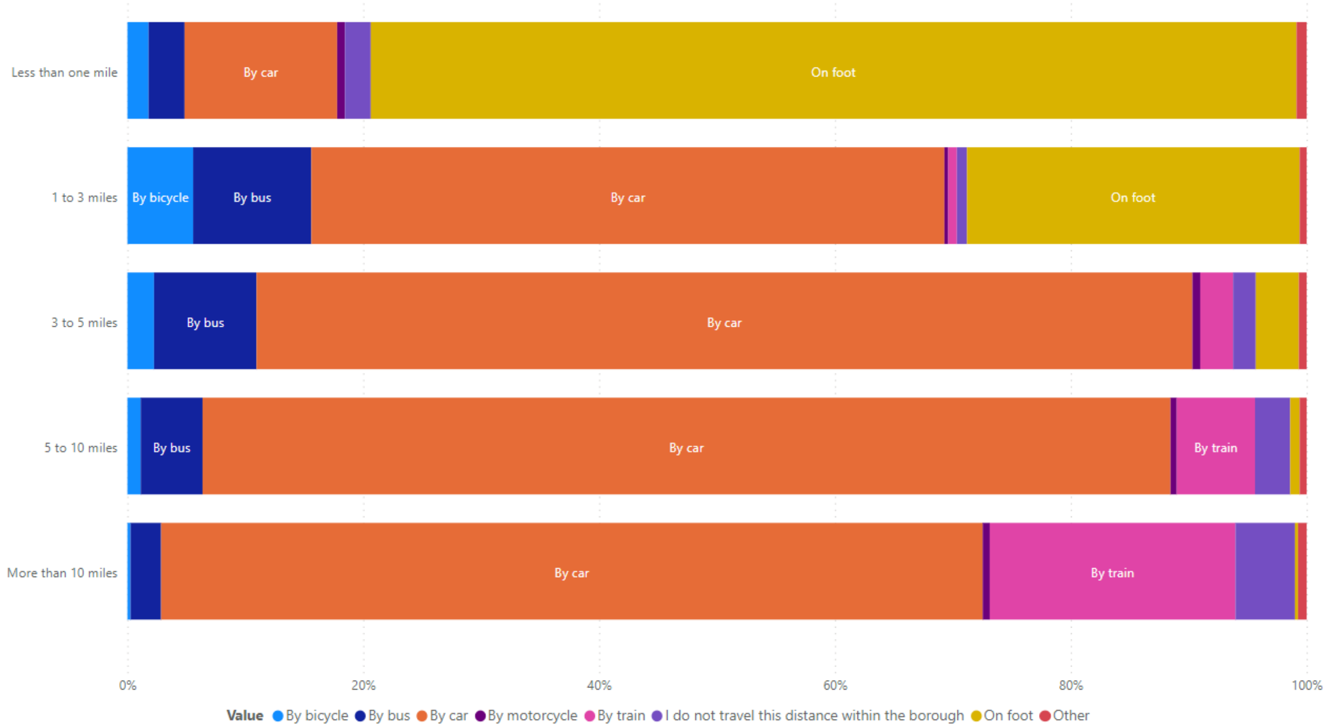

Figure 31 How residents would travel different distances within the borough

Respondents were asked whether their local area was accessible on foot or by bicycle, 76% (1133) of respondents responded Yes:

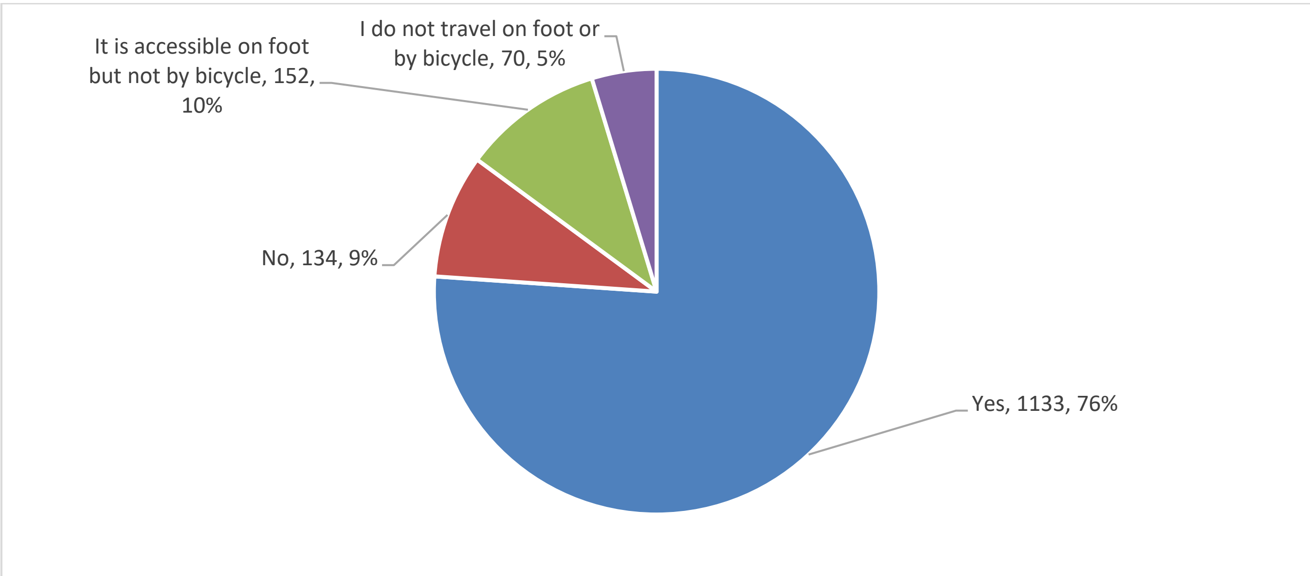

Figure 32 Whether respondents considered their local area to be accessible on foot or by bicycle

We asked respondents if they felt comfortable travelling on foot or by bicycle in their local area, 49% said Yes.

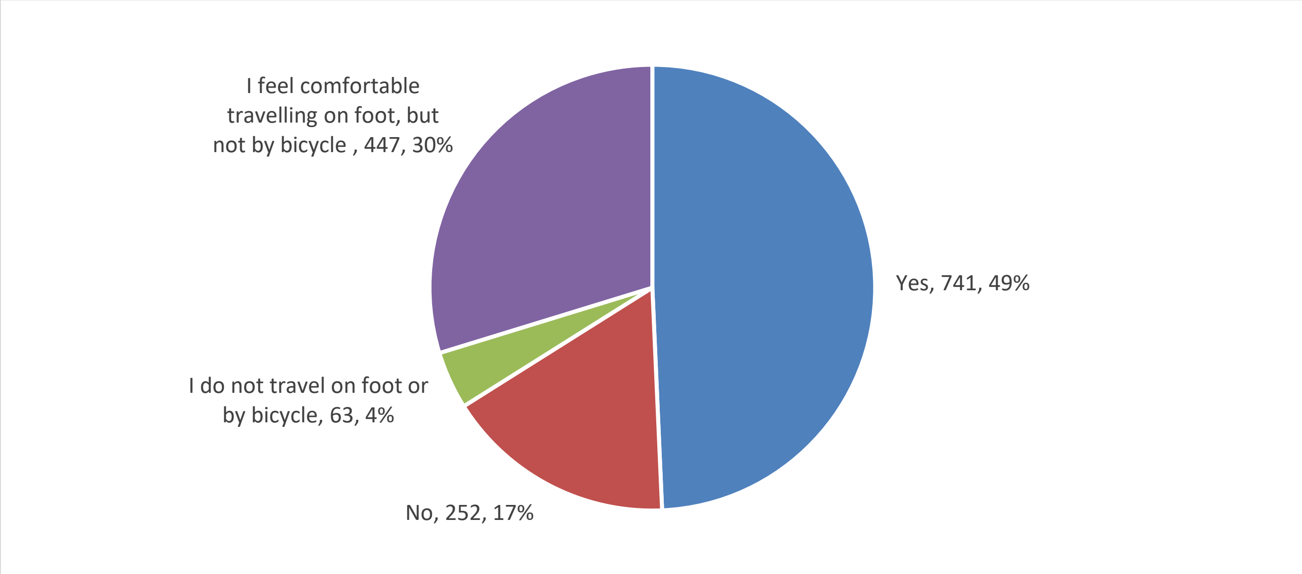

Figure 33 Whether respondents felt comfortable travelling in their local area on foot or by bicycle

Breakdown of results by subgroup

Older age groups were slightly more confident than younger age groups that they were informed of actions they could take to combat climate change, 74% (157) of 66-75 year olds and 70% (64) of respondents aged 75+ answered Yes to this question. In contrast, only 43% (30) of respondents aged 26-35 answered Yes to this question. There were no significant differences between male and female responses to this question. The ward where respondents felt least informed of actions they could take to combat climate change was Brenchley and Horsmonden where 46% (8) said they were not well informed, while the most confident ward was Sherwood where 77% (33) said they felt well informed.

There was no significant difference between genders regarding paying extra for climate change, but 17-25 year olds were more likely to say no than any other age groups (31%,5).

Housing and homes

Affordable housing

When asked the following question:

Cost of housing is not the only factor when considering the ‘affordability’ of an area; how much do you think that each of the following factors influences people’s decision to move into or stay in the borough?

And provided the following options, which respondents ranked from significant to insignificant:

Costs of commuting

Costs of schooling (travel, uniform etc.)

Cost of leisure facilities

Cost of parking and accessing retail

Quality of employment opportunities

The results were as follows:

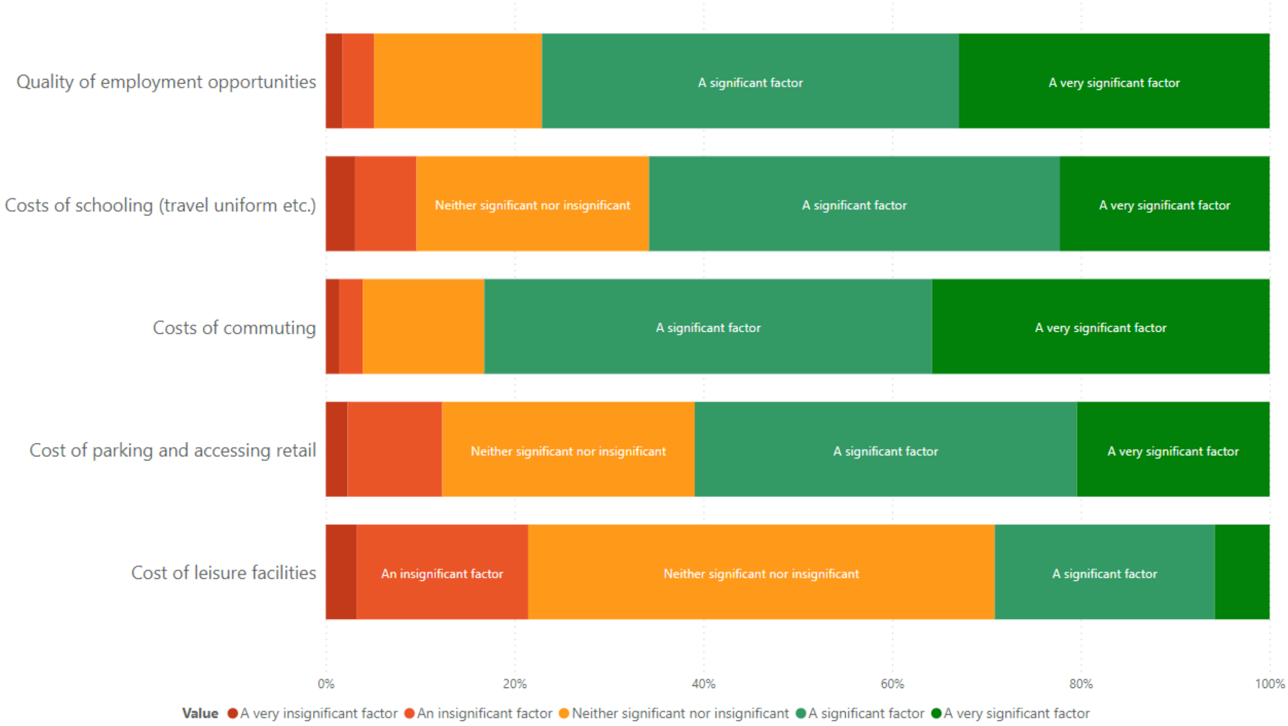

Figure 34 How significant residents felt a range of factors were in influencing people's decision to move into or stay in the borough

Overall, all these factors were rated as significant factors apart from Cost of leisure facilities which was rated neither significant nor insignificant.

We also asked respondents what other factors they felt might influence this. The most common response was the availability of affordable housing, categorised below as Housing and development" (97, 6% of all responses, 15% of 641 comments provided), Transport (82, 5% of all responses, 13% of 641 total comments) and Safety (72,5% of all responses, 11% of 641 total comments).

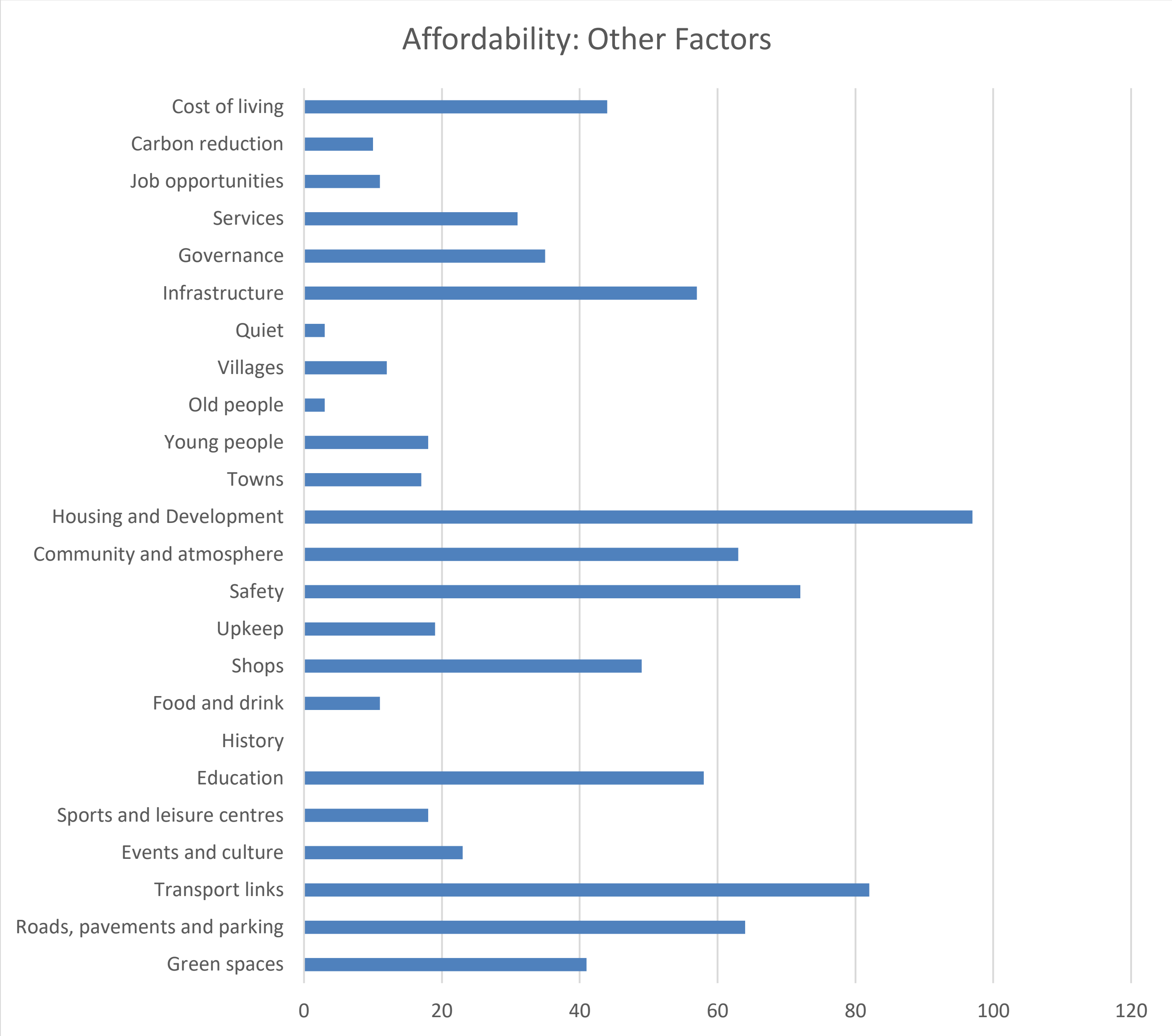

Figure 35 The themes that respondents' comments on "other factors" that might influence people's decision to move into or stay in the area were divided across

The comments on the top three topics were split across age demographics as below, with younger demographics more concerned with Transport links than Housing and development.

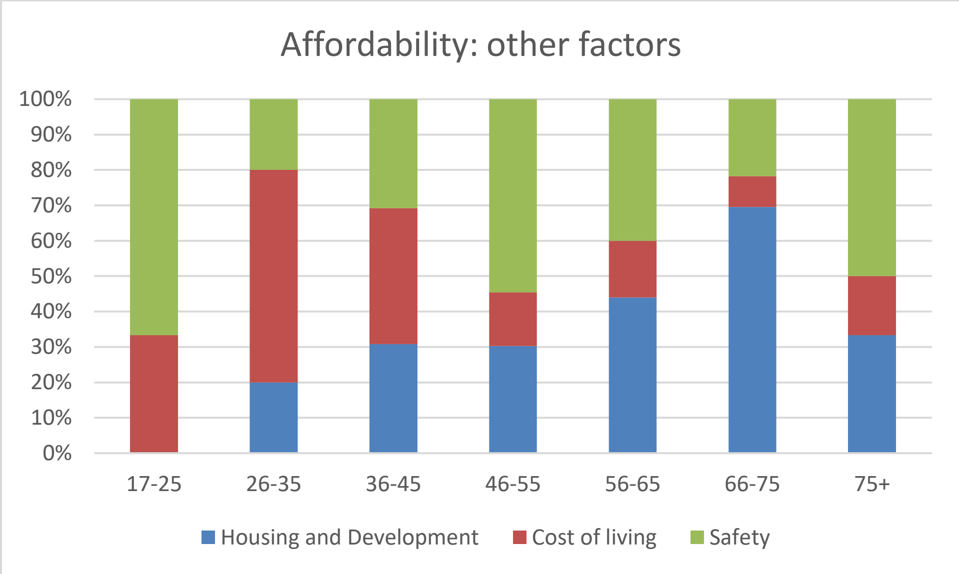

Figure 36 How the top three themes on respondents' comments related to other factors influencing people's decision to move into or stay in the area were divided between age group

We asked respondents what factors might influence their own housing choices over the next 10 years. 55% (829) of respondents had no plans to change housing situation. 19% (290) felt they would need a smaller property and 18% (276) said that access to open spaces and parks would influence their decision.

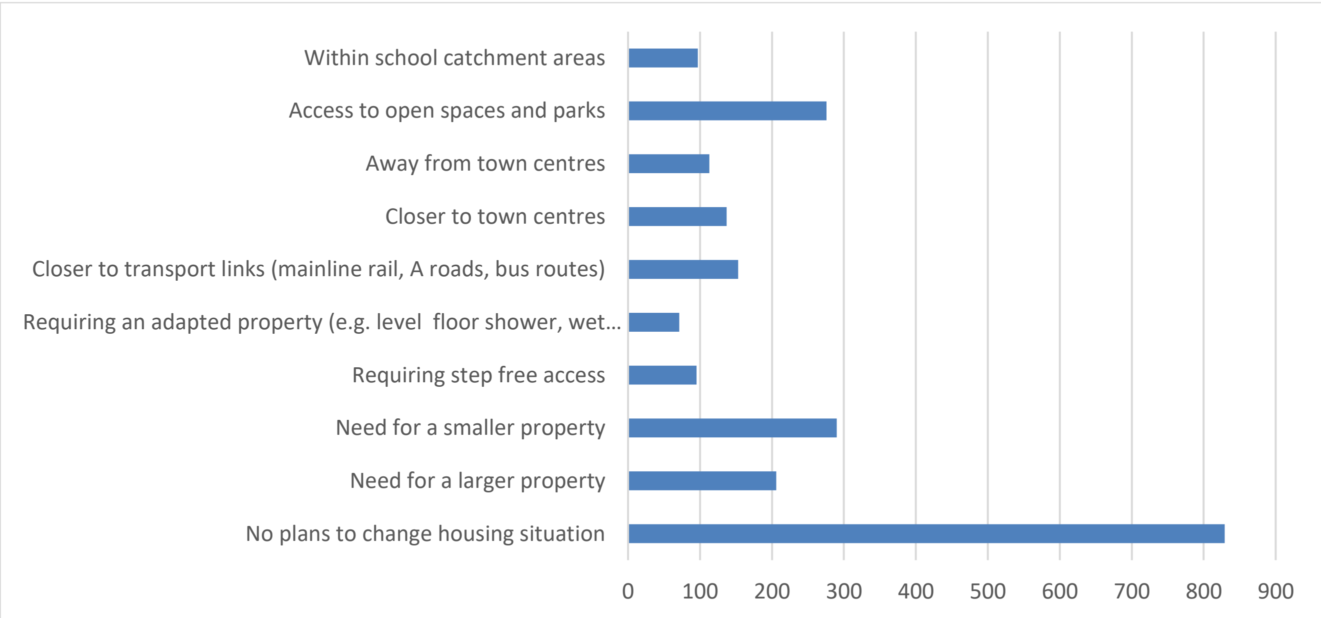

Figure 37 What factors might influence residents' decisions related to housing over the next five years

There was a substantial difference in responses from younger age groups to older age groups for this question. Younger age groups (16 - 35) were more likely to need larger properties (56, 31% of respondents in age group) within school catchment areas (32,18% of respondents in age group) while older respondents (65+) were less likely to have plans to change housing situation (174, 40% of respondents in age group).

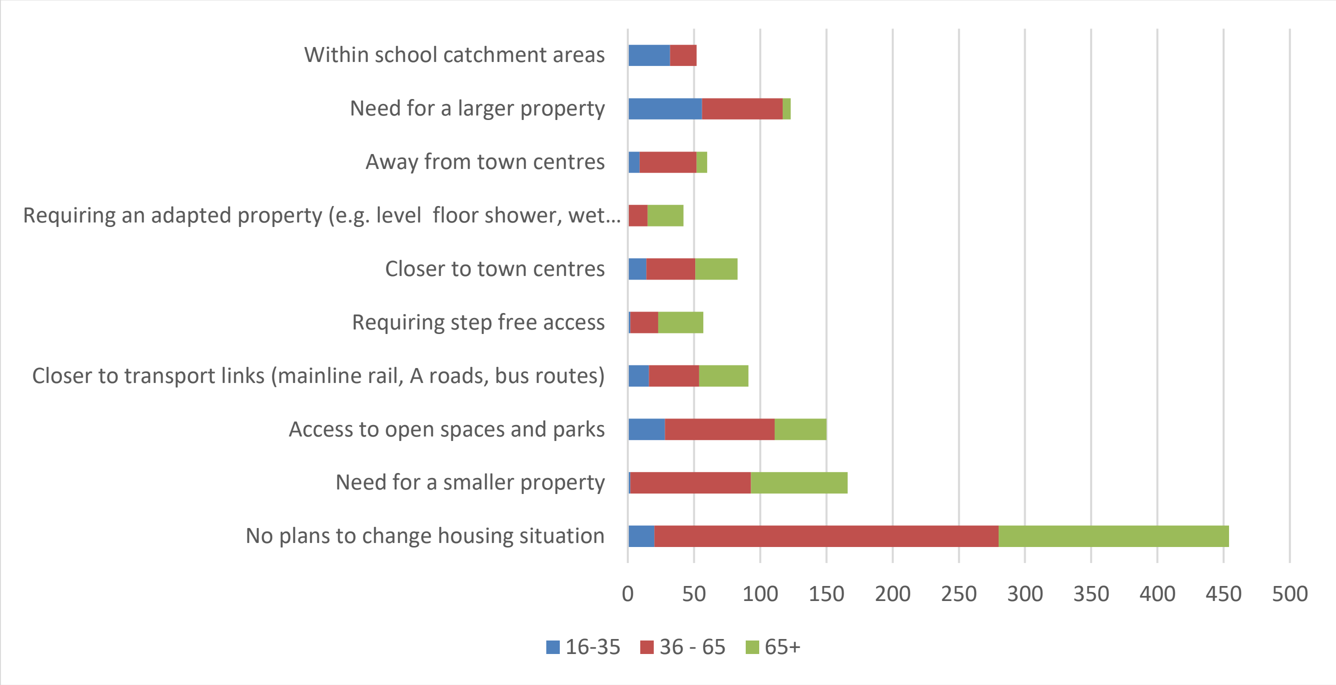

Figure 38 How the factors influencing respondents' housing decisions over the next five years were divided between age groups

Young people

We also asked respondents if they felt Tunbridge Wells was somewhere they could see young people remaining when they leave home.

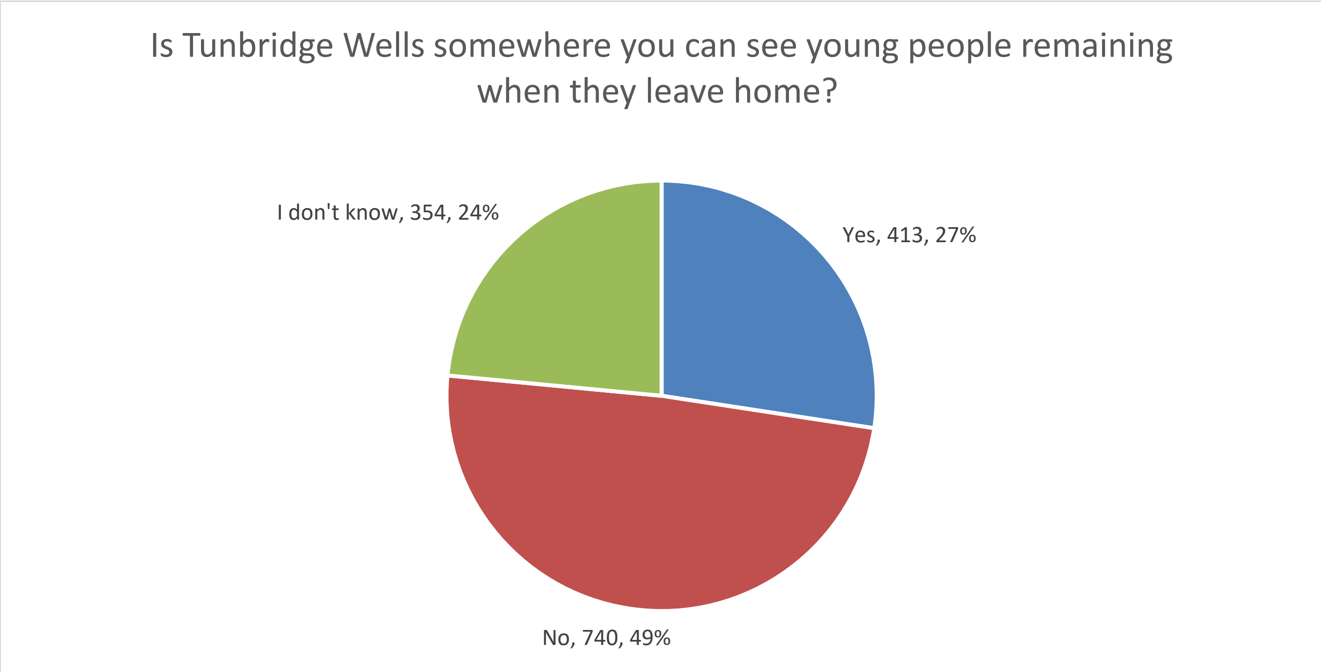

Figure 39 Whether respondents felt that Tunbridge Wells was somewhere they could see young people remaining when they leave home

These responses were consistent across all age groups and genders.

We asked those respondents who said “No” why young people wouldn’t stay in the borough, to which they gave responses related to the following themes. Most popular among these responses was Cost of living (395, 26% of all responses, 53% of comments), Housing and development (314, 21% of all responses, 42% of comments) and Job opportunities (222, 15% of all responses, 30% of comments.)

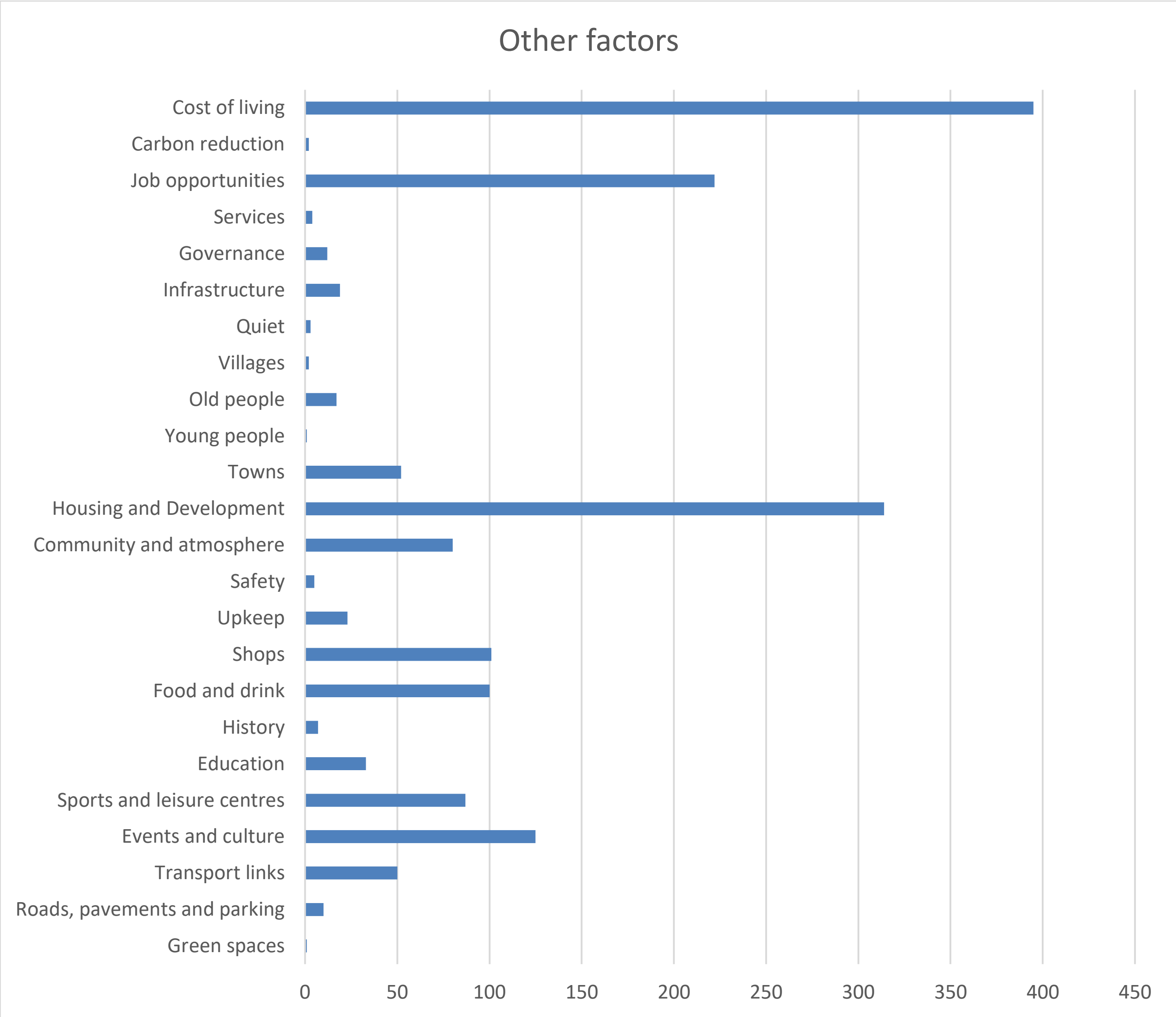

Figure 40 Other factors that respondents' comments related to when asked what other factors might influence young people's decision to stay in Tunbridge Wells when they leave home

Breakdown of results by subgroup

Beyond the demographic insights already mentioned above, there were no significant differences between age group and gender with regard to these questions.

Accessing the Council

Council communications

We asked respondents whether they would know how to get in contact if they had a question about a council service. 78% (1173) of respondents answered Yes.

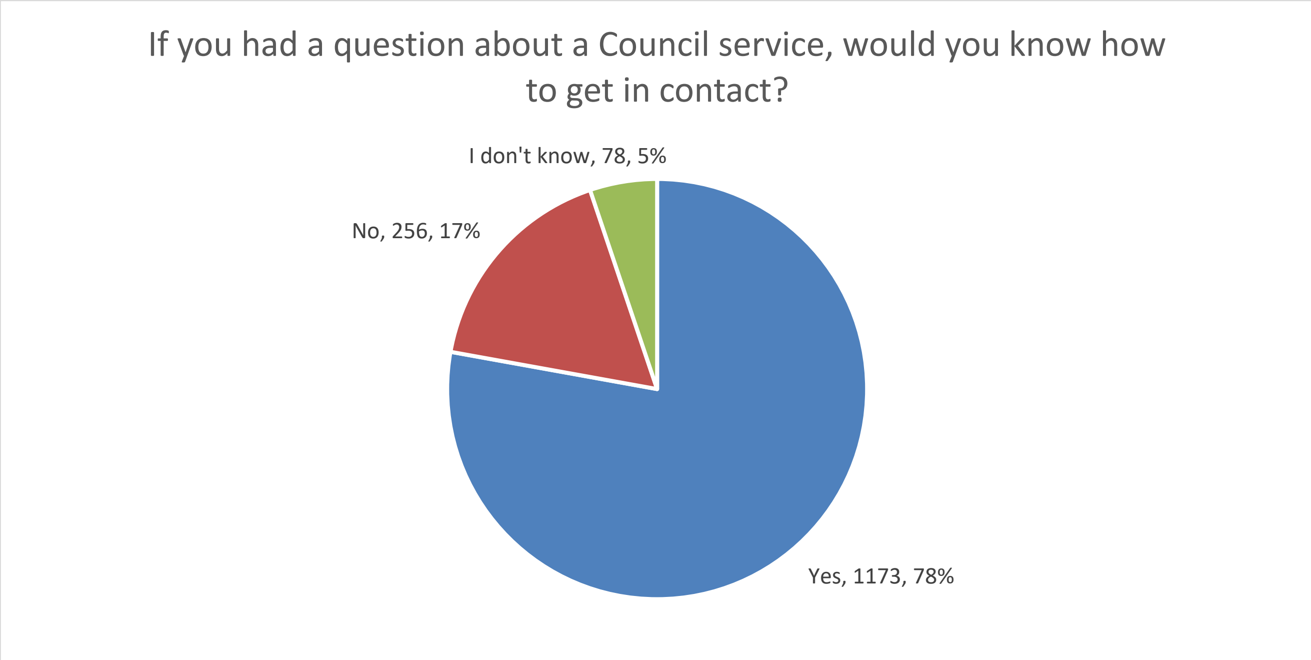

Figure 41 Whether respondents felt they knew how to get into contact if they had a question about a Council service

We also asked whether respondents felt that the Council kept them up to date on changes and news in the borough, to which 71% (1062) of respondents responded Yes.

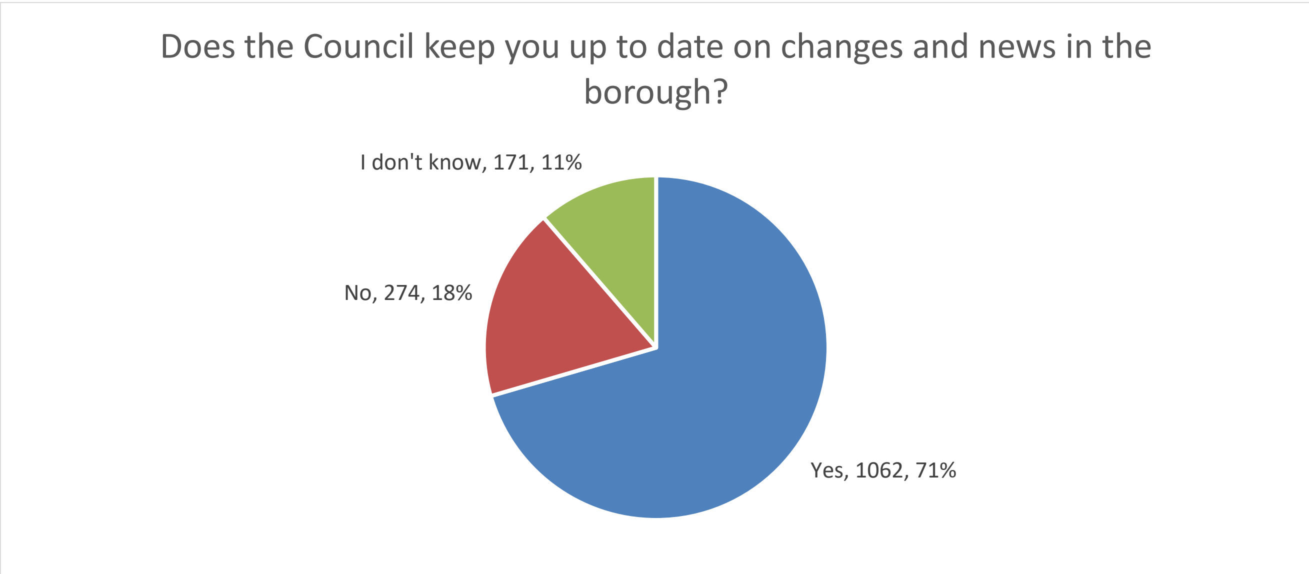

Figure 42 Whether respondents felt that the Council keeps them up to date on changes and news in the borough

We asked respondents how they find out about Council news, 48% (729) said they subscribed to the weekly email newsletter, 47% (704) read Local Magazine, and 30% (456) used the Council website.

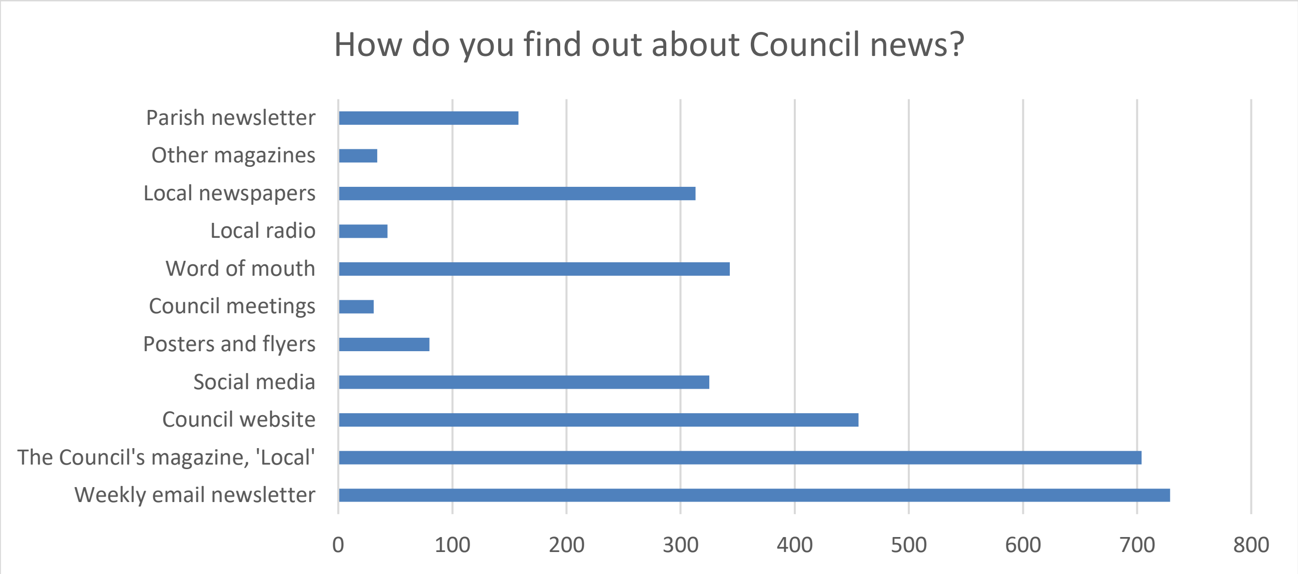

Figure 43 How respondents find out about Council news

We then asked how respondents *prefer* to find out about Council news, and 57% preferred the email newsletter, 35% preferred Local Magazine, and 25% preferred the Council website.

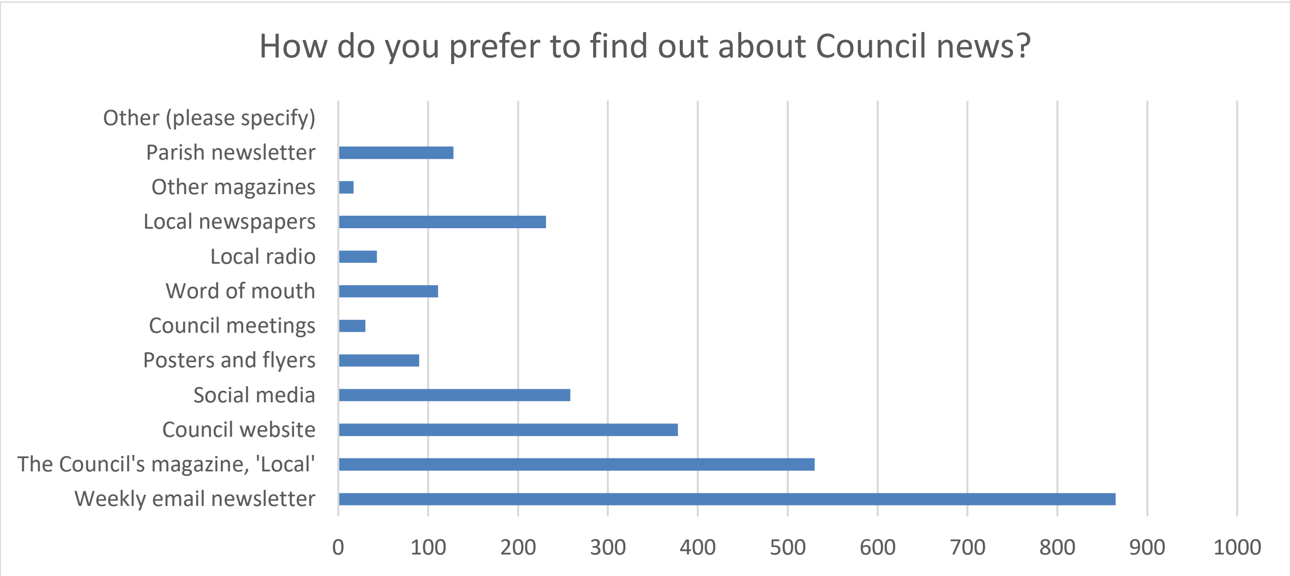

Figure 44 How respondents prefer to find out about Council news

Online services

86% (1302) of respondents had used the Council’s online services. These answers were consistent across all age groups, where similar proportions of all groups answered Yes and No.

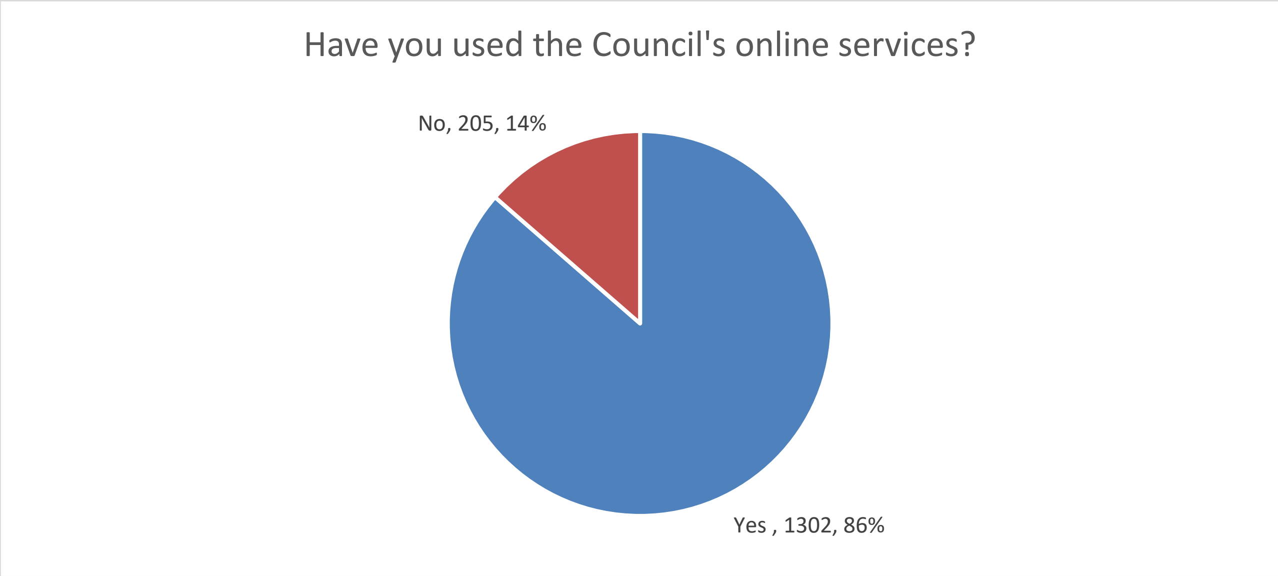

Figure 45 Whether or not respondents have used the Council's online services

Those respondents who responded that they had not used online services were asked what their barriers to using them were, and 48% said they choose not to use online services.

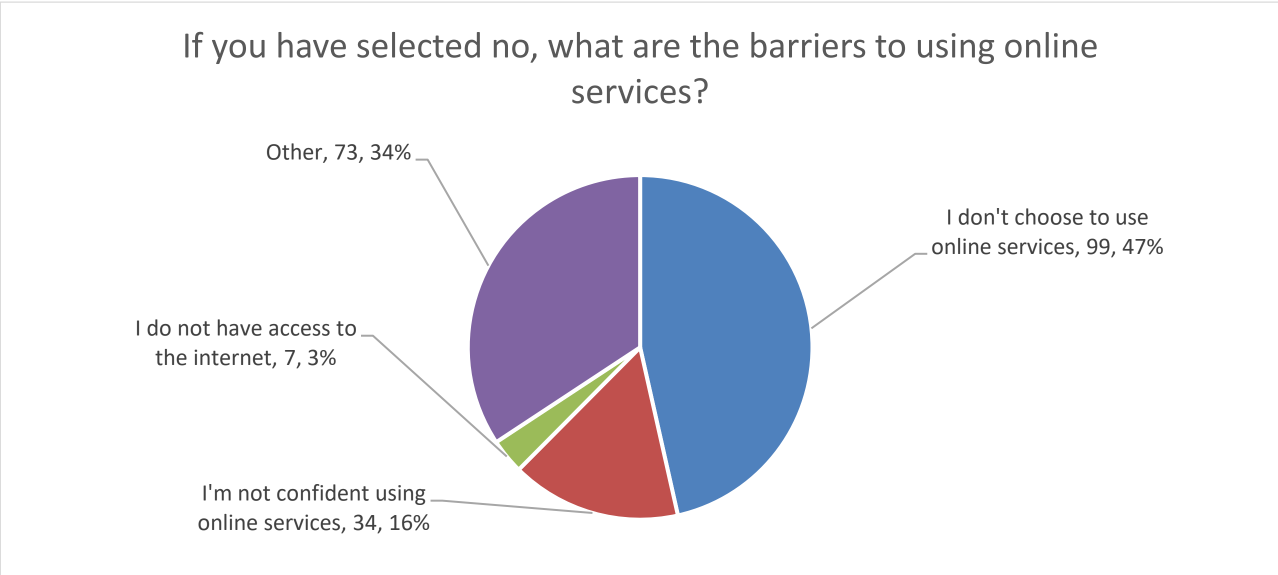

Figure 46 What the barriers to using online services were for those respondents who did not use these services

We asked respondents how they would get in touch if they needed to contact the Council. 79% (1197) would get in contact by email, 67% (1004) by phone, and 65% (975) via the website.

Of those who said there were other barriers to using online services, almost half said they have not needed to (34, 2% of all responses, 47% of all Other comments).

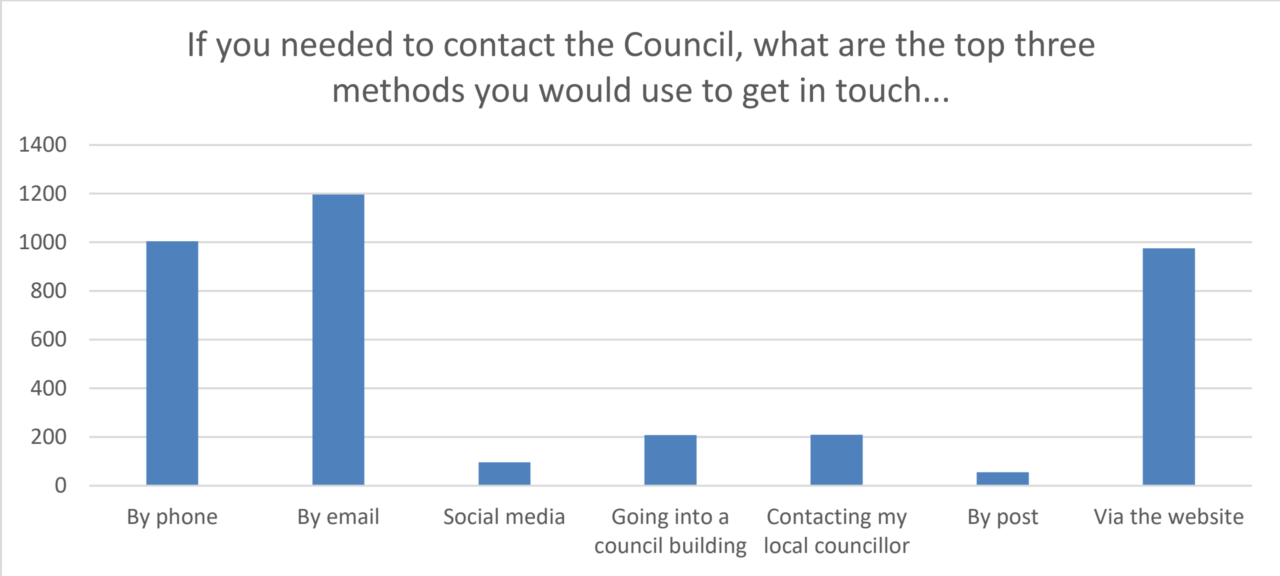

Figure 47 The top methods that respondents would use to get in touch with the Council

Breakdown of results by subgroup

Responses to questions about Council communications and online services were consistent across all age groups, apart from the final question about how respondents would get in touch, where women aged 17 – 25 were less likely to contact the council by phone (38%, 3, of women in this age group compared to 67% (1004) of all respondents).

Looking ahead

We asked respondents what one change they would make to make the Borough a better place, their responses were split across the following categories:

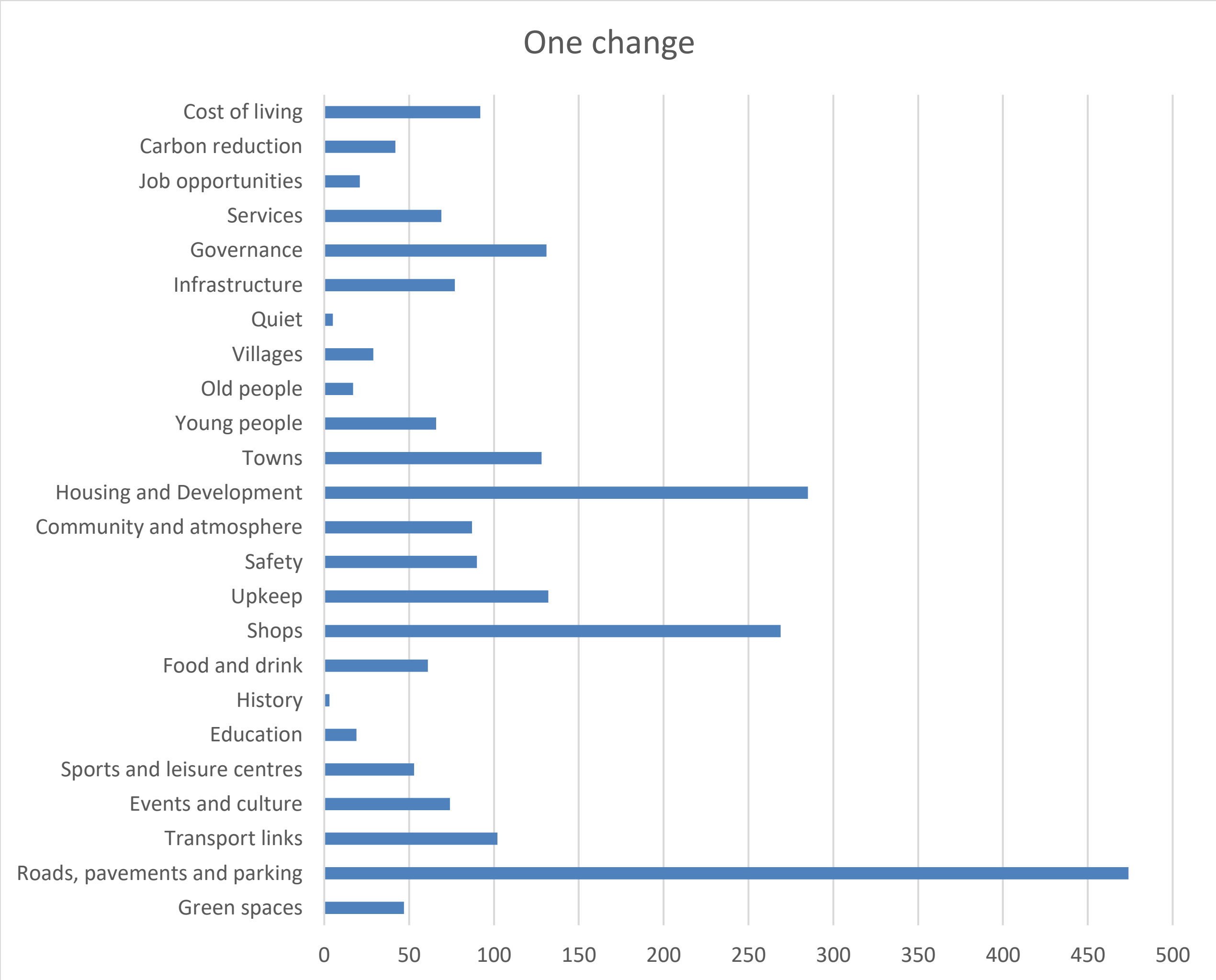

Figure 48 The way that responses to the question "What one change would make the borough a better place" were divided between a range of themes

The most common comments were related to Roads, pavements and parking (21%, 474), followed by Housing and development (12%, 285) and shops (12%, 269).

We also asked respondents what changes they would like to see to improve the borough over the next 3 years. Their responses were split across categories as follows:

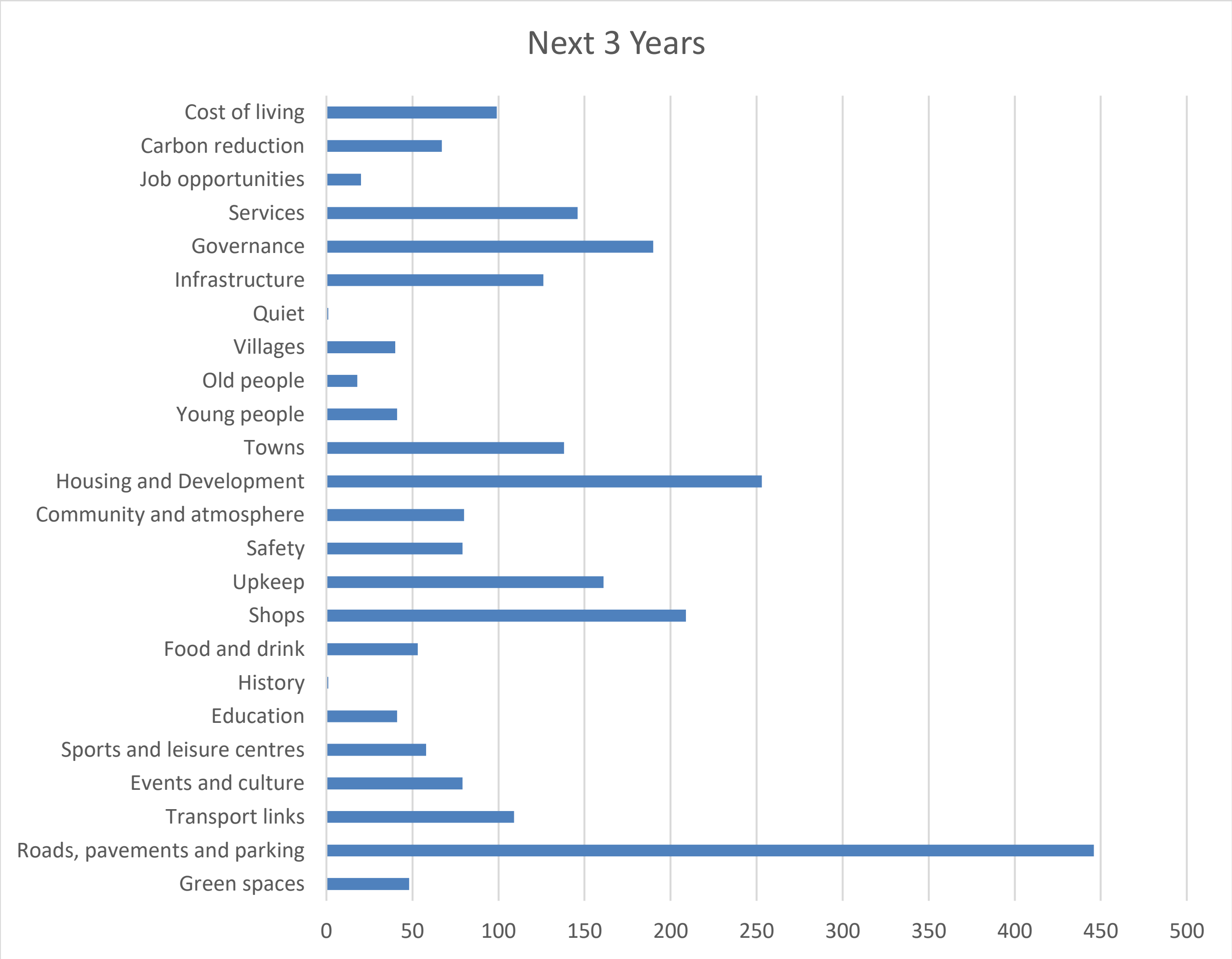

Figure 49 The way that responses to the question "What needs to change in the borough over the next three years" were divided between a range of themes

The top three categories were Roads, pavements and parking (19%, 446), Infrastructure, services and governance (14%, 341) and Housing and development (11%, 253).

Breakdown of results by subgroup

Responses to both questions in these categories were split evenly across wards, genders and age groups in line with overall responses.

– Ends –