Budget Consultation 2021

Report

October 2021;

Prepared For: **Stroud District Council**

Prepared By: **Future Focus Research**
www.futurefocusresearch.co.uk

Contents

1. Approach to research

1.1 Research objectives

Stroud District Council (SDC) commissioned Future Focus Research to conduct a survey of local residents and businesses as part of the annual budget consultation process. The survey examined their views on SDC spending priorities, local priorities, suggestions for future strategies, and satisfaction levels with the Council's activities. We have also compared the findings on some questions as far back as 2010.

1.2 Methodology

The research consisted of 500 ten minute telephone interviews with local residents and 200 ten minute telephone interviews with local businesses.

For the resident survey, all interviews were conducted with a representative sample of residents aged 18 and over who live in a household where Council Tax is paid to Stroud District Council. The sample was based on the quota controls below, which reflect the demographic makeup of the Stroud District Council area. In addition, to ensure the views were obtained from individuals from all areas of the district, we targeted a proportionate number of interviews in each of the local areas, as follows:

- Gloucester Border Areas
- Stroud Central
- Stroud Border Areas, including Nailsworth
- Stonehouse
- Dursley
- Wotton-Under-Edge
- Berkeley

These areas are grouped together based on the Royal Mail local area postcodes - see Appendix A for details of the postcodes. In addition to area, quotas were also set on age and gender as shown in table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1: Age and Gender quotas

Gender	
Male	49%
Female	51%
Total	**100%**
Age	
18 - 34	21%
35 – 54	37%
55 – 74	31%
75+	11%
Total	**100%**

For the business survey, quotas were set in terms of business size (based on number of employees) as follows:
- 140 interviews with businesses with less than 10 employees; and
- 60 interviews with businesses with 10 or more employees.

Fieldwork was conducted 6th September – 3rd October 2021.

Both questionnaires were designed in conjunction with the Council to ensure the research was able to deliver the intended objectives. Interviews were conducted by a team of trained interviewers.

A sample size of 500 gives a margin of error of +/-4.4% at the 95% confidence interval. Therefore, if 50% of respondents give an answer to a question, we can be sure that the true value lies somewhere between 45.6% and 54.4%. A sample size of 200 gives a margin of error of +/-6.9% at the 95% confidence interval. Therefore, if 50% of respondents give an answer to a question, we can be sure that the true value lies somewhere between 43.1% and 56.9%.

Please note where charts do not add up to 100 this is due to one of two reasons:
- The question was a multiple choice and respondents may have given more than one answer
- Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage and therefore the total presented in the chart may sum to slightly more or less than 100%.

1.3 Who did we interview?

1.3.1 Resident Survey

The profile of the 500 interviews is shown in table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2

Area	**%**	**Number of respondents**
Gloucester Border Areas	16%	80
Stroud Central	26%	132
Stroud Border Areas	19%	95
Stonehouse	10%	49
Dursley	15%	77
Wotton-under-Edge	8%	38
Berkeley	6%	29
Gender		
Male	48%	242
Female	51%	253
No binary	1%	4
Prefer not to say	<1%	1

Age		
18 – 34	21%	103
35 – 54	37%	183
55 – 74	31%	153
75+	11%	53
Prefer not to say	2%	8
Disability		
Yes	11%	56
No	86%	429
Prefer not to say	3%	15
Working status		
Employed in Stroud district	34%	171
Employed outside Stroud district	12%	61
Unemployed and actively looking for paid employment	10%	50
Unemployed but not looking for paid employment	2%	9
Retired	34%	169
At school/college/university	6%	30
Other (e.g. house person, carer)	1%	7
Prefer not to say	1%	3
Ethnicity		
White or White British	89%	444
Other	11%	54
Prefer not to say	<1%	2
Total	**100**	**500**

Where there are differences between any of the demographics, these have been highlighted in the report. Caution needs to be taken with some sub-analysis due to small base sizes, particularly in relation to BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic). These are highlighted as indicative findings only and should not be treated as being statistically significant.

1.3.2 Business Survey

The profile of the 200 interviews is shown in table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3

Business Sector	%	No. of responses
Retail and Wholesale	45	89
Hospitality and Leisure	16	32
Manufacturing and Engineering	6	12
Professional Services	5	10
Creative services & media	4	8
Personal Services	4	8
Business Services	3	6
Health and Social Work	3	6
Travel and Tourism	3	6

Real estate	3	6
Education	3	5
Transport, storage and distribution	2	4
Agriculture and Fishing	2	4
Construction and Building Services	2	4
Number of employees	**%**	**No. of responses**
One	6	12
2 – 4	25	50
5 – 9	39	78
10 – 25	26	51
26 – 50	4	7
51 - 100	1	2
Total	**100**	**200**

Where there are differences between businesses of different sizes (less than 10 employees v 10 or more), these have been highlighted in the report, although caution should be taken due to the small sample size.

2. Summary

This section provides an overview of the findings of this survey:

2.1 Residents Survey

Satisfaction and priorities

- 94% are *satisfied with their local area as a place to live* (94% in 2020).
- 75% are *satisfied with the way SDC runs things* (81% in 2020).
- 68% agree that *services have been maintained to a good standard* (75% in 2020).
- 65% are satisfied that *SDC is working to improve the environment* (67% in 2020).
- 63% agree that they *get value for money from SDC* (64% in 2020).
- 57% agree that *SDC is business like and efficient* (63% in 2020).
- The issues that were considered to be the most important and should be a focus for SDC was *leisure centres/parks/open spaces* (42%) followed by *housing* (39%) and *waste and recycling collection* (35%).
- 93% rated *promote economic recovery and work with local partners to support thriving market towns and rural vitality* as a *very high/high priority* (93% in 2020).
- 84% rated *support the development of more resilient communities and enable local people to live healthy and happy lives* as a *very high/high priority* (81% in 2020).
- 87% rated *work with partners and communities to tackle climate emergency and work towards becoming a carbon neutral district* as a *very high/high priority* (77% in 2020).
- 85% rated *increase the supply of affordable housing and help prevent homelessness* as a *very high/high priority* (72% in 2020).

Community Safety

- The biggest problems in local areas were considered to be *groups hanging around the street* (33% *very big* or *fairly big problem*) and *people being drunk/rowdy in public places* (21%).
- 95% felt safe (either very or fairly) during the daytime.
- 83% felt safe (either very or fairly) after dark.
- 62% agreed that their local area *is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together* (70% in 2020). Just under 1 in 5 (19%) disagreed (9% in 2020).
- 65% agreed that *people in your local area pull together to improve the local area* (73%) in 2020*).* Around 1 in 5 (22%) disagreed (12% in 2020).

Information from Stroud DC

- 66% think that SDC *acts upon the concerns of local residents* a *great deal* or a *fair amount* (70% in 2020).
- 70% think that *SDC keeps residents very or fairly well informed about the services and benefits it provides* (78% in 2020).

Communication

- The most preferred method of receiving information from the Council was *newsletter* (33%), *email* (24%), *website* (22%) and *letter* (15%).

Council Tax and other charges

- 45% would not accept any level of increase in Council tax (45% in 2020), whilst 23% would accept a 2% increase, 26% would accept a 2.5% increase and 6% would accept a 3% increase or more.
- 48% agreed that *the Council should levy a charge for any new services it introduces* (51% in 2020).
- 46% agreed that the *Council should consider reasonable increases in the level of existing charges* (40% in 2020).
- 36% agreed that the *Council should not raise additional income through fees and charges* (32% in 2020).

Coronavirus Pandemic

- 66% said that the coronavirus pandemic has had a *negative impact* on their *lifestyle* (58% in 2020).
- When asked about other aspects of their life that has been impacted by coronavirus, the following percentages said that there had a been an *extremely* or *fairly negative* impact on these aspects:
  - *Mental health* (52% - 35% in 2020)
  - *Physical health* (48% - 33% in 2020)
  - Their *job* (33% - 27% in 2020)
  - *Financial situation* (21% - 22% in 2020)
  - *Diet* (32% - 20% in 2020)
- 68% either *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that *SDC had supported the community during the pandemic.*
- 65% *trust SDC* either *a great deal* or *a fair amount* (77% in 2020).
- 68% felt that *SDC keep them very or fairly well informed about local issues and changes to council services due to the pandemic* (73% in 2020).

2.2 Business Survey

Satisfaction and priorities

- 96% are *satisfied with their local areas as a place to do business* (96% in 2020).
- 79% are *satisfied that SDC is working to improve the environment* (77% in 2020).
- 75% agree that *services have been maintained to a good standard* (72% in 2020).
- 70% are *satisfied with the way SDC runs things* (63% in 2020).
- 63% agree that they *get value for money from SDC* (63% in 2020).
- 63% agree that *SDC is business like and efficient* (59% in 2020).
- 83% rated *promote economic recovery and work with local partners to support thriving market towns and rural vitality* as a *very high/high priority* (86% in 2020).
- 82% rated *increase the supply of affordable housing and help prevent homelessness* as a *very high/high priority* (78% in 2020).
- 80% rated *support the development of more resilient communities and enable local people to live healthy and happy lives* as a *very high/high priority* (76% in 2020).
- 79% rated *work with partners and communities to tackle climate emergency and work towards becoming a carbon neutral district* as a *very high/high priority* (68% in 2020).

- *Transport and parking* (50%), *police and crime prevention* (33%) *roads and highways* (26%) and *youth issues/employment/apprenticeships* (25%) were considered the most important services to businesses.

Information from Stroud DC

- 66% said they are *very well/fairly well informed about the services and benefits the Council provides* (70% in 2020).

Business Support Services

- The main issues considered to be affecting businesses were *rates* (42%), *staff* (41%), *Covid/another lockdown* (35%) and *customers* (31%).
- Awareness was highest for the *Chamber of Trade/Commerce* (94%) and the *Federation of Small Businesses* (87%).
- The issue considered to be the most important in terms of recovery of the local economy were *rates/rent/license fee issues* (60%).
- 82% were aware of the business grants, 40% had applied for a grant and the majority were happy with the process.

Contact with the Council

- 19% had contacted the Council recently, more commonly by *telephone* (68%). The majority were happy with the contact.

Coronavirus Pandemic

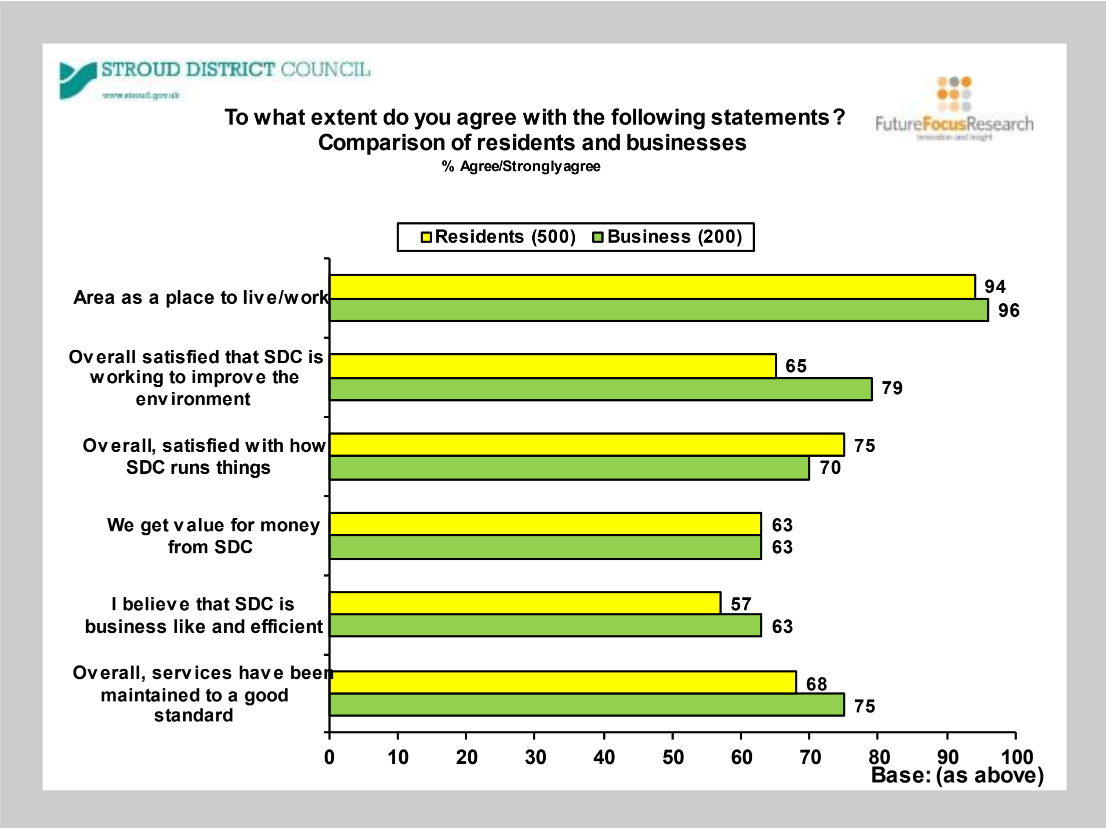
- 80% said that the coronavirus pandemic has had a *negative impact* on their *customers* (67% in 2020) and their *financial situation* (79% - 73% in 2020).
- When asked about other aspects of their business that has been impacted by coronavirus, the following percentages said that there had a been an extremely or fairly negative impact on these aspects:
  - *supply chain* (73% - 55% in 2020)
  - *employees* (75% - 53% in 2020)
- 47% were concerned about their *future business prospects* (45% in 2020).
- 39% were concerned about *customer relationships* (25% in 2020).
- 46% were concerned about their *relationship with suppliers* (25% in 2020).
- 69% were very or fairly satisfied with *the way SDC has responded to the coronavirus pandemic* (69% in 2020).
- 77% felt that they had been kept *very* or *fairly well informed about local issues and changes to Council services due to the pandemic* (72% in 2020).

3. Residents v Businesses

3.1 Opinions of Stroud DC

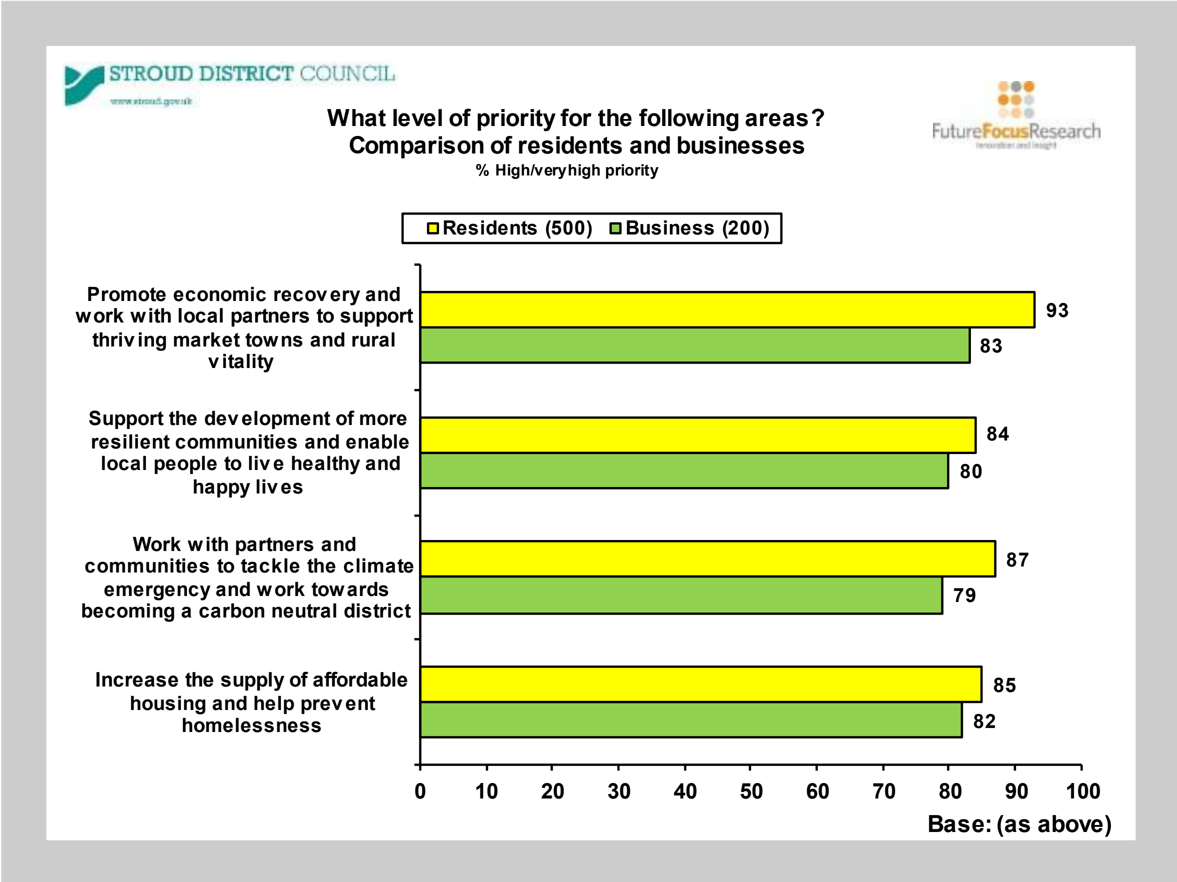
Opinions of residents and businesses were generally consistent with the exception that businesses were more likely to agree that they are *satisfied that SDC is working to improve the environment* (79% compared to 65% of residents). See figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1



There is a fair amount of consistency between residents and businesses in the level of priority given to each element of the Council's plan to support recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, with the exception of *promote economic recovery and work with local partners to support thriving market towns and rural vitality* (93% of residents rated is as a *high/very high priority* compared to 83% of businesses). See figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2


STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
What level of priority for the following areas? Comparison of residents and businesses
% High/very high priority
FutureFocusResearch
Residents (500)
Business (200)
Promote economic recovery and work with local partners to support thriving market towns and rural vitality
Support the development of more resilient communities and enable local people to live healthy and happy lives
Work with partners and communities to tackle the climate emergency and work towards becoming a carbon neutral district
Increase the supply of affordable housing and help prevent homelessness
93
83
84
80
87
79
85
82
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
Base: (as above)

4. Resident Survey

This section details the views and opinions from the resident survey, covering:

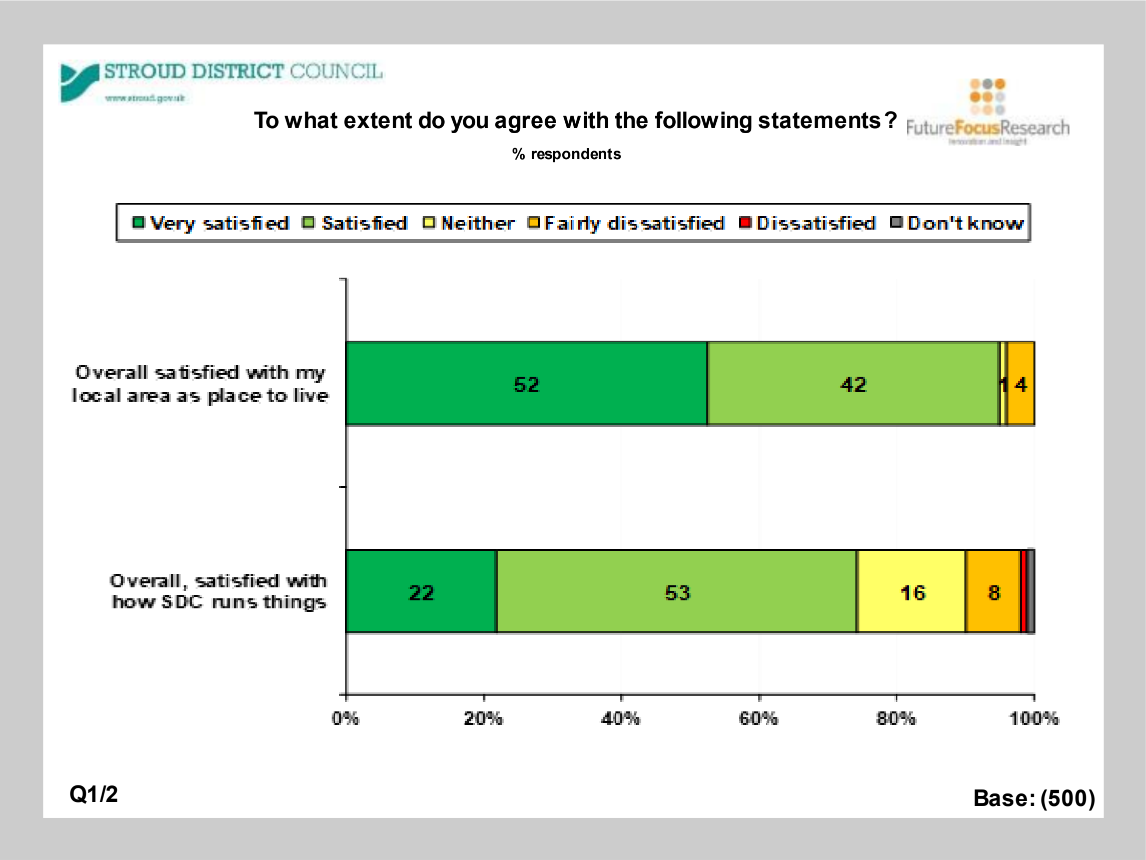
- Satisfaction and Priorities
- Information from Stroud DC
- Feeling of safety
- Council Tax
- Coronavirus Pandemic

4.1 Satisfaction and Priorities

The vast majority of respondents were *happy with their area as a place to live* (94% *very satisfied* or *satisfied*). See figure 4.1. Those aged 18 – 35 were the least satisfied (77%).

Residents were asked how satisfied they were *with the way Stroud DC runs things* and 75% said they were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied*. Again, younger residents (18-34s) were least satisfied (35%). BAME residents were less satisfied *with the way Stroud DC runs things* (41% compared to 79% of white residents).

Figure 4.1



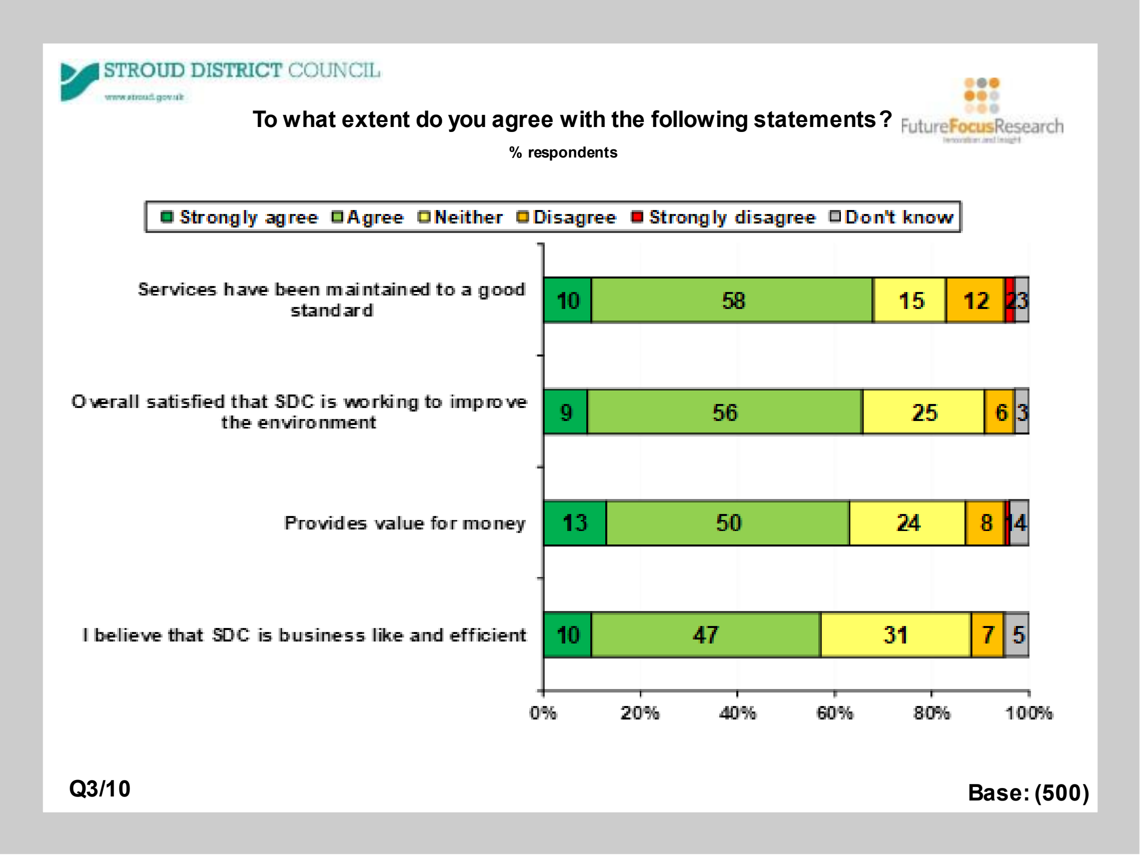
Residents were then asked to what extent they agreed with a range of statements (see figure 4.2 which is ranked in order of agreement).

Just under 7 in 10 agreed (either *strongly agree/agree*) that *services have been maintained to a good standard* (68%). Around two thirds agreed that *Stroud DC is working to improve the environment* (65%) and 63% agreed that *Stroud DC provides value for money*. The statement with the lowest percentage agreement was *Stroud DC is business like and efficient* (57%).

Those aged 18 – 34 were less likely to agree with all statements – *Stroud DC is business like and efficient* (20%), *SDC provides value for money* (24%), *services have been maintained to a good standard (25%)* and *Stroud DC is working to improve the environment* (25%).

BAME residents were less likely to agree that *Stroud DC provides value for money* (26%), *Stroud DC is business like and efficient* (33%), *Stroud DC are working to improve the environment* (37%), and that *services have been maintained to a good standard* (37%).

Figure 4.2



Comparing the 2021 findings with previous years, percentages have decreased slightly for some statements – *satisfaction with the way Stroud DC runs things* (81% to 75%), *services* *have been maintained to a good standard* (75% to 68%) and *SDC is business like and efficient* (63% to 57%). However, for the others the percentages have remained consistent. See figures 4.3 and 4.4.

Figure 4.3

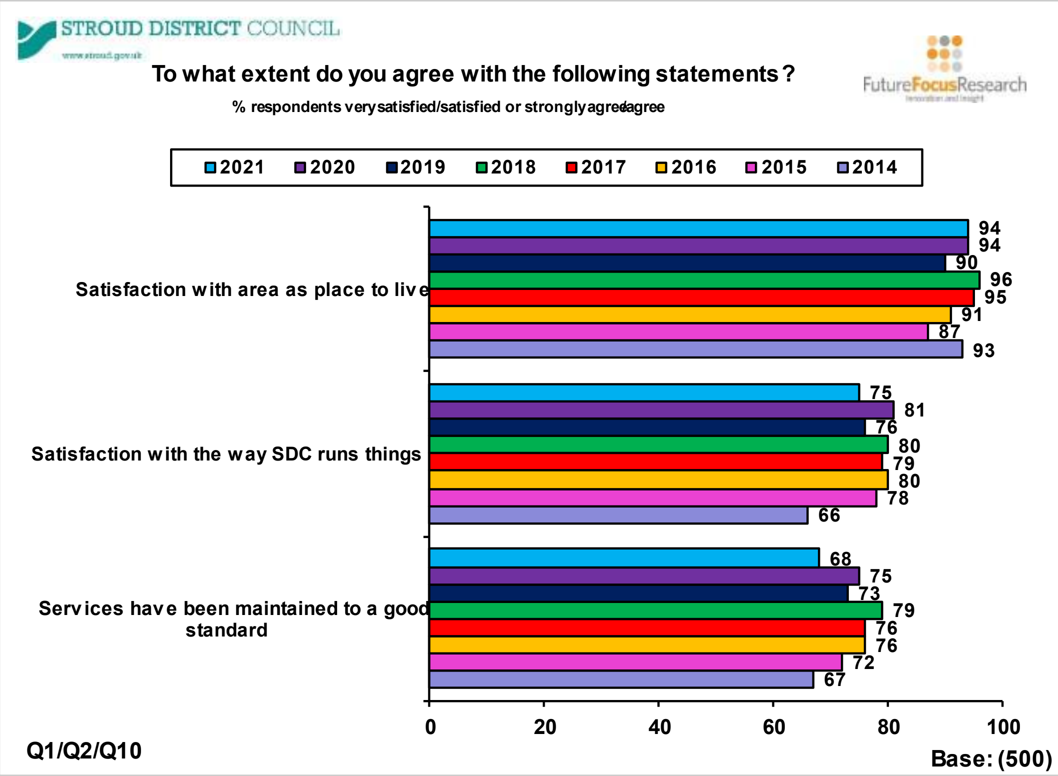
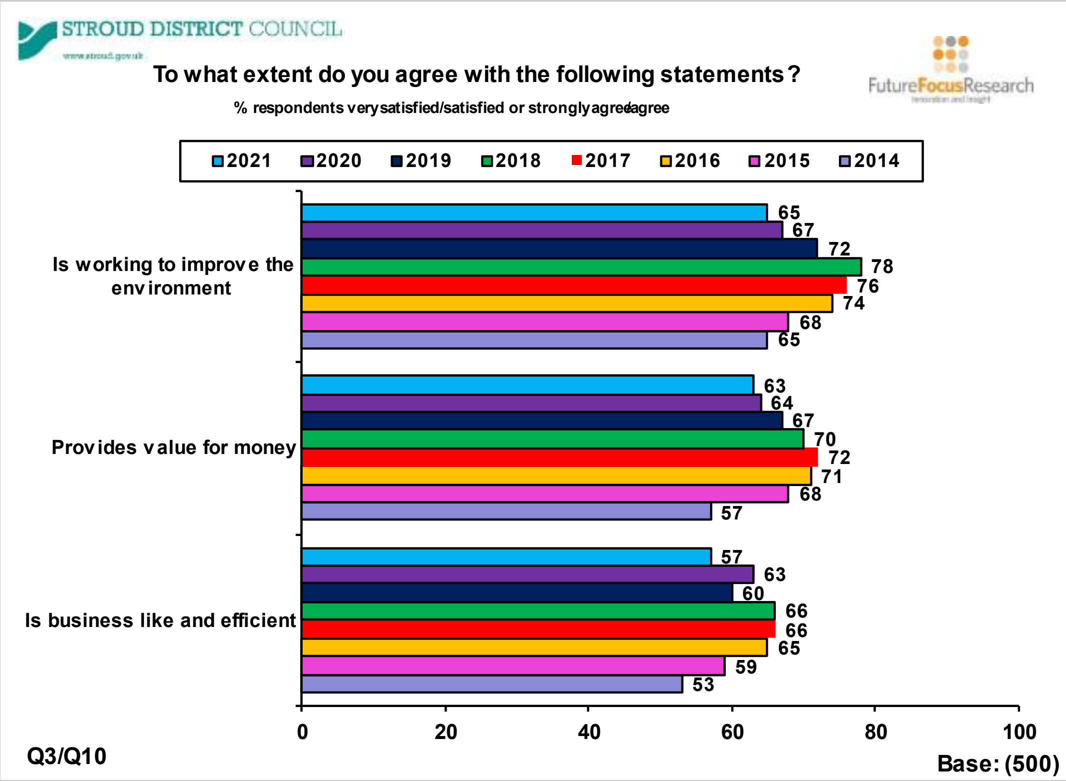
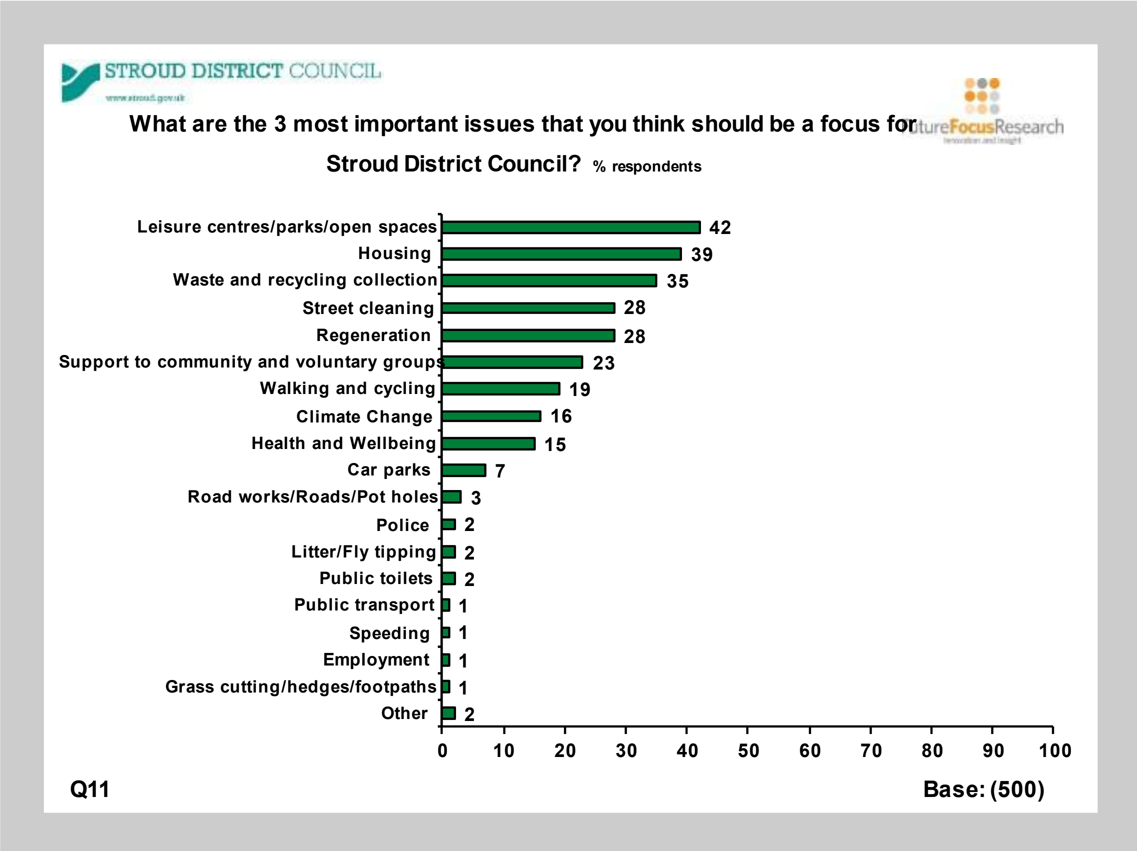


Figure 4.4


STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
FutureFocusResearch
To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
% respondents very satisfied/satisfied or strongly agree/agree
2021
2020
2019
2018
2017
2016
2015
2014
Is working to improve the environment
65
67
72
78
76
74
68
65
Provides value for money
63
64
67
70
72
71
68
57
Is business like and efficient
57
63
60
66
66
65
59
53
0
20
40
60
80
100
Q3/Q10
Base: (500)

Respondents were asked what were the three most important issues that should be a focus for SDC. The most popular mentions were *leisure centres/parks/open spaces* (42%), followed by *housing* (39%) and *waste and recycling collection* (35%). See figure 4.5

Figure 4.5



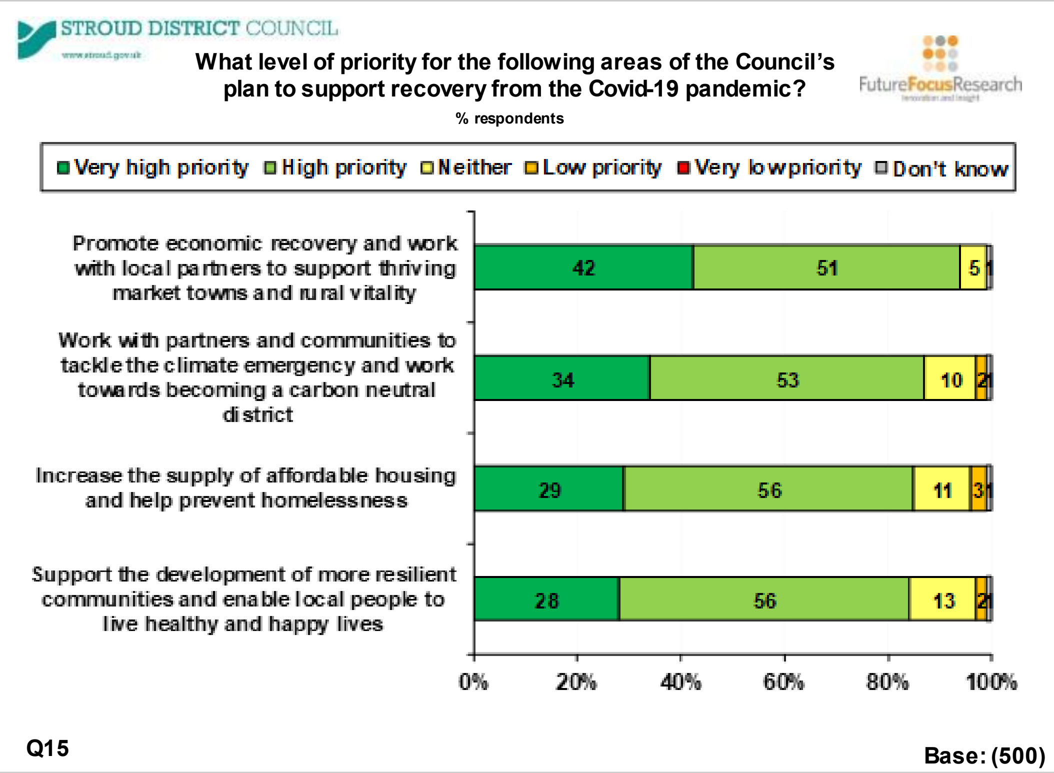
Those aged 18 – 34 were more likely to state that *housing* (81%), *leisure centres/parks/open spaces* (81%) and *street cleaning* (54%) should be a focus.

BAME residents were more concerned about *street cleaning* (65%) l*eisure centres/ parks/open spaces* (61%) and *housing* (54%).

Respondents were then asked to indicate the level of priority for each of four areas of the Council's plan to support recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. All areas were rated as either a *very high* or a *high* priority by at least 8 in 10 respondents. See figure 4.6.

The issue that rated the highest priority was *promote economic recovery and work with local partners to support thriving market towns and rural vitality* (93% *very high* or *high*) followed by *work with partners and communities to tackle climate emergency and work towards becoming a carbon neutral district* (87%), *increase the supply of affordable* *housing and help prevent homelessness* (85%) and *support the development of more resilient communities and enable local people to live healthy and happy lives* (84%).

Figure 4.6



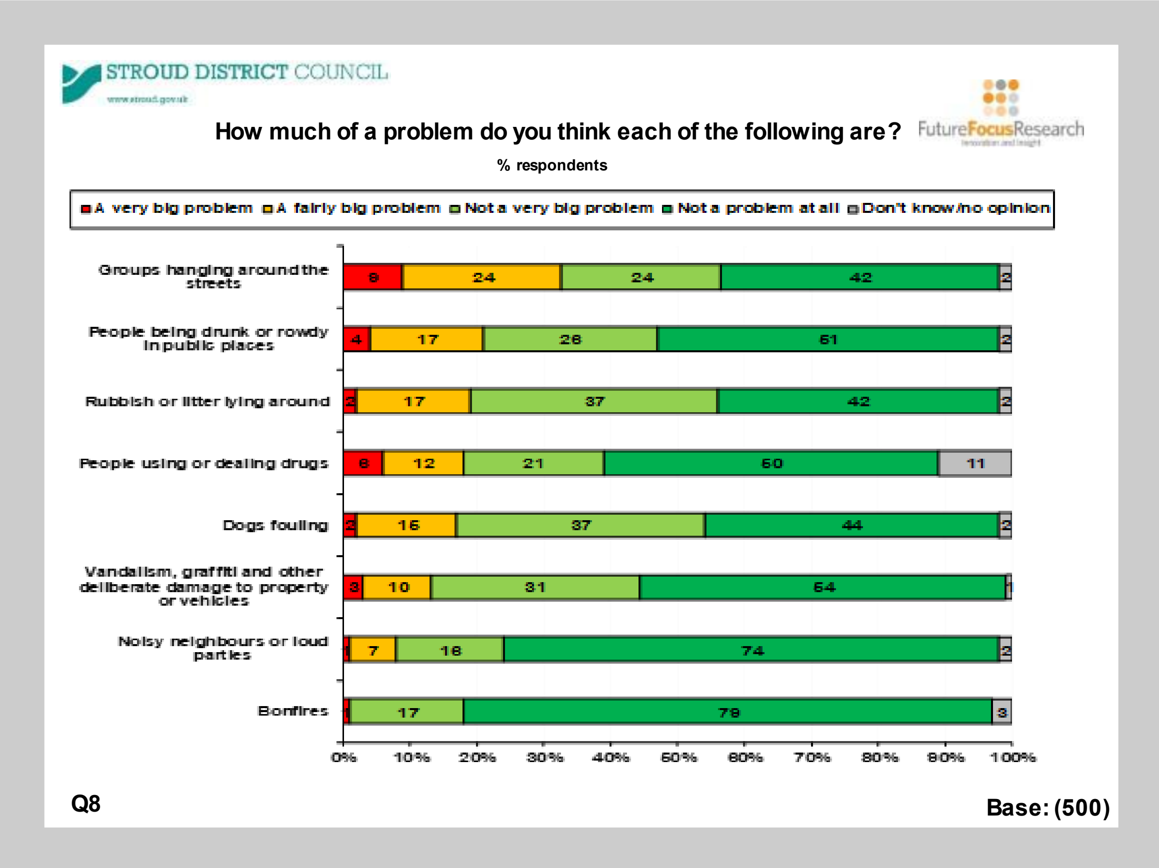
Those aged 18 – 35 were more likely than other age groups to rate *increase the supply of affordable housing and help prevent homelessness* as a *very high* or *high* priority (97%).

BAME residents were less likely than white residents to rate *support the development of more resilient communities and enable local people to live healthy and happy lives* as a high or very high priority (63%) and were more likely to rate *increase the supply of affordable housing and help prevent homelessness* as a very high or high priority (94%).

4.2 Community Safety

Respondents were then asked how much of a problem a list of issues were in their area. The biggest problems would appear to be *groups hanging around the street* (33% *very big* or *fairly big problem*), followed by *people being drunk or rowdy in public places* (21%). See figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7

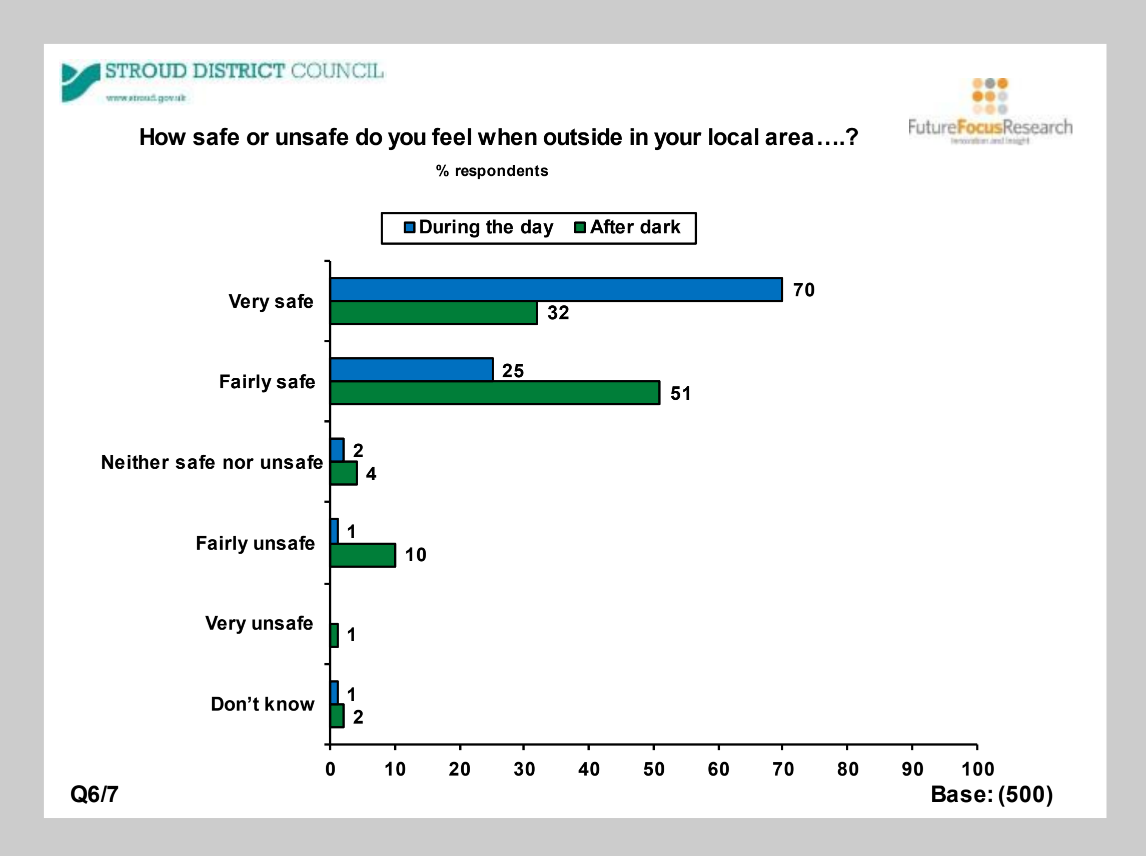


Those aged 18 – 34 were more likely than other age groups to think that most of the listed issues were a problem – *groups hanging about the street* (77% *very big* or *fairly big problem*), *people being drunk or rowdy in public places* (65%), *people using or dealing drugs* (60%), *rubbish or litter lying around* (54%), *vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to vehicles* (45%), dog fouling (42%) and *noisy neighbours or loud parties (30%).*

BAME residents were more likely than white residents to think that most of the listed issues were a problem – *groups hanging about the street* (69%), *people being drunk or rowdy in public places* (63%), *people using or dealing drugs* (59%), *vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to vehicles* (48%), *rubbish or litter lying around* (46%) and *noisy neighbours or loud parties* (37%).

Respondents were asked how safe they feel in their local area during the daytime and after dark. Feeling of safety was high during the daytime with 95% feeling safe (70% *very safe* and 25% *fairly safe*). Feeling of safety during the night-time fell slightly to 83%, the biggest fall being in the percentage feeling *very safe* (from 70% in the daytime to 32% after dark). See figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8



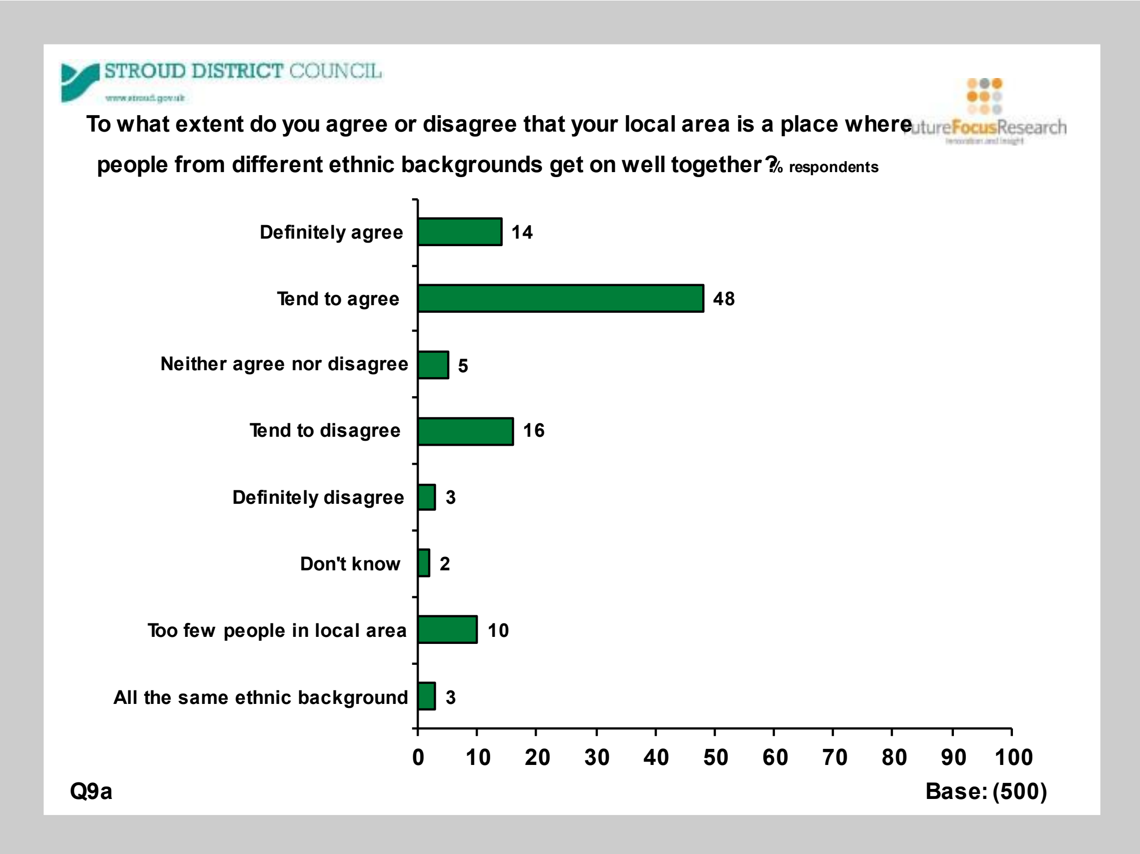
Interestingly, those aged 56 – 75 were more likely than other age groups to feel *very safe during the daytime* (80%) and those aged 18 – 25 were the least likely (50%).

Men were more likely than women to feel *very safe after dark* (41% compared to 23%).

BAME residents were less likely to feel *very safe during the daytime* (31%) and *after dark* (4%).

When asked to what extent they agree or disagree that their *local area is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together*, 62% agreed (14% *definitely agree* and 48% *tend to agree*). In 2020 this was 70%. However, just under 1 in 5 (19%) disagreed (9% in 2020). See figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9

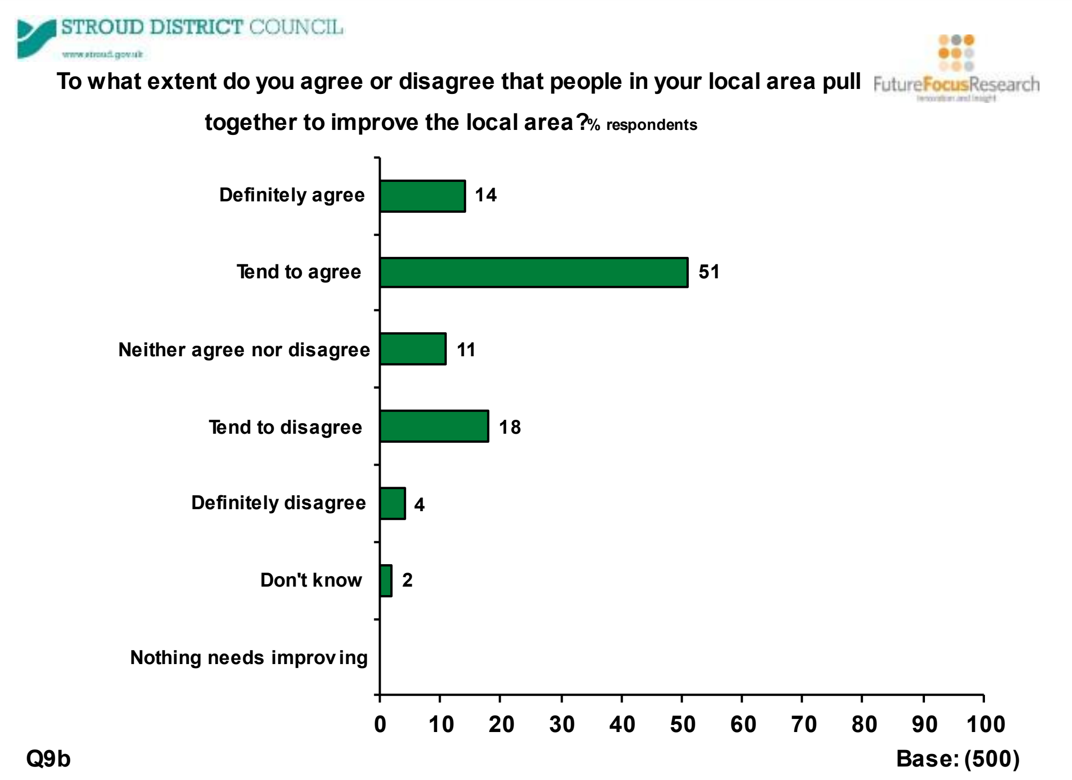


Those aged 35 – 55 (78%) and 56 – 75 (71%) were more likely to agree (either *definitely agree* or *tend to agree*) and those aged 18 – 24 were the least likely (22%).

BAME residents were less likely to agree than white residents (44% compared to 54%).

Respondents were then asked whether they agree or disagree *that people in their local area pull together to improve the local area*. Almost two thirds (65%) agreed that they do (14% *definitely agree* and 51% *tend to agree*). In 2020 this was 73%. However, around 1 in 5 (22%) disagreed (12% in 2020). See figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10



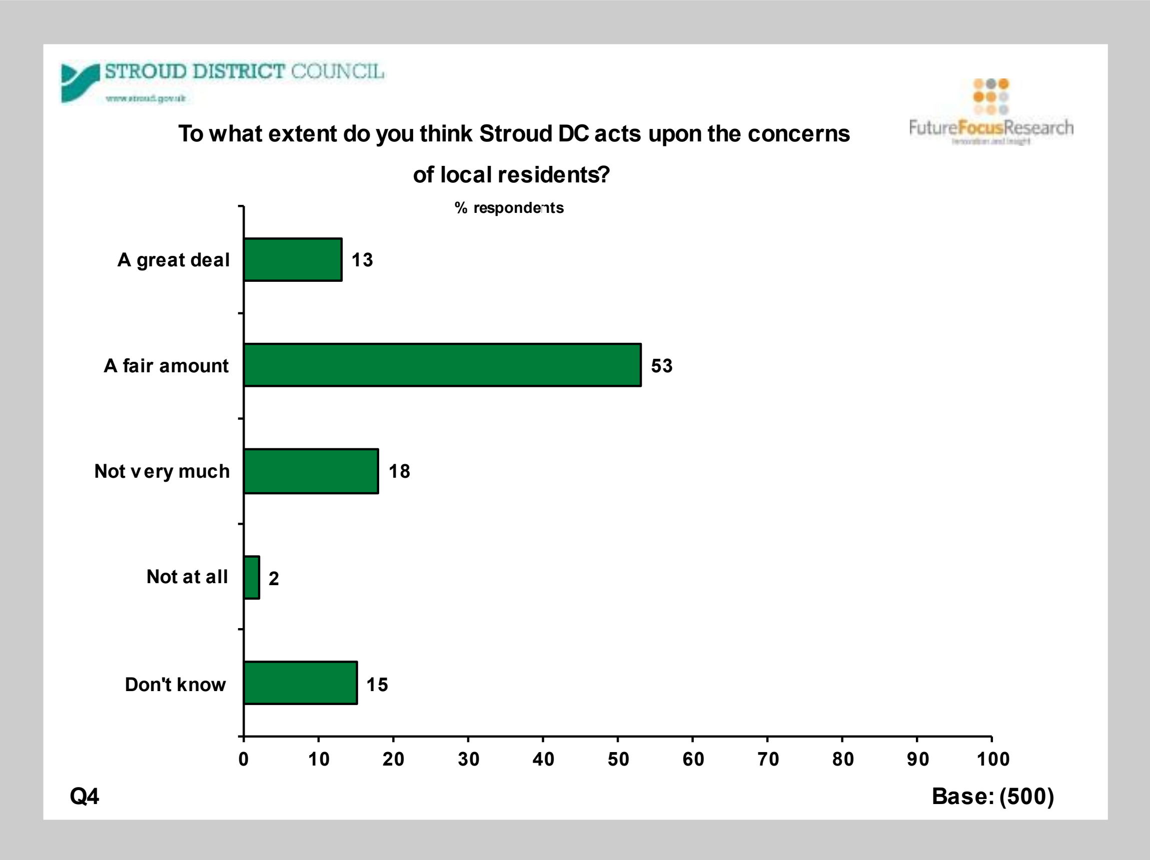
Those aged 35 – 55 (77%) and 56 – 75 (86%) were most likely to agree and those aged 18 – 24 were the least (15%).

BAME residents were much less likely to agree than white residents (24% compared to 71%).

4.3 Information from Stroud DC

Residents were asked to what extent they think Stroud DC *acts upon the concerns of local residents*. Around two thirds (66%) felt that they did, either *a great deal* or *a fair amount* (70% in 2020). A further 20% stated *not very much* or *not at all* (16% in 2020). See figure 4.11.

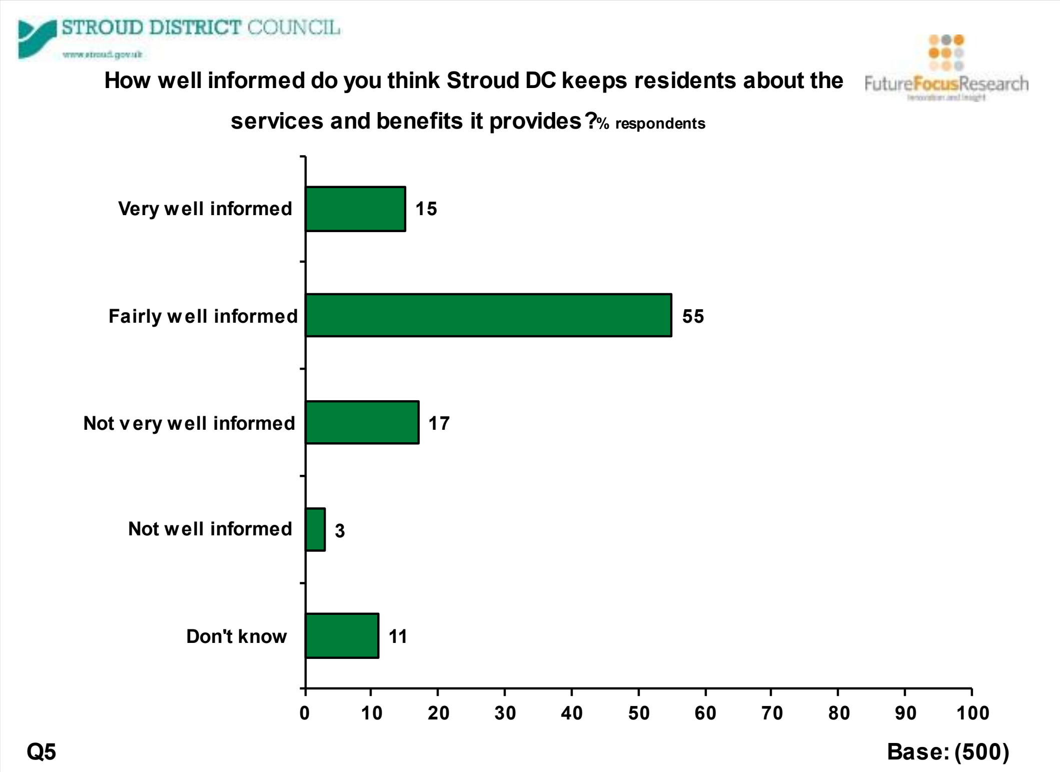
Figure 4.11



Those aged 18-34 were the least likely to say either *a great deal* or *a fair amount* (24%) as were BAME residents (43%).

Residents were also asked how well they felt *Stroud DC keeps residents informed about the benefits and services it provides*. 70% felt that they were either *very well informed* or *fairly well informed*, a decrease from 78% in 2020. A further 20% stated *not very well informed* or *not well informed* (16% in 2020). See figure 4.12.

Figure 4.12

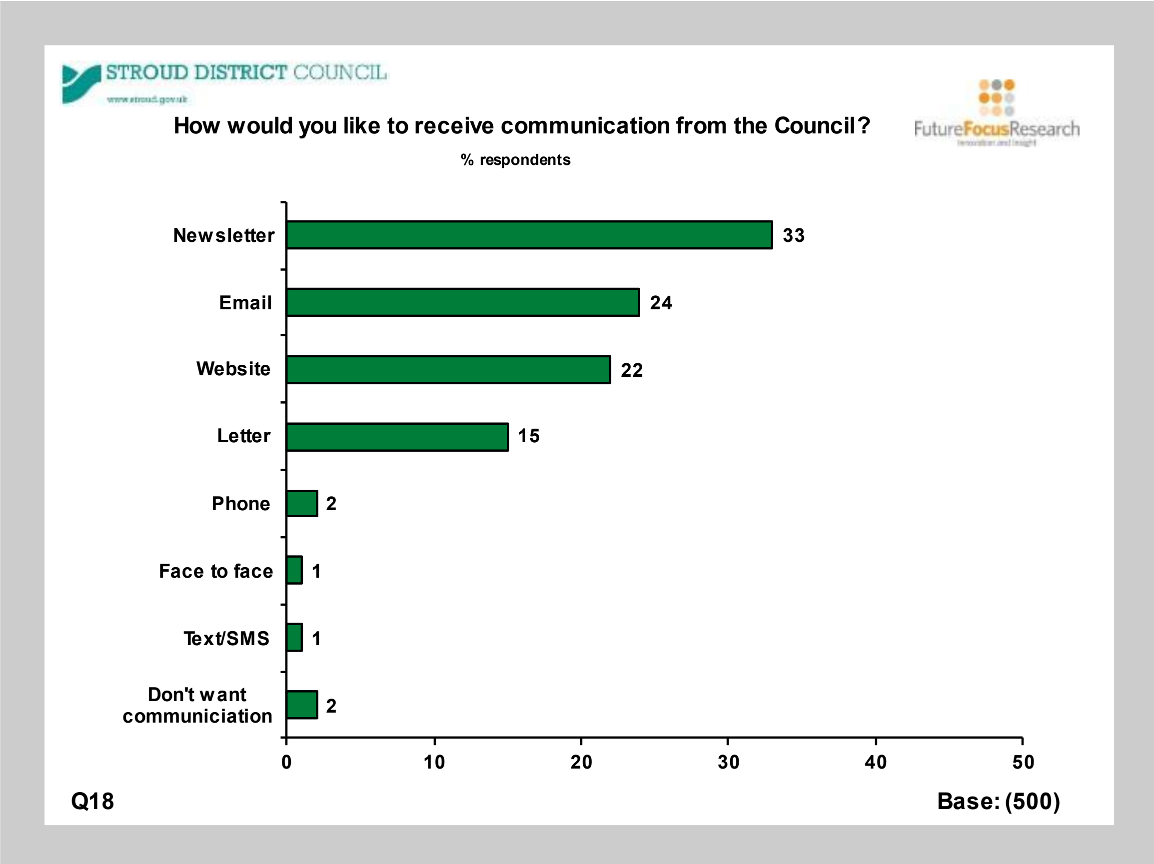


Residents were asked how they would prefer to receive information from the Council. The most popular was *newsletter* (33%), followed by *email* (24%), *website* (22%) and *letter* (15%). See Figure 4.13.

Those aged over 75 were less likely to want to *email* (8%) and were more likely to want a *letter* (30%) or a *newsletter* (45%).

BAME residents were much more likely to favour the *website* (65%).

Figure 4.13



In addition to communication *from* the Council, residents were also asked how they would like to engage or communicate *with* the Council. This was unpromoted and many did not know (27%), however the most common responses were by *telephone* (44%) and *email* (17%).

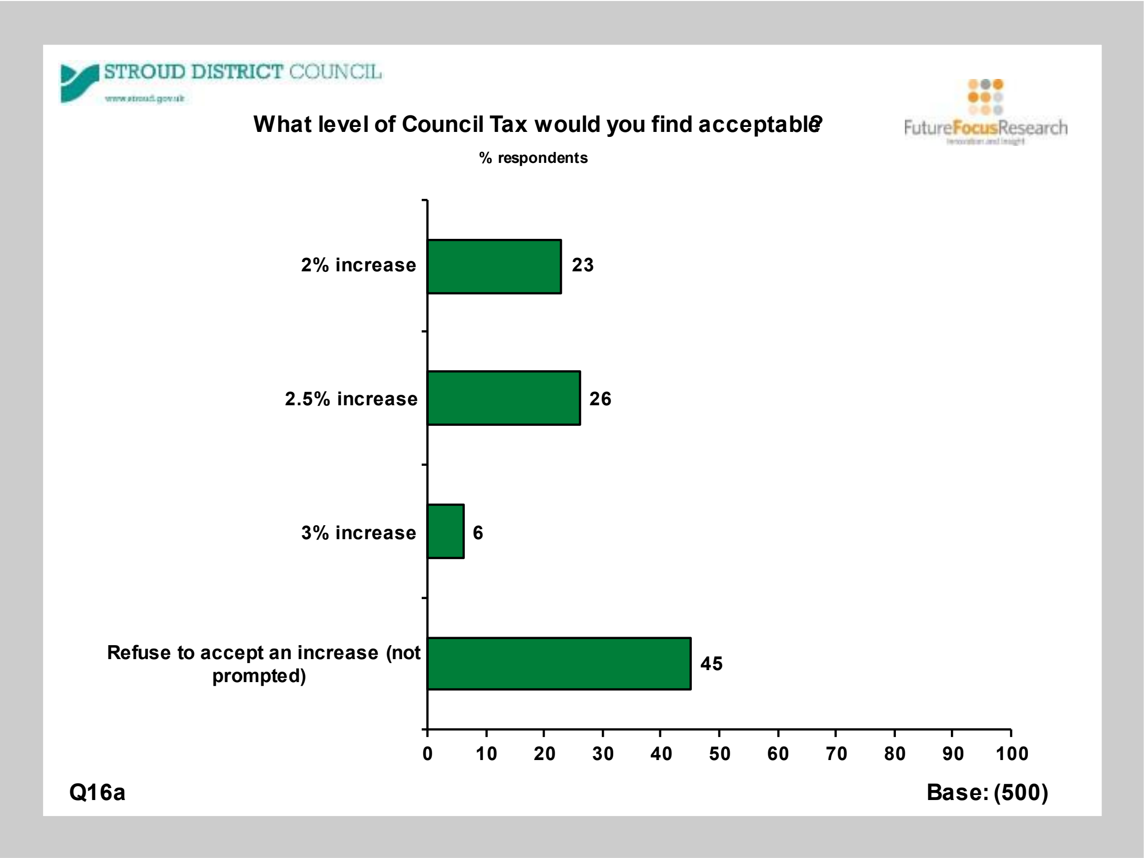
4.4 Council Tax

Respondents were presented with the following three options for the District element of the Council Tax:

- *2% increase*
- *2.5% increase*
- *3% increase*

Despite it not being offered as a response, 45% would not accept an increase. 23% of respondents felt that there should be a *2% increase* and a similar proportion (26%) were prepared to accept a *2.5% increase* and 6% would accept a *3% increase*. In total 55% would accept an increase of 2% or more. See figure 4.14.

Figure 4.14



Those who said that they would pay a *3% increase*, were asked whether they would be prepared to pay more than 3%. Almost a half (48%) said that they would.

Those aged 56 – 76 were most likely to say that they would pay more (73% prepared to pay an increase of at least 2%) and those aged 18 – 34 the least (15%). 81% of BAME residents refused to pay any increase.

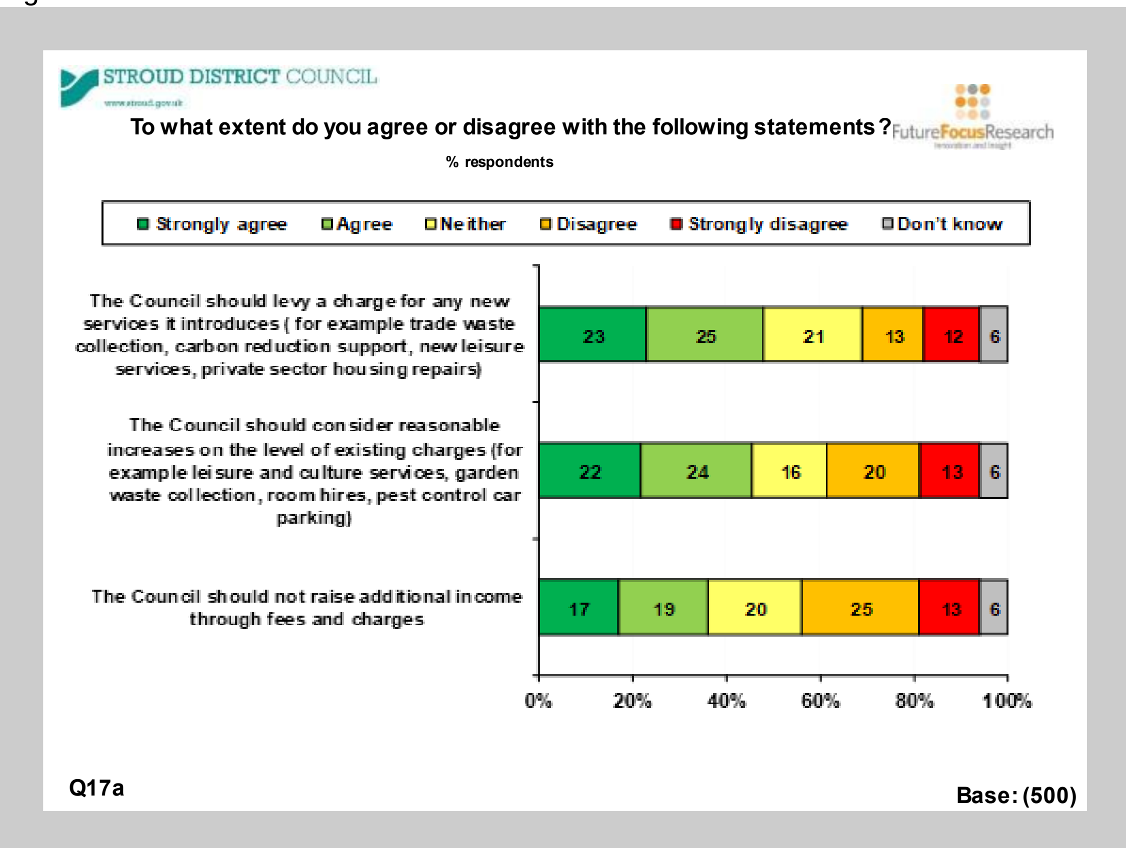
Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements relating to Council charges. See figure 4.15.

Just under a half agreed (48% either *strongly agreed* or *agreed*) that *the Council should levy a charge for any new services it introduces (for example trade waste collection, carbon reduction support, new leisure services, private sector housing repairs)* whilst 25% disagreed (51% agreed in 2020). Men were more likely to agree (59% compared to 39% of women) and BAME residents were least likely to agree (11%).

A similar percentage (46%) agreed that *the Council should consider reasonable increases on the level of existing charges (for example leisure and culture services, garden waste collection, room hires, pest control car parking)*, whilst 33% disagreed (40% agreed in 2020). Men were more likely to agree than women (54% compared to 38%). BAME residents were the least likely to agree (6%).

Over a third (36%) agreed that *the Council should not raise additional income through fees and charges* (32%) in 2020). A similar proportion (38%) disagreed. Those aged 18 – 34 were most likely to agree (65%) as were BAME residents (69%).

Figure 4.15



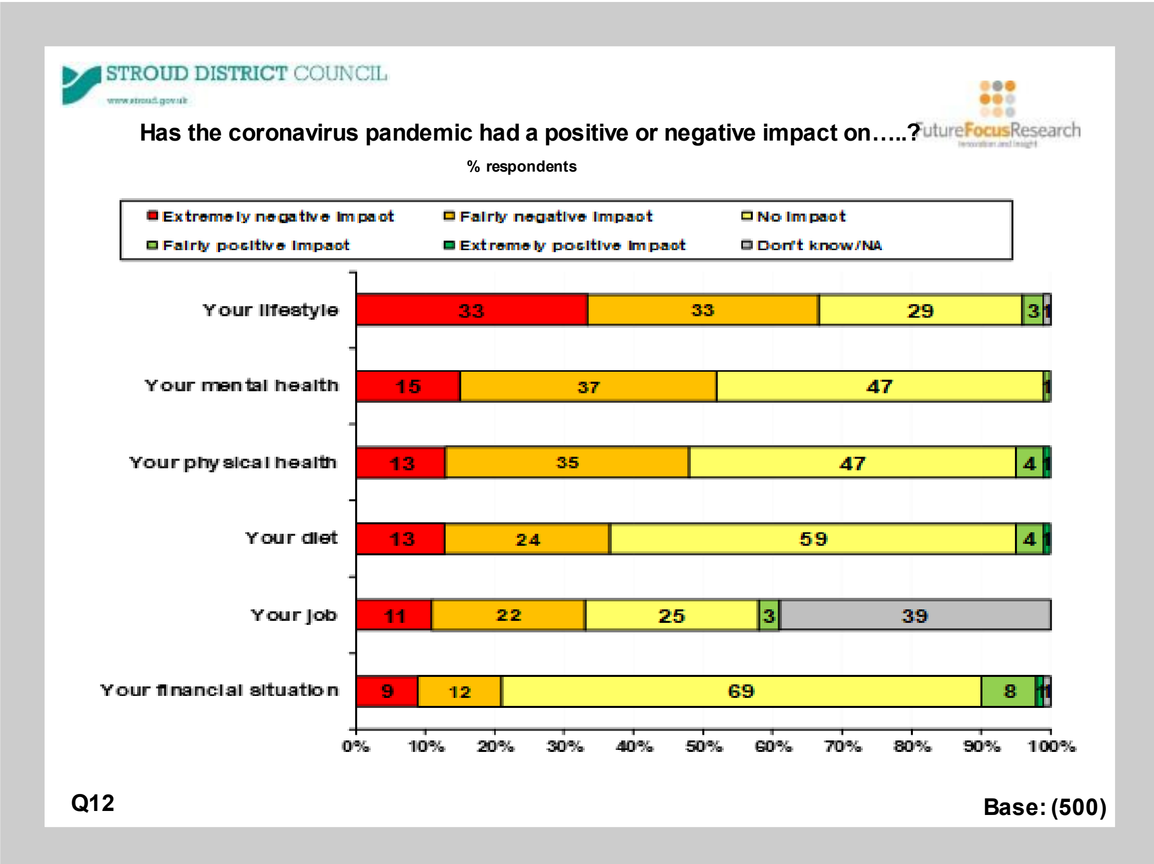
4.5 Coronavirus Pandemic

Respondents were asked whether the coronavirus has had a positive or negative impact on various aspects of their life. The biggest negative impact was considered to be on *lifestyle* with 66% saying that the pandemic has had either an *extremely negative impact* or a *fairly negative impact* (58% in 2020). This was followed by *mental health* (52% extremely or fairly negative impact – 35% in 2020), *physical health* (48% - 33% in 2020), their *diet* (37% - 20% in 2020), *their job* (33% - 27% in 2020) and *financial situation* (21% - 22% in 2020). See figure 4.16. With the large increases since 2020, it would appear that the impact of the pandemic has worsened.

For over a half, there was no impact on their *financial situation* (69%) or *diet* (59%).

Very few respondents said that the pandemic has had a *positive effect* on their lives, although 9% (almost 1 in 10 respondents) did say that it had positively affected their *financial situation.*

Figure 4.16



Men were more impacted than women when it came to their diet (43% *fairly* or *extremely negative* impact compared to 22% of women) and *physical health* (57% compared to 40% of women).

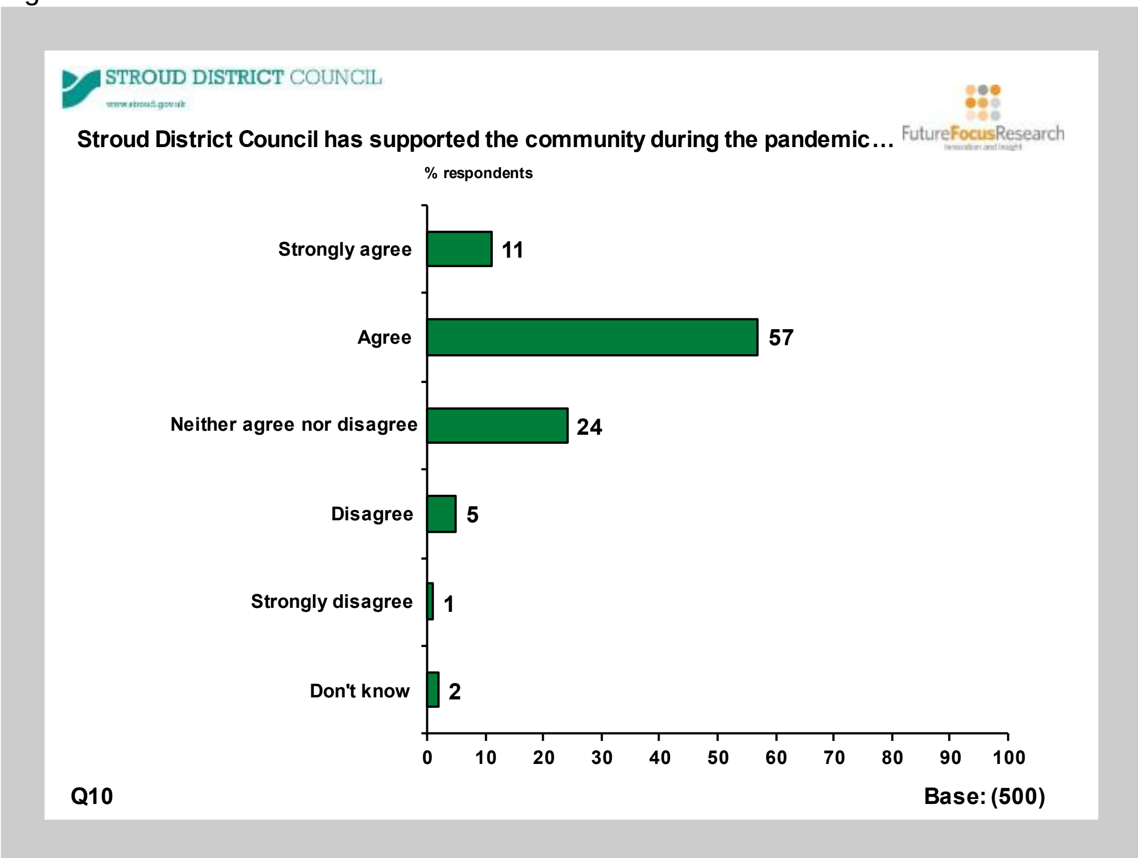
Those aged 18 – 24 were the most impacted age group (*financial situation* (47% *fairly negative* or *extremely negative* impact), *lifestyle* (88%), *diet* (71%), *mental health* (72%), *physical health* (77%)).

Those aged 35 – 55 were most likely to say the pandemic had impacted on their *job* (51%).

BAME residents were more impacted than white residents when it came to their *financial situation* (45% *fairly negative* or *extremely negative* impact compared to 18% of white residents), *their job* (56% compared to 30%), *lifestyle* (91% compared to 64%), *diet* (69% compared to 33%) and *mental health* (67% compared to 50%).

Respondents were also asked to what extent they agreed that *SDC had supported the community during the pandemic.* Over two thirds (68%) either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* that they did, and only 6% disagreed. See figure 4.17.

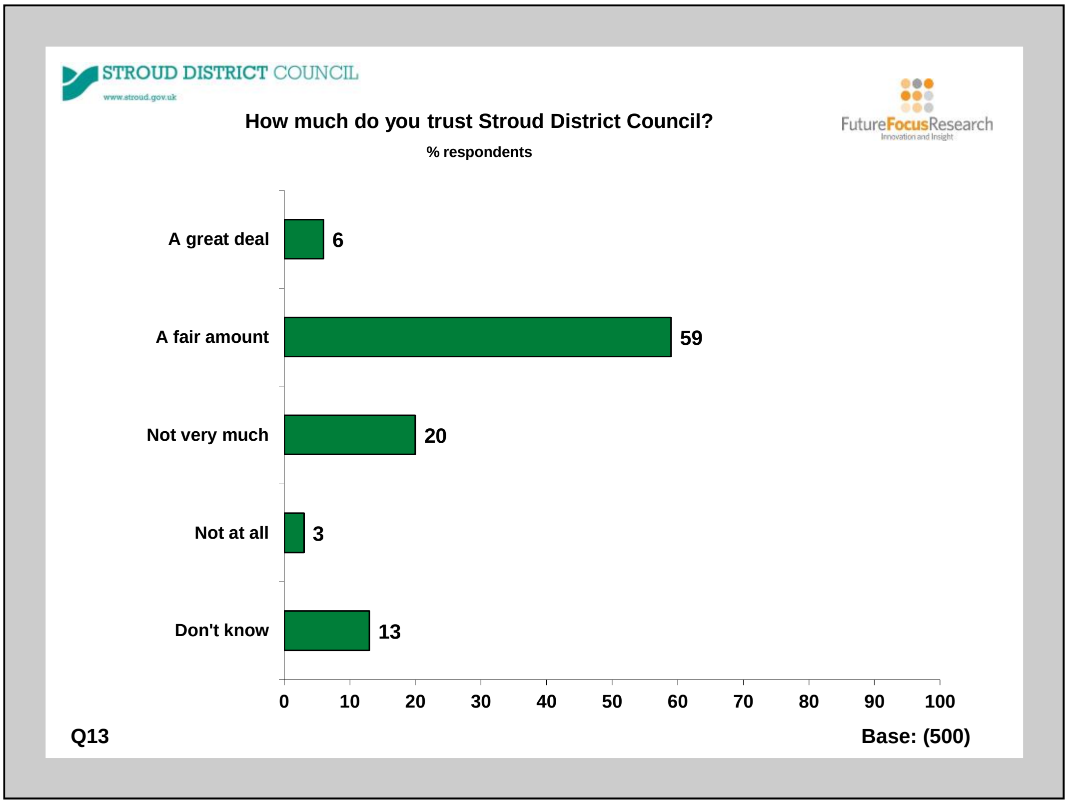
Figure 4.17



Those aged 18 – 24 were least likely to agree (34% *strongly agree* or *agree*) as were BAME residents (37%).

When asked how much *they trust Stroud DC*, 65% said that they had *a great deal* or *a fair amount* of trust (77% in 2020). Almost a quarter of residents (23%) did not trust SDC either *not very much* or *not at all*. See figure 4.18.

FIGURE 4.18

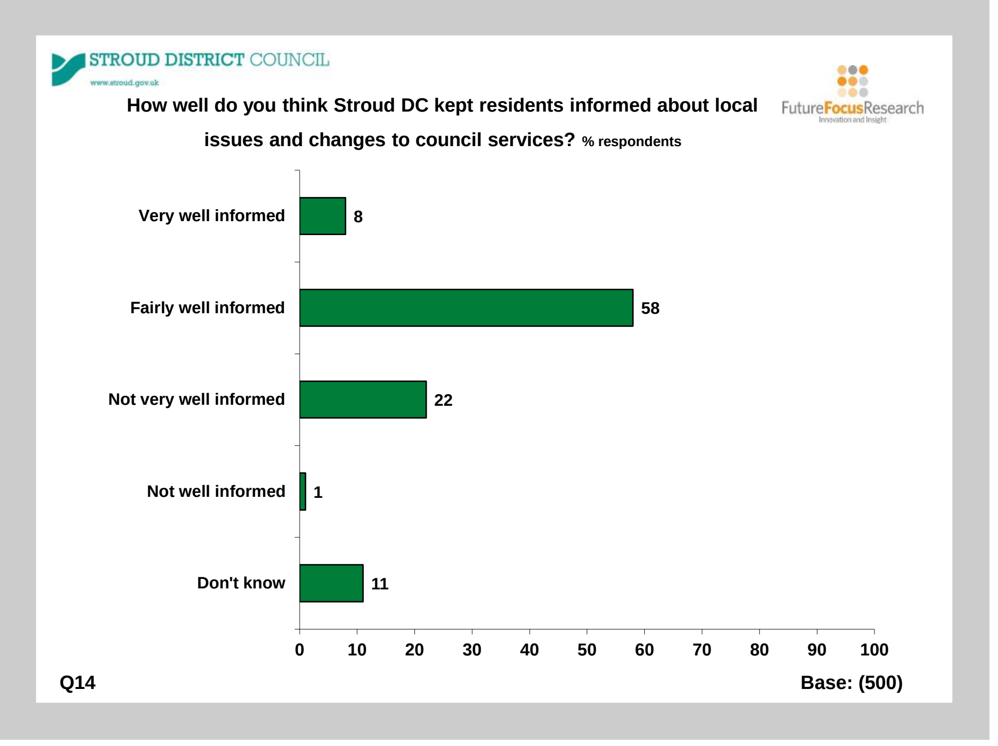


Those aged 18 – 34 were least likely to trust Stroud DC (13% *a great deal* or *a fair amount*) as were BAME residents (31%).

Residents were then asked how well they felt *Stroud DC kept residents informed about local issues and changes to council services*. 66% felt that they were either *very well informed* or *fairly well informed* (73% in 2020). A further 23% stated *not very well informed* or *not well informed* (17% in 2020). See figure 4.19.

Those aged 18 – 34 were least likely to say that they were *very or fairly well informed* (10%) as were BAME residents (26%).

Figure 4.19


STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
www.stroud.gov.uk
How well do you think Stroud DC kept residents informed about local issues and changes to council services? % respondents
FutureFocusResearch
Very well informed
8
Fairly well informed
58
Not very well informed
22
Not well informed
1
Don't know
11
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
Q14
Base: (500)

5. Business Survey

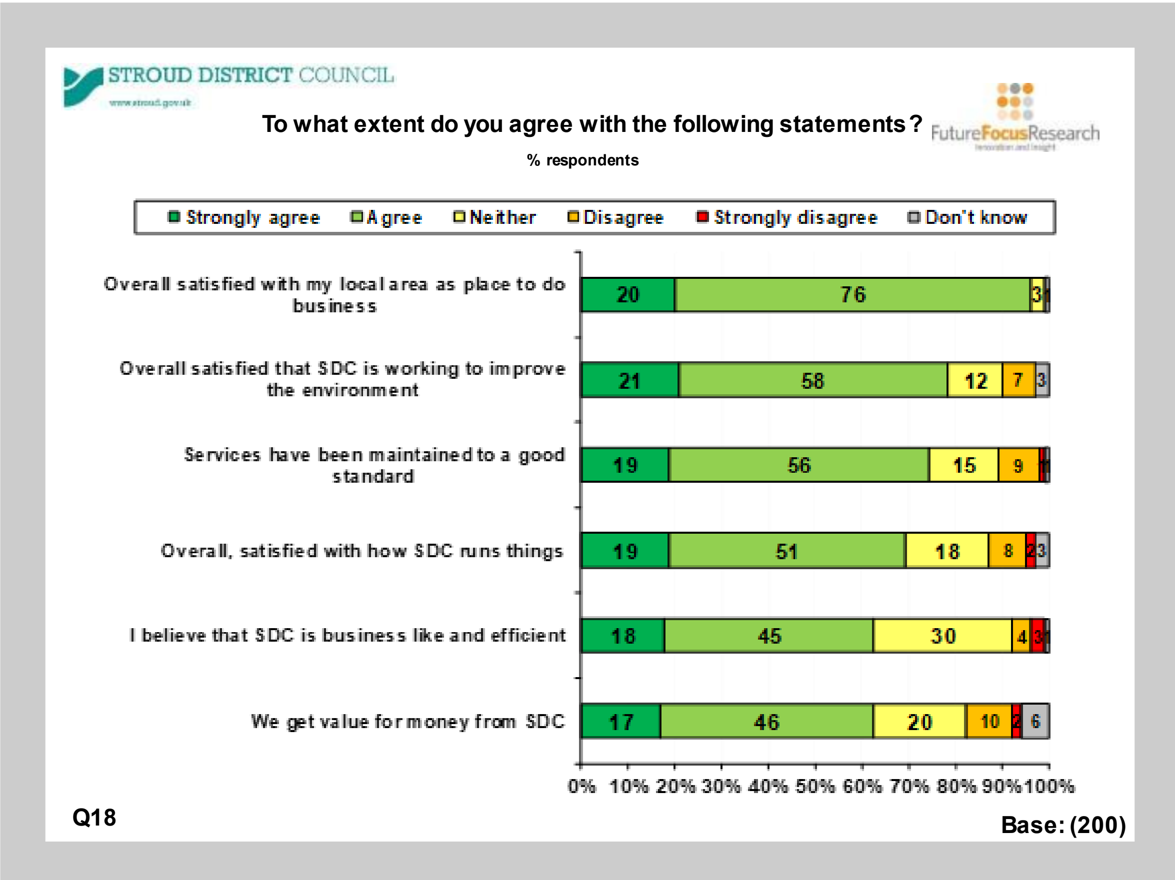
This section details the views and opinions from the business survey, covering:

- Satisfaction and Priorities
- Information from Stroud DC
- Business Support Services
- Contact with the Council
- Coronavirus Pandemic

5.1 Satisfaction and Priorities

Almost everyone (96%) agreed (*strongly agree/agree*) that they were *satisfied with their local area as a place to do business* and 79% agreed (strongly agree/agree) that they were *satisfied that Stroud DC is working to improve the environmen*t. Three quarters (75%) agreed (*strongly agree/agree*) that *services have been maintained to a good standard* and 70% agreed that they were *satisfied with how Stroud DC runs things.* 63% agreed that they *get value for money from Stroud DC* and that they are *business like and efficient*. See figure 5.1

Figure 5.1



Larger businesses (those with 10 employees or more) were more likely to agree that *Stroud DC is business like and efficient* (72% compared to 59% of smaller businesses).

Comparing this year's results to previous years, the percentage agreement to all statements in 2021 is very consistent with 2020, with the exception of *satisfaction with the way SDC runs things* which has increased from 63% to 70%. See figure 5.2 and 5.3.

Figure 5.2

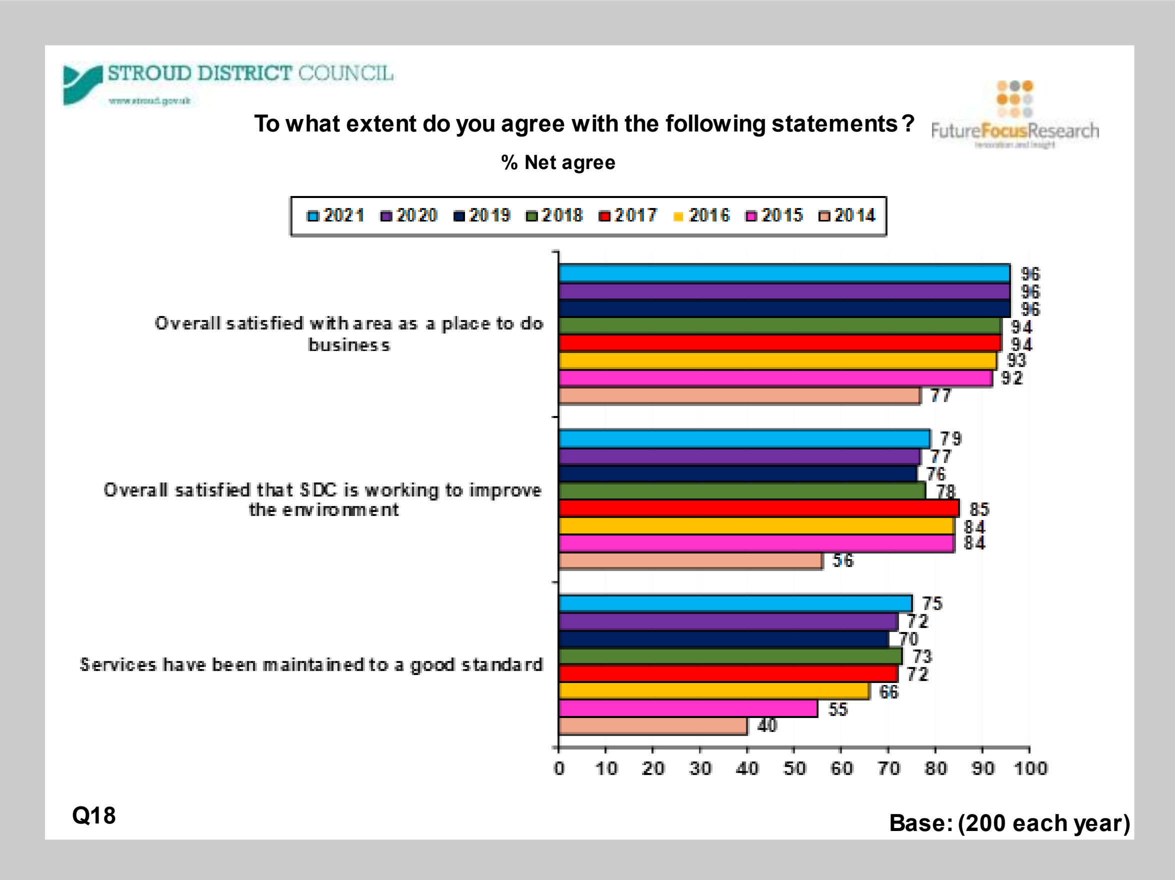
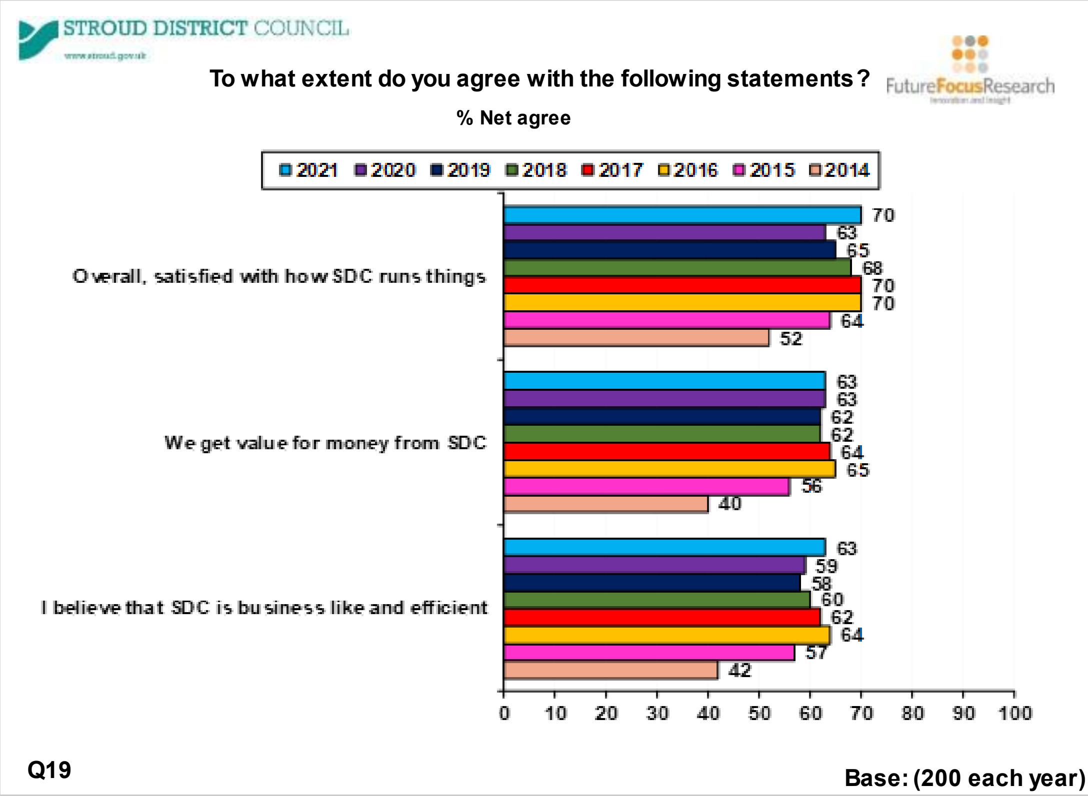


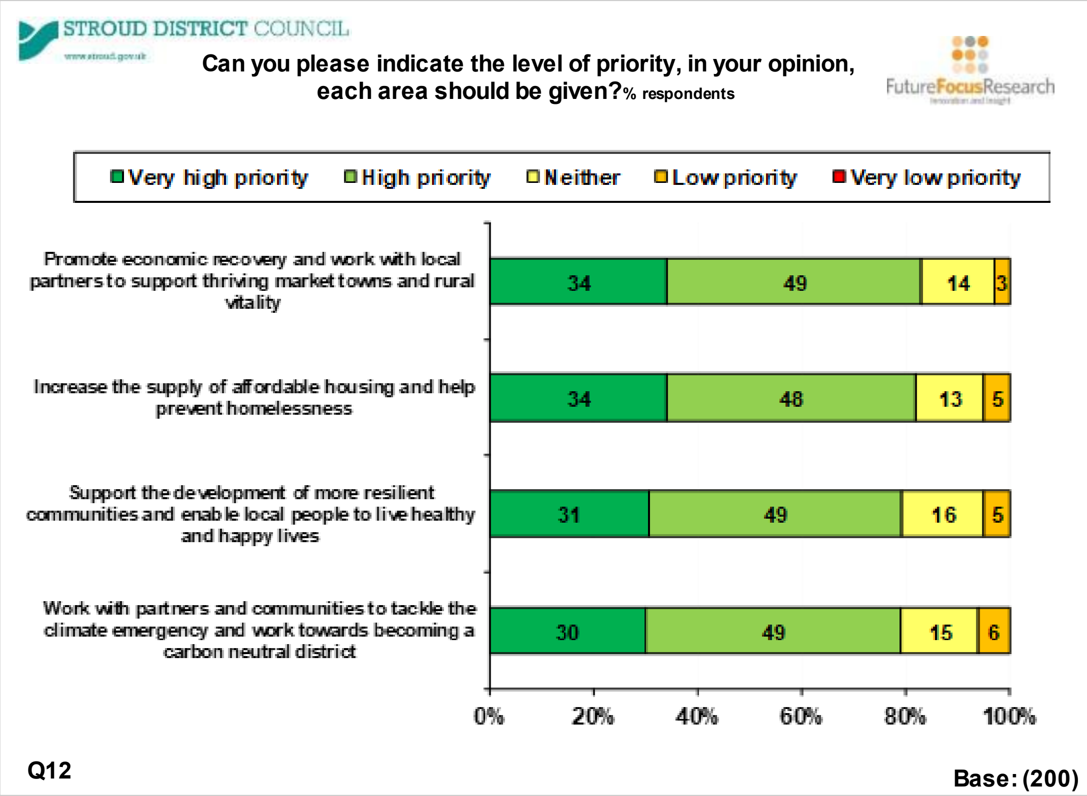
Figure 5.3



Businesses were then asked to indicate the level of priority for each of four areas of the Council's plan to support recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. See figure 5.4.

The issue that rated the highest priority was *promote economic recovery and work with local partners to support thriving market towns and rural vitality* (83% *very high* or *high*) followed by *increase the supply of affordable housing and help prevent homelessness* (82%), *support the development of more resilient communities and enable local people to live healthy and happy lives* (80%) and *work with partners and communities to tackle climate emergency and work towards becoming a carbon neutral district* (79%).

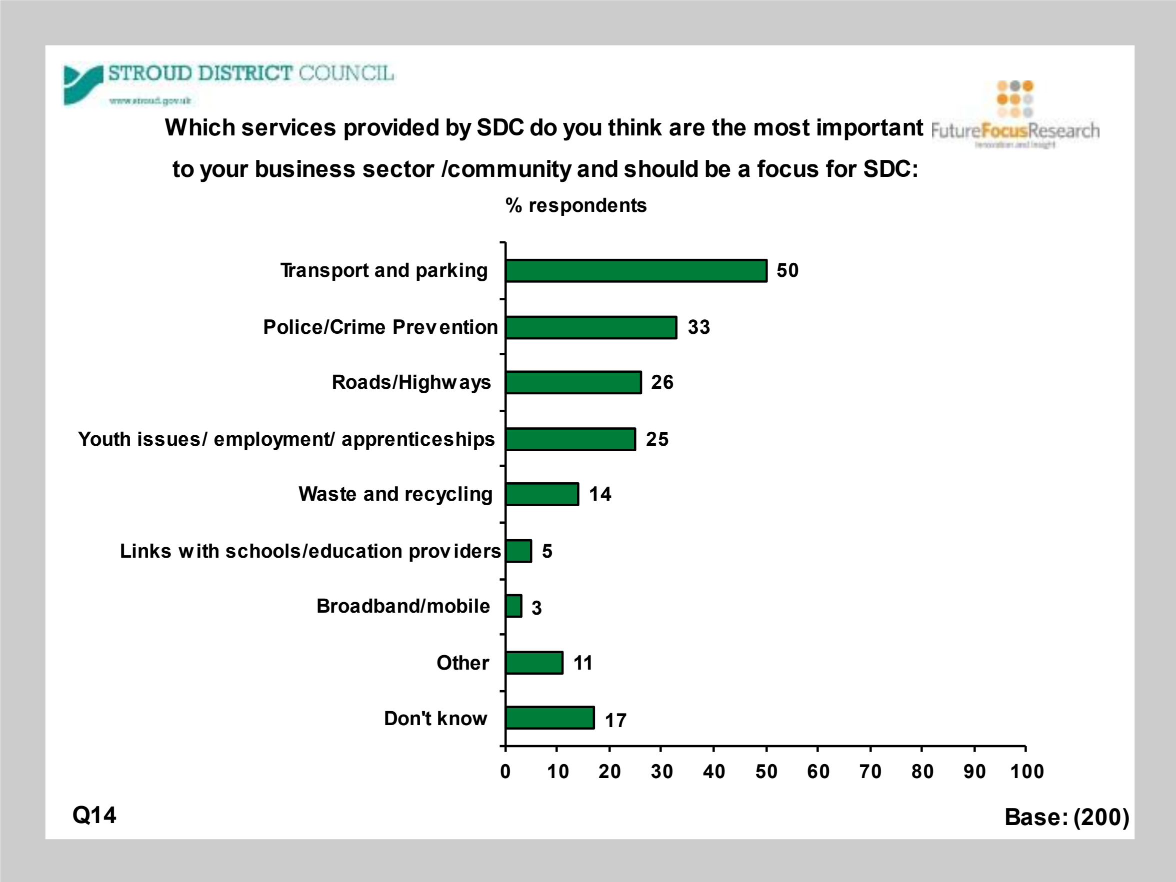
Figure 5.4



Larger businesses (those with 10 employees or more) were more likely than smaller businesses (those with 9 employees or less) to consider *promote economic recovery and work with local partners to support thriving market towns and rural vitality* to be a *high* or *very high* priority (90% compared to 80%), *support the development of more resilient communities and enable local people to live healthy and happy lives* (90% compared to 74%) and *increase the supply of affordable housing and help prevent homelessness* (93% compared to 77%).

Respondents were then asked what services provided by Stroud DC they thought were most important to their business sector/community and should be a focus for SDC. *Transport and parking* (50%) was the most popular response, followed by *police/crime prevention* (33%), *roads and highways* (26%) and *youth issues/employment/ apprenticeships* (25%). See figure 5.5.

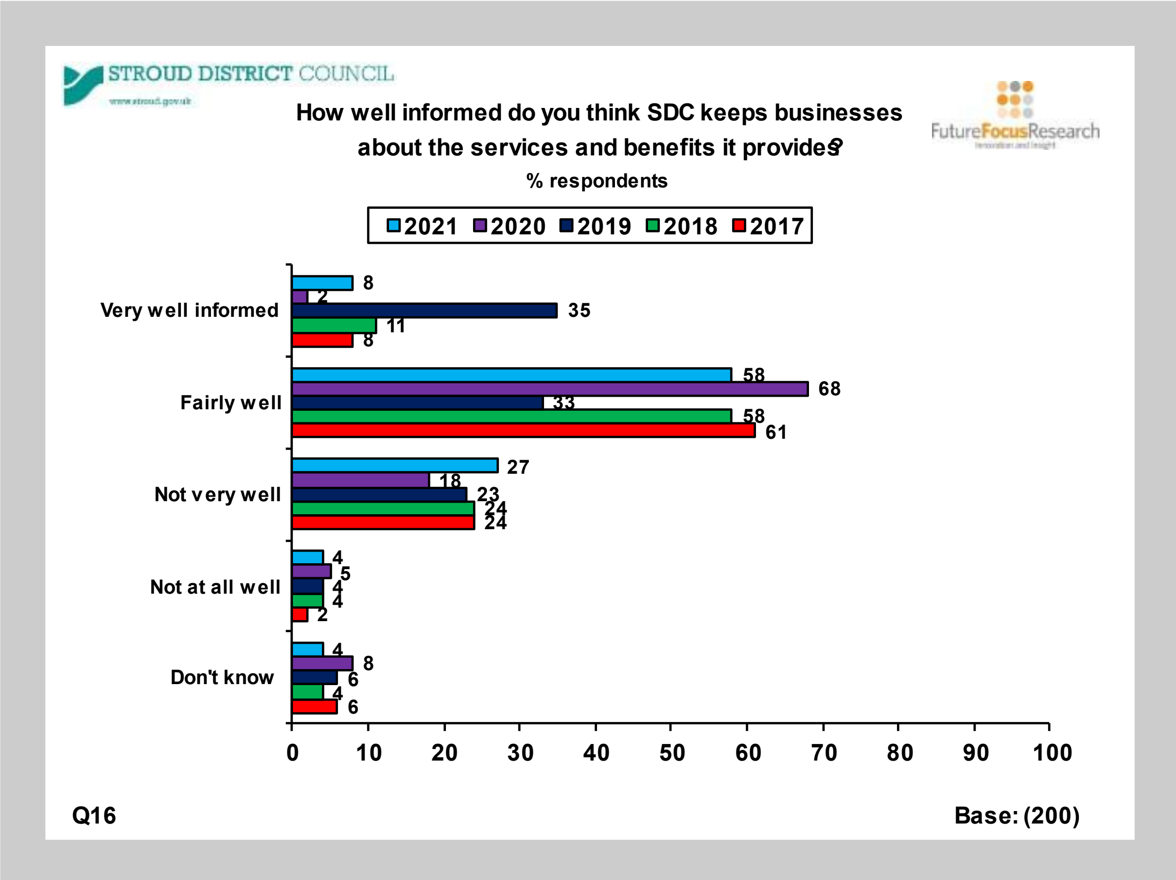
Figure 5.5



5.2 Information from Stroud DC

Businesses were asked *how well informed they think SDC keeps businesses about the services and benefits it provides*. Two thirds of businesses (66%) said that they were either *very well* or *fairly well informed*, a slightly lower percentage than 2020 (70%). See figure 5.6.

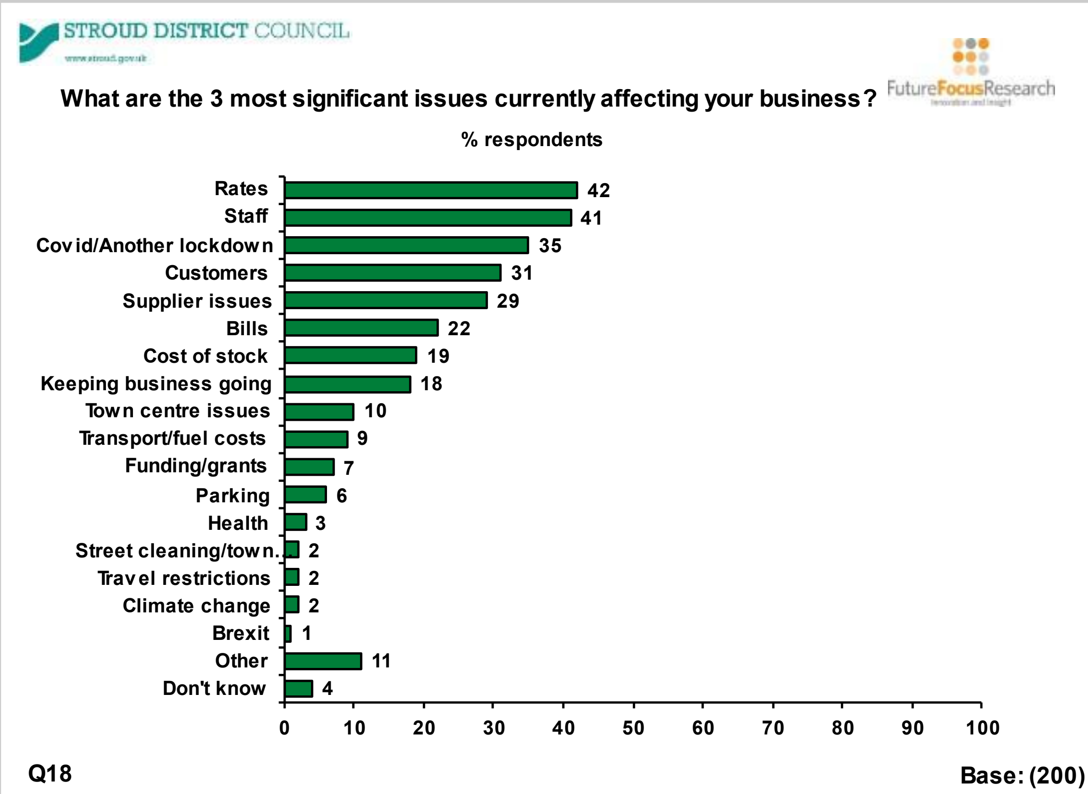
Figure 5.6



5.3 Business Support Services

Businesses were asked what the 3 most significant issues that were currently affecting their business. The main issues were *rates* (42%), *staff* (41%) and *Covid/another lockdown* (35%). See figure 5.7.

Figure 5.7



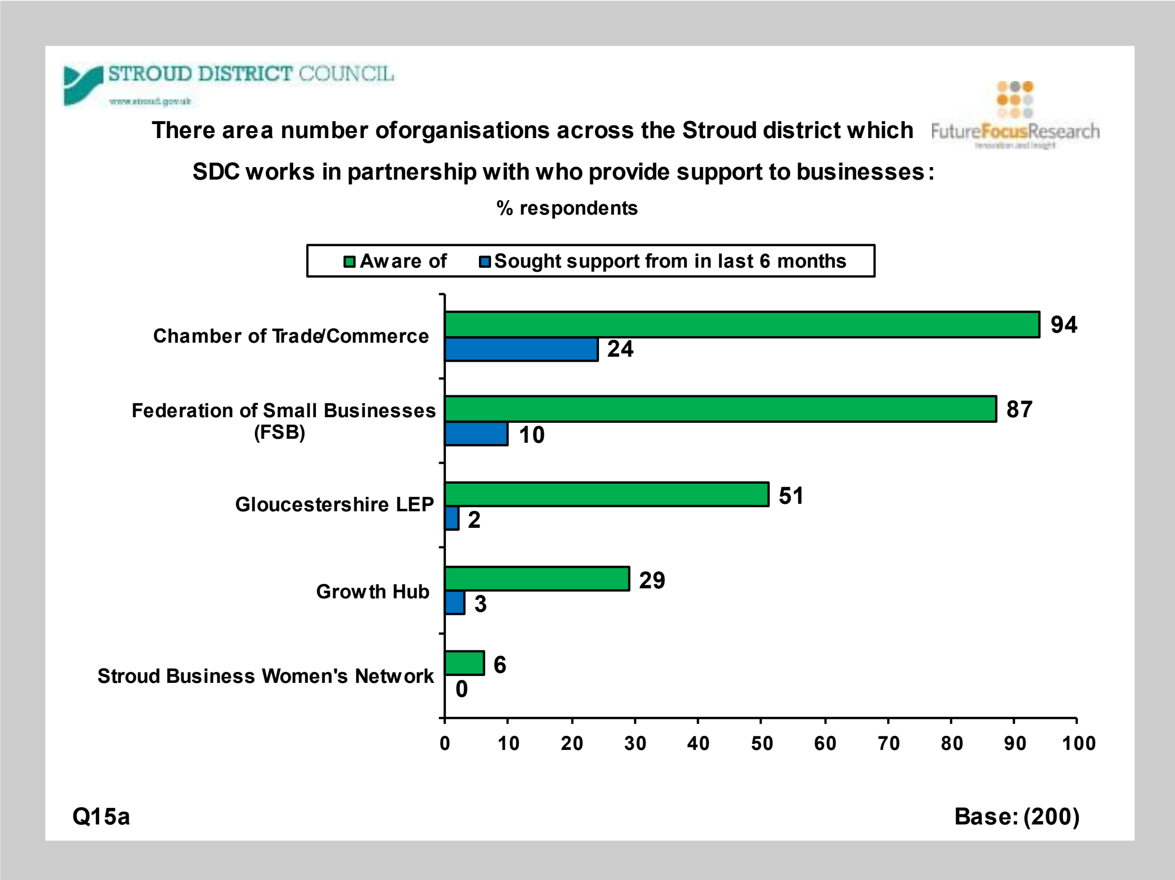
Smaller businesses (those employing 9 or less) were more concerned with *keeping the business going* (23% compared to 7% of larger businesses) and *town centre issues* (14% compared to 2%).

Larger businesses (those employing 10 or more) were more concerned with *rates* (50% compared to 38% of smaller business) and *staff* (53% compared to 36%).

Business were prompted with a list of support services and asked which they were aware of. The majority were aware of the *Chamber of Trade/Commerce* (94%) and *Federation of Small Businesses* (87%). Awareness of *Gloucester LEP* was 51%, 31% for the *Growth Hub* (31%) and just 6% for *Stroud Business Women's Network*. See figure 5.8.

Some businesses had sought advice from these organisations – 24% from the *Chamber of Trade/Commerce,* 10% from *FSB*, 3% from *Growth Hub* and 2% from *Gloucester LEP*.

Figure 5.8

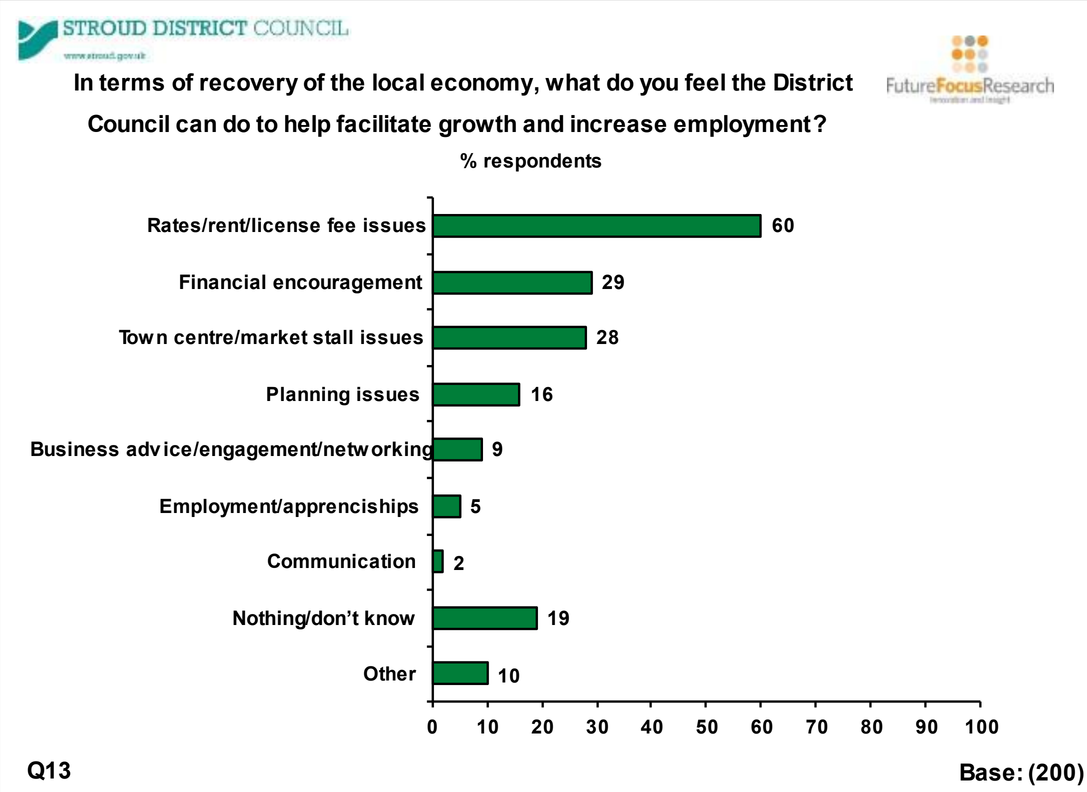


Larger businesses (those employing 10 or more) were more likely to have heard of the *Gloucestershire LEP* (60% compared to 47% of those employing 9 or less).

Businesses were also asked if they were aware of any other organisations who provide support to businesses. The most common mentioned were *banks and building societies* (10 businesses), *Start and Growth* (6 businesses) and *Fredericks Foundation (*5 businesses).

Businesses were asked in terms of recovery of the local economy, what *they felt the Council can do to help facilitate growth and increase employment*. The most popular mentioned were *rates/rent/licence fee issues* (60%) followed by *financial encouragement* (29%) and *town centre/market stall issues* (28%). See figure 5.9.

Figure 5.9

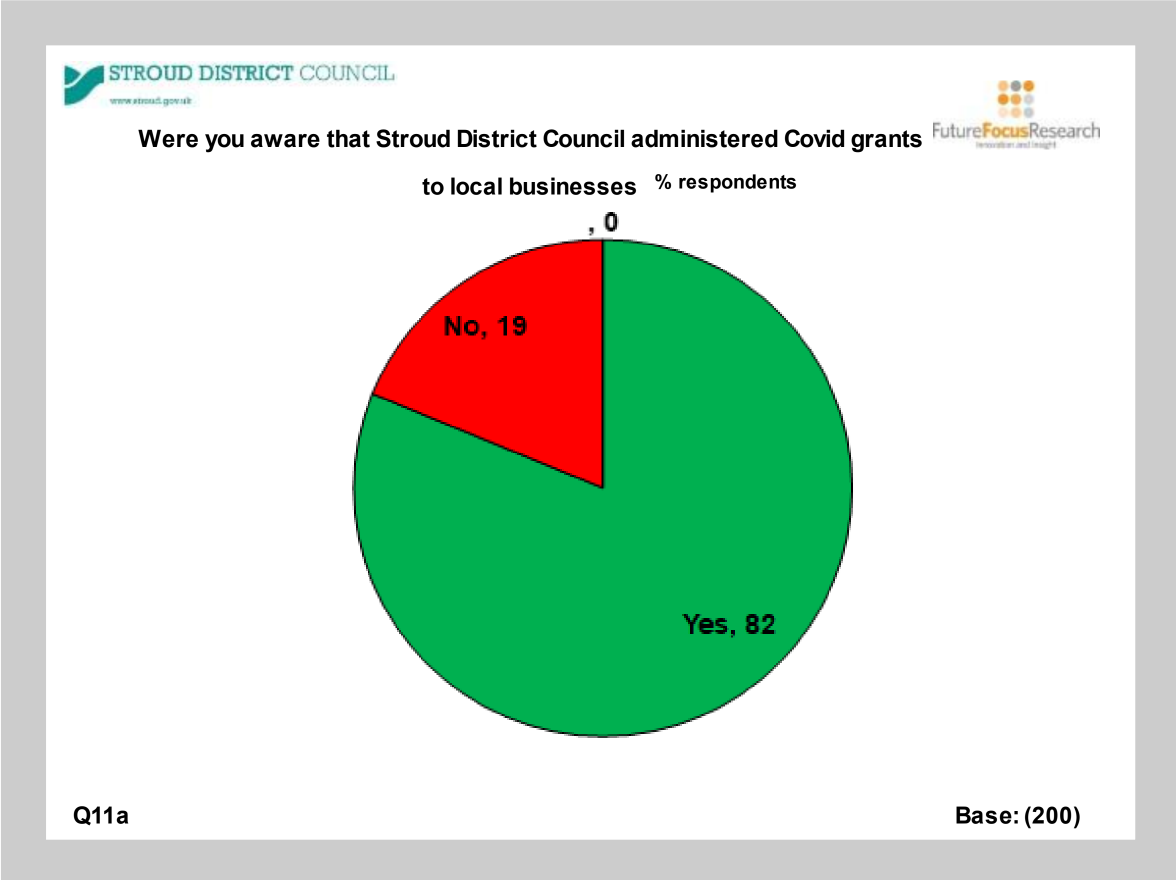


Larger businesses (those employing 10 or more) were more likely to want *business advice/engagement/networking* (17% compared to 6% of smaller businesses)

Businesses were asked *what more SDC could do to support them*. Most did not have any suggestions but the most common was *help with rates* (10 businesses).

When asked about grants, 82% were aware that SDC administered covid grants (figure 5.10).

Figure 5.10



When asked, 49% of businesses said that they had applied for a grant. Of those who did, 85% agreed that *the application process was clear and easy to follow* and 80% agreed that they were *notified of the outcome of the application process*. See figures 5.11 and 5.12.

Smaller businesses were more likely to have applied for a grant (59% compared to 27% of larger businesses).

Figure 5.11

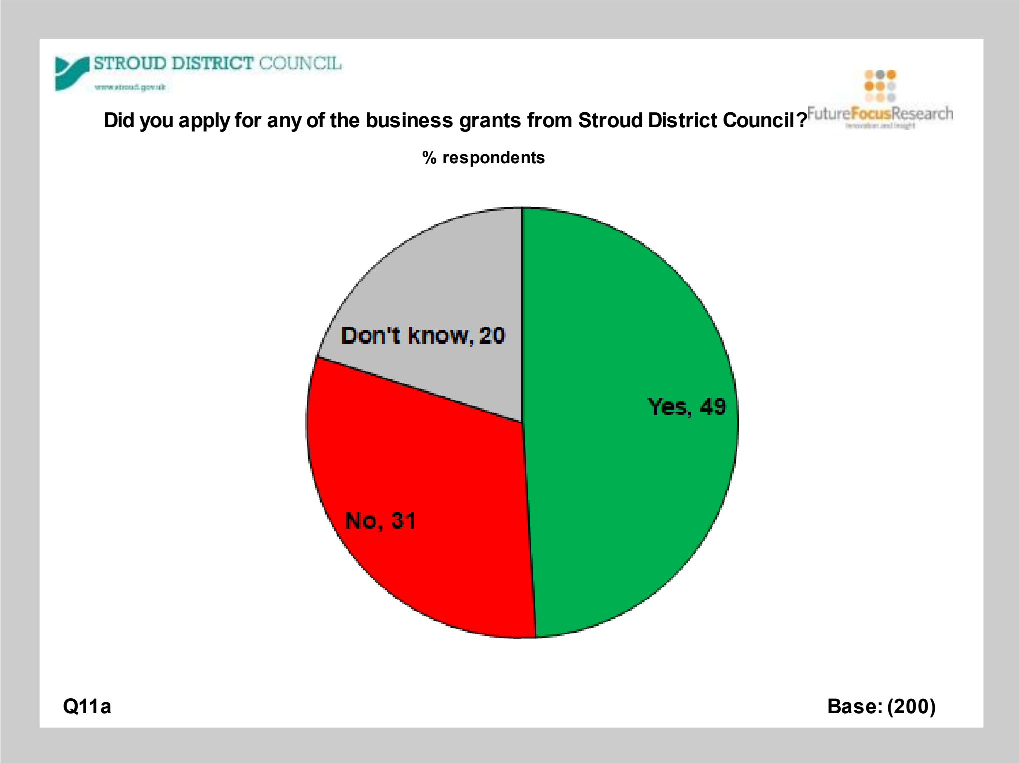
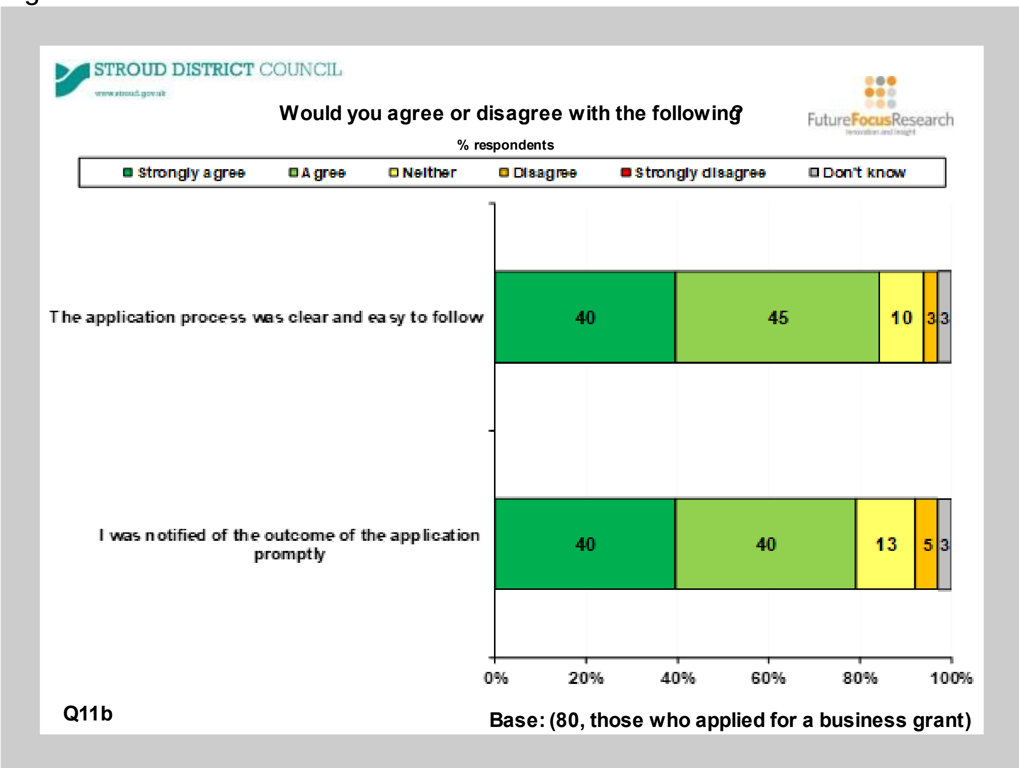


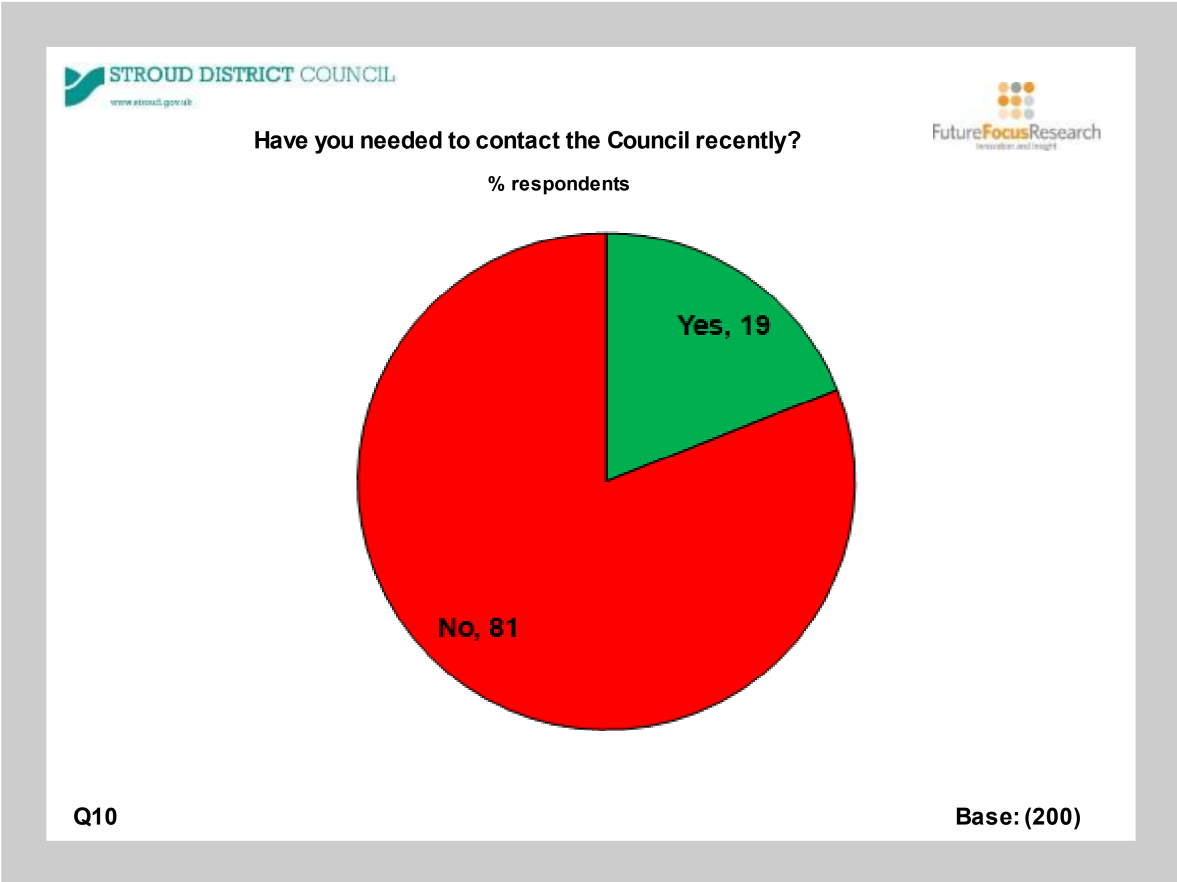
Figure 5.12



5.4 Contact with Council

Just under 2 in 10 businesses (19%) had contacted the Council recently. See Figure 5.13

Figure 5.13



The main method of contact was by *telephone* (68%). See Figure 5.14.

The most common reasons for businesses to contact the Council were *business rate issues/rate relief* (74%) and *Covid-19* (68%). See figure 5.15.

84% agreed that they would be *happy to contact SDC again for further advice, 79%* agreed (either *strongly agreed* or *agreed*) that *information given was clear and easy to follow* and 68% agreed with *staff were helpful and I was treated fairly.* See figure 5.16.

Figure 5.14

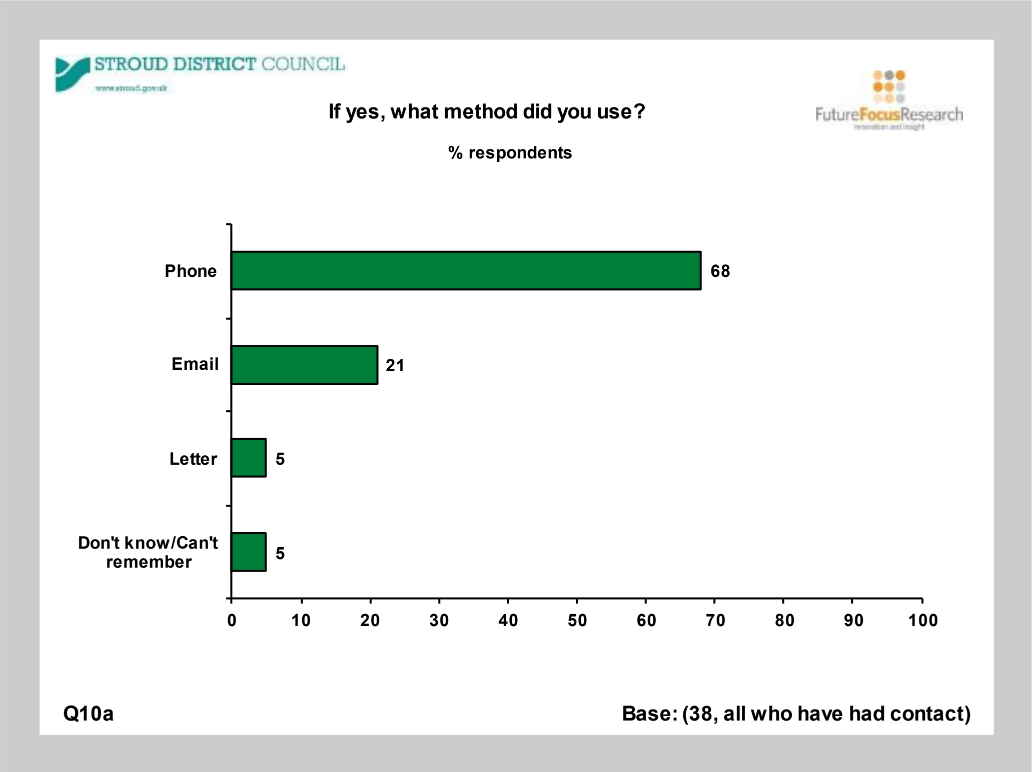


Figure 5.15

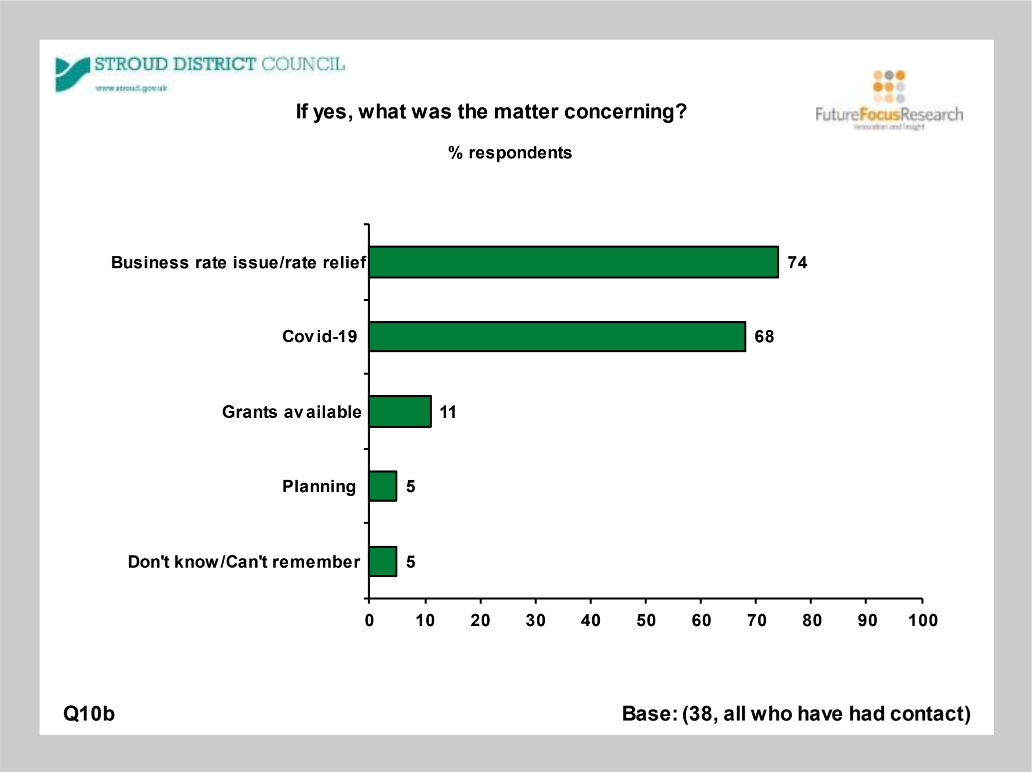
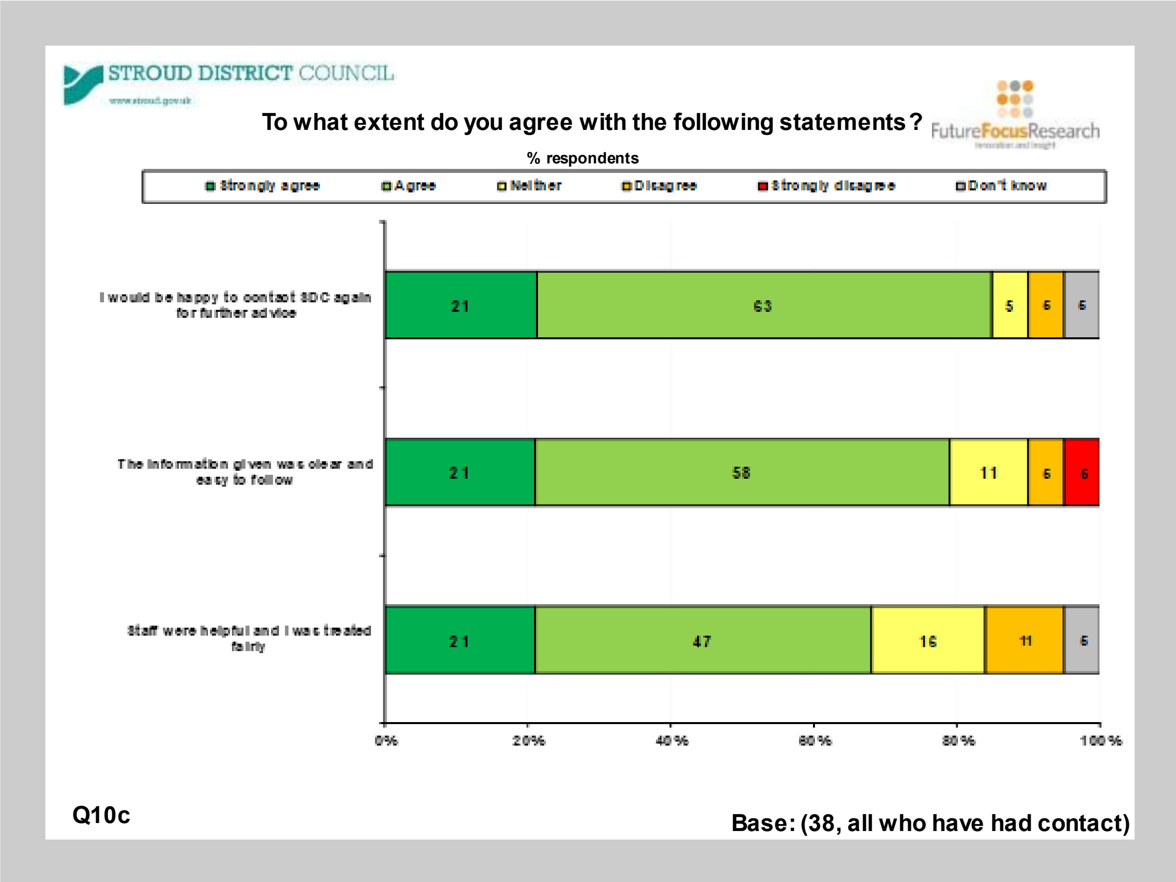


Figure 5.16



Most did not have any suggests for improving their contact experience, the few that did suggested:

- Make it easier to speak to a person/the right person (7 businesses)
- Quicker response (3 businesses)
- Better advice (2 businesses)

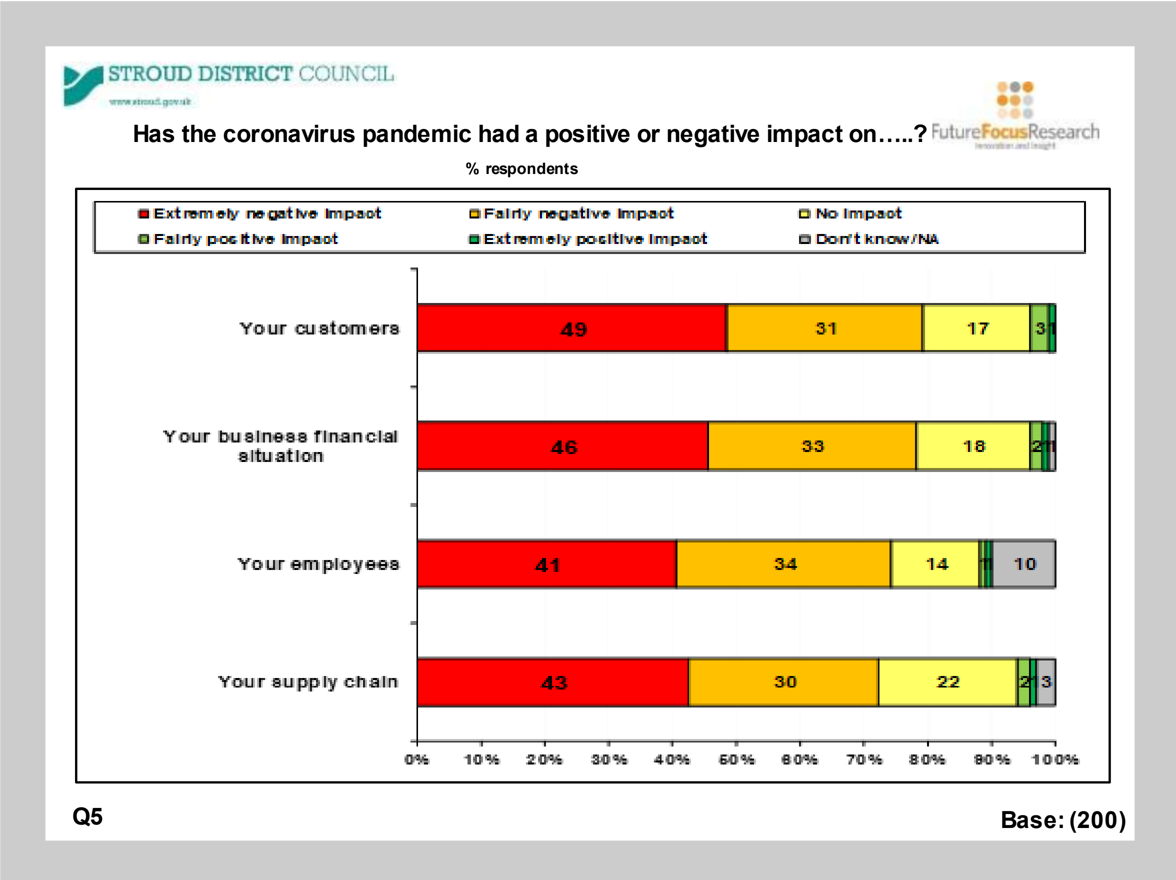
5.5 Coronavirus Pandemic

Businesses were asked whether the coronavirus pandemic has had a positive or negative impact on various aspects of their life.

The biggest negative impact was considered to be on their customers (80% *extremely* or *fairly negative impact* – 67% in 2020) and *financial situation* (79% - 73% in 2020). This was followed by *employees* (75% - 53% in 2020) and *supply chain* (73% - 55% in 2020). See figure 5.17. With the large increases since 2020, it would appear that the impact of the pandemic has worsened.

Very few businesses said that the pandemic has had a positive effect on their business.

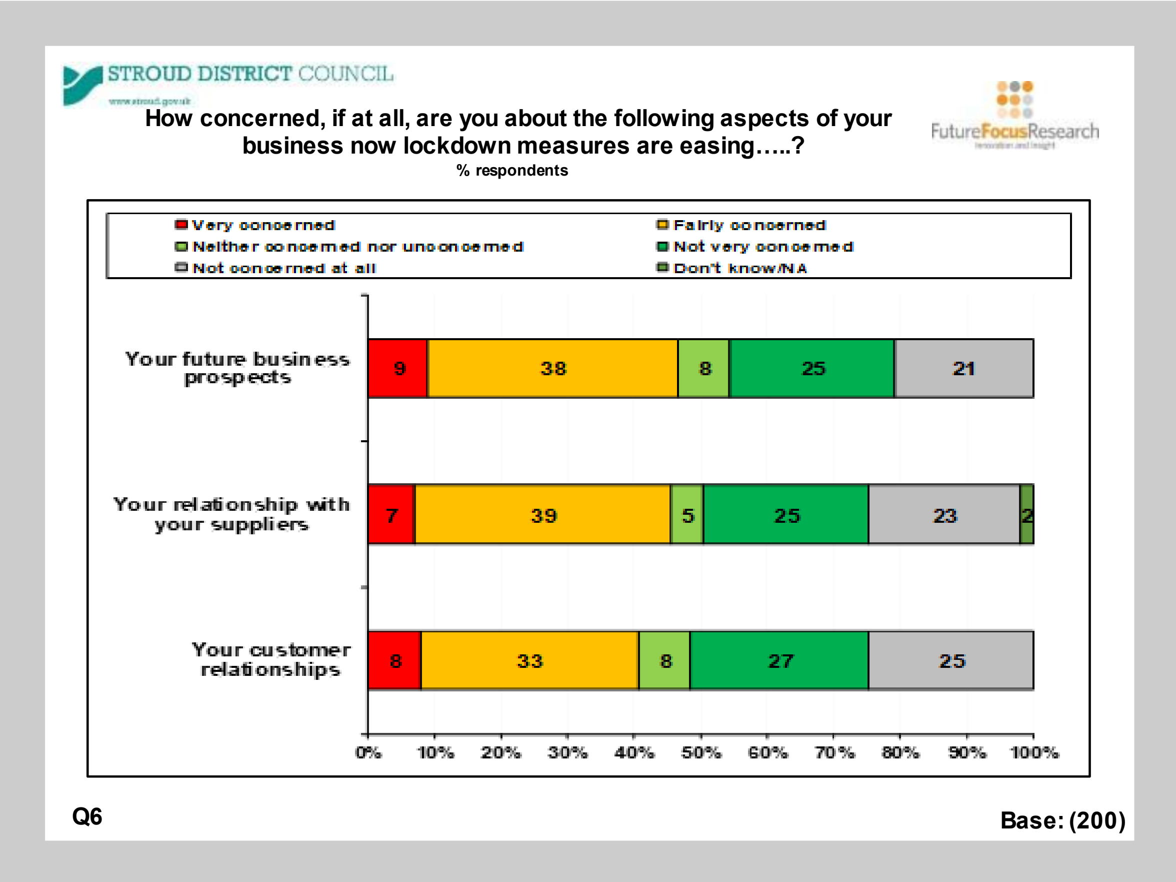
Figure 5.17



Larger companies (those employing 10 or more) were more likely to say that the pandemic has had an effect on their *employees* (87% compared to 69% of smaller businesses), *supply chain* (82% compared to 69%) and *customers* (88% compared to 75%).

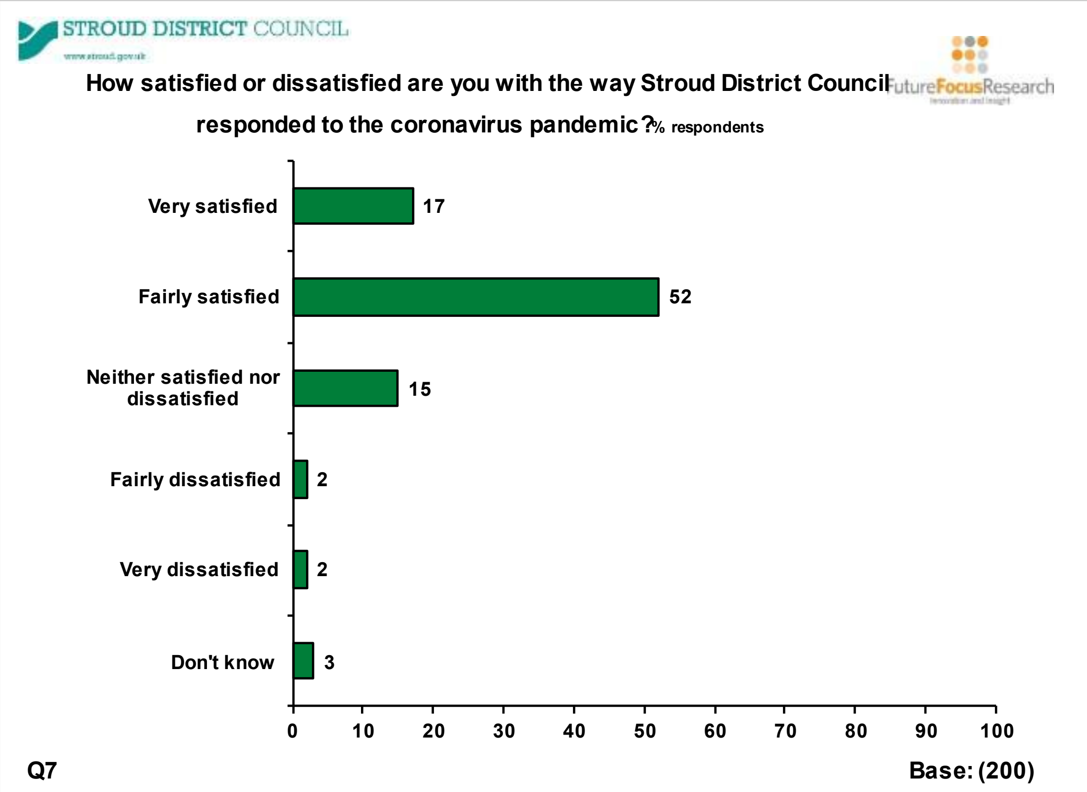
When asked about other aspects of their business as a result of Covid -19, 47% were concerned (either very or fairly) about their *future business prospects* (45% in 2020). A similar percentage (46%) were also concerned about their *relationships with their suppliers* (25% in 2020) and their *customer relationships* (39% - 25% 2020). See figure 5.18.

Figure 5.18



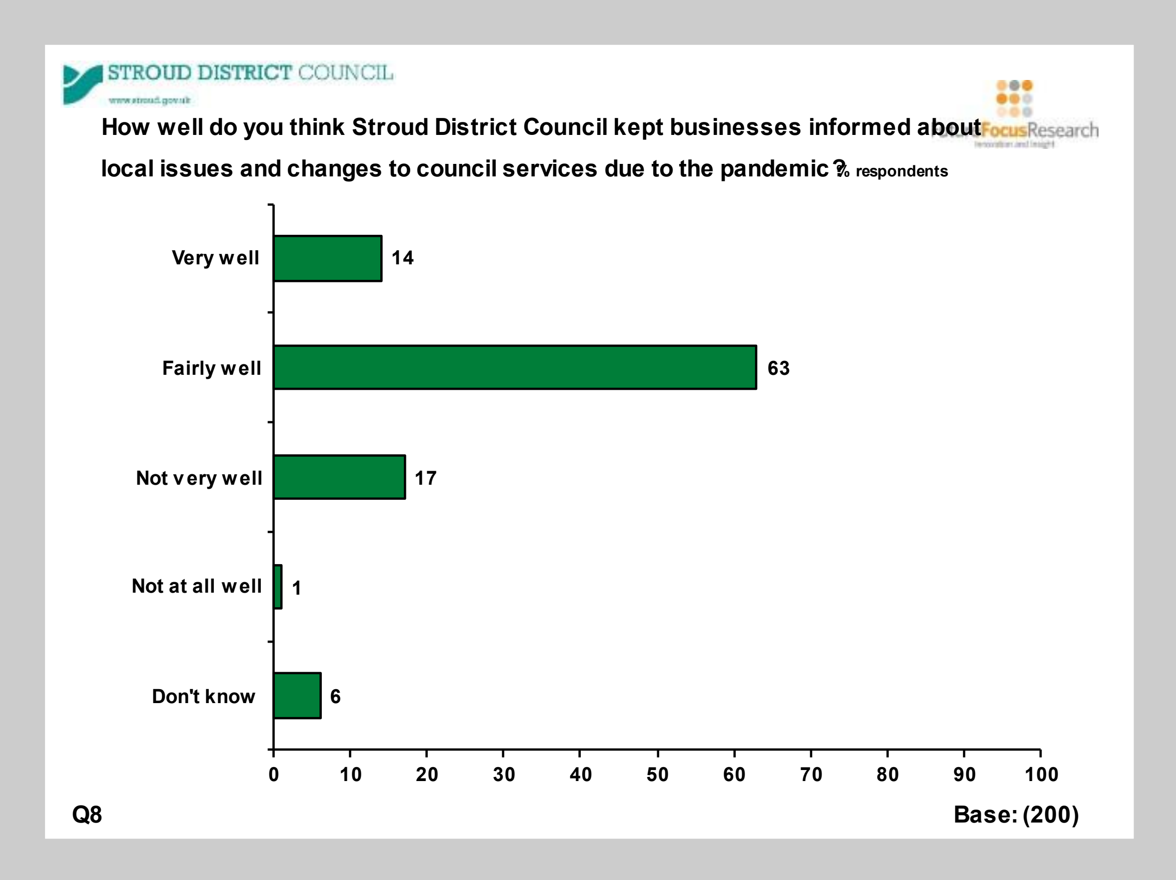
Businesses were also asked how satisfied they were with the way *SDC has respondent to the coronavirus pandemic*. 69% were either *very* or *fairly satisfied*, and just 4% were dissatisfied (also 69% in 2020). See figure 5.19.

Figure 5.19



Businesses were also asked how well they felt *SDC has kept businesses informed about local issues and changes to council services due to the pandemic*. 77% were either *very* or *fairly well informed* (72%) in 2020), and 18% said that they weren't well informed, either *not very well* or *not at all well* (21% in 2020). See figure 5.20.

Figure 5.20



Businesses were asked what the Council could do to help their business in the pandemic recovery. Most did not have any suggestions, but those who did suggested:

- Lower rates (35 businesses)
- Help with rent/bills (15 businesses)
- Make sure there isn't another lockdown (8 businesses)

Appendix A Local area postcodes

Ref	Area Name	Postcodes
1.	Gloucester Border areas	GL2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.7, 3.4, 4.0, 4.8
2.	Stroud Central	GL5.1, to GL5.5
3.	Stroud Border Areas	GL6.0 to GL6.9
4.	Stonehouse	GL10.2, 10.3
5.	Dursley	GL11.4 to GL11.6
6.	Wotton-Under-Edge	GL12.7, 12.8
7.	Berkeley	GL13.9