

Budget Consultation 2016

Report

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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 post towns – 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 10 employees or less; and
- 60 interviews with businesses with more than 10 employees.

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 46.6% 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%.

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	49%	245
Female	51%	255
Age		
18 – 34	21%	105
35 – 54	36%	182
55 – 74	31%	155
75+	11%	53
Prefer not to say	1%	5
Disability		
Yes	10%	52
No	89%	442
Prefer not to say	1%	6

Working status		
Employed in Stroud district	29%	144
Employed outside Stroud district	18%	88
Unemployed and actively looking for paid employment	8%	37
Unemployed but not looking for paid employment	4%	21
Retired	32%	162
At school/college/university	3%	17
Other (e.g. house person, carer)	5%	27
Prefer not to say	1%	4
Ethnicity		
White or White British	91%	457
Other	9%	43
Total	100	500

Where there are differences between any of the demographics, these have been highlighted in the report.

1.3.2 Business Survey

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

Table 1.3

Business Sector	%	Number of responses
Agriculture and Fishing	5.5	11
Business Services	2.5	5
Construction and Building Services	5	10
Creative Services and Media	1	2
Health and Social Work	2.5	5
Hospitality and Leisure	16.5	33
IT and Telecoms	0.5	1
Manufacturing and Engineering	7.5	15
Personal Services	8	16
Professional Services	2	4
Real Estate	1	2
Retail and Wholesale	41.5	83
Transport, storage and distribution	6.5	13
Total	100	200

Number of employees	%	Number of responses
One	10	20
2 – 4	30	60
5 – 10	30	60
11 – 25	22.5	45
26 – 50	6.5	13
51 – 100	1	2
Total	100	200

Where there are differences between businesses of different sizes (10 or less employees v more than 10), 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

- 91% are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (87% in 2015)
- 80% are satisfied with the way SDC runs things (78% in 2015)
- 76% agree that services have been maintained to a good standard (72% in 2015)
- 74% are satisfied that SDC is working to improve the environment (68% in 2015)
- 71% agree that they get value for money from SDC (68% in 2015)
- 65% agree that SDC is business like and efficient (59% in 2015)
- **Agreement with all statements have increased since 2015**
- The services valued the most were refuse collection (63% high), recycling (55%) and housing (52%)
- Waste/recycling (47%) and housing (46%) were the services considered to be most in need of funding
- 92% rated *provide value for money and high quality services* as a very high/high priority (83% in 2015)
- 92% rated *help local people and businesses grow the local economy and increase employment* as a very high/high priority (88% in 2015)
- 78% rated *provide affordable and decent housing* as a very high/high priority (77% in 2015)
- 78% rated *minimise carbon footprint/recycle more/less waste to landfill* as a very high/high priority (66% in 2015)
- 75% rated *promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and deliver the public health agenda* as a very high/high priority (71% in 2015)
- **All areas were considered to be a higher priority than in 2015**

Information from Stroud DC

- 72% think that SDC acts upon the concerns of local residents a great deal or a fair amount. This was higher than in 2015 (63%)
- 85% think that SDC keeps residents very or fairly well informed, compared to 71% in 2015

Council Tax

- 43% would not accept any level of increase in Council tax, whilst 32% would accept a 2% increase. 12% would accept 4% or more.

Contact with SDC

- 28% had either contacted the Council or had found out information about the Council recently. The main method was by phone (70%)
- Those who hadn't made contact said if they needed to they would do so by phone (60%) or website (28%)

Stroud District Council's website

- 33% had used the Council's website, of these, 98% managed to do everything they needed to
- Of those most (96%) were happy with the website and did not have any suggestions for improvement
- The main reasons given for not using the website were that phoning was quicker (29%), not online (21%) and no need (20%)

2.2 Business Survey

Satisfaction and priorities

- 93% are satisfied with their local areas as a place to do business (92% in 2015)
- 84% are satisfied that SDC is working to improve the environment (84% in 2015)
- 70% are satisfied with the way SDC runs things (64% in 2015)
- 66% agree that services have been maintained to a good standard (55% in 2015)
- 65% agree that they get value for money from SDC (56% in 2015)
- 64% agree that SDC is business like and efficient (57% in 2015)
- **Agreement with all statements have either increased or stayed the same since 2015**
- 95% rated *provide value for money and high quality services* as a very high/high priority (88% in 2015)
- 93% rated *help local people and businesses grow the local economy and increase employment* as a very high/high priority (82% in 2015)
- 93% rated *provide affordable and decent housing* as a very high/high priority (79% in 2015)
- 87% rated *promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and deliver the public health agenda* as a very high/high priority (75% in 2015)
- 85% rated *minimise carbon footprint/recycle more/less waste to landfill* as a very high/high priority (74% in 2015)
- **More businesses rated each area as very high/high priority than in 2015**
- Roads/Highways (73%) & Transport and parking (68%) were considered the most important services to businesses though they had been advised that these are not provided by SDC

Employment of staff

- 20% had employed additional staff in the last 12 months, the same as 2015 with most (90%) having had no difficulty recruiting people with the right skills

Broadband/Mobile phone signal

- 50% are satisfied with their current broadband performance
- 85% are satisfied with their current mobile phone/device coverage
- 11% said that their business is somewhat or greatly restricted by mobile phone/device coverage

Support for businesses

- Rates/rent/licence fee issues (43%), parking improvements (35%) and town centre/market stall issues (32%) were the most common suggestions on what the Council can do to support growth and increase employment
- Stop waste/become more efficient/prioritise/spend less/streamlining (63%) were the most common suggestions on how the Council can best deliver services to residents and businesses without spending more money
- Only 17% were aware of the budget changes regarding business rates
- 9% said that the EU Referendum decision has made them somewhat uncertain about their future business plans, 89% said it would make no difference

Working with education providers

- 11% worked with schools colleges, lower than any other year (2015 - 27%). The most common link was work experience.

Information from Stroud DC

- 64% said they are very well/fairly well informed about services and benefits the Council provides
- This was similar in 2015 (65%) – although note that question was worded slightly differently

Contact with Council

- 8% had recently contacted the Council
- The main method of contact was by phone (81%)
- Just 7% had used the Councils new website
- 93% of those using the website managed to do what they needed (base:14)

3. Residents v Businesses

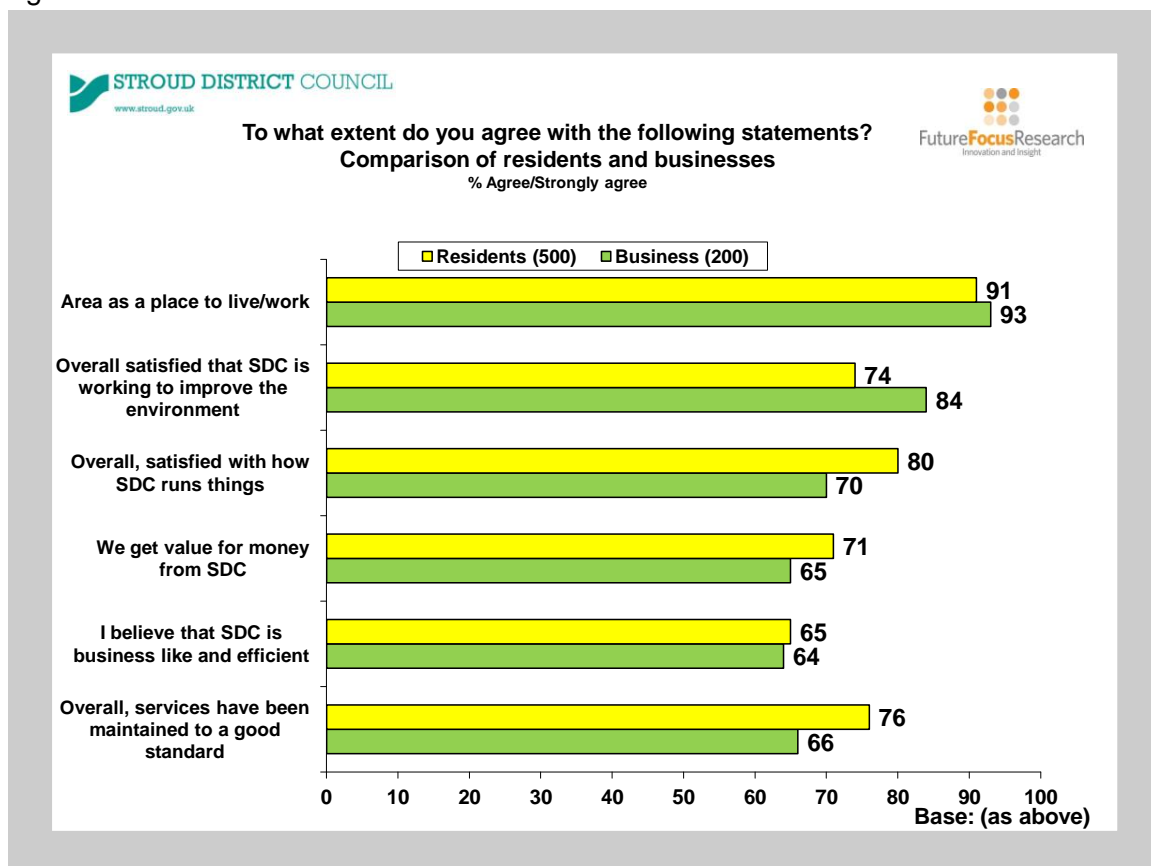
3.1 Opinions of Stroud DC

Whilst residents and businesses were consistently happy with their area as a place to live and work, opinions differed with regards to other aspects of the Council.

Business were more likely to agree that Stroud DC *is working to improve the environment* (84% compared to 74%).

Residents were more likely to agree that they are *satisfied with the way Stroud DC runs things* (80% compared to 70%) and that *services have been maintained to a good standard* (76% compared to 66%). See figure 3.1.

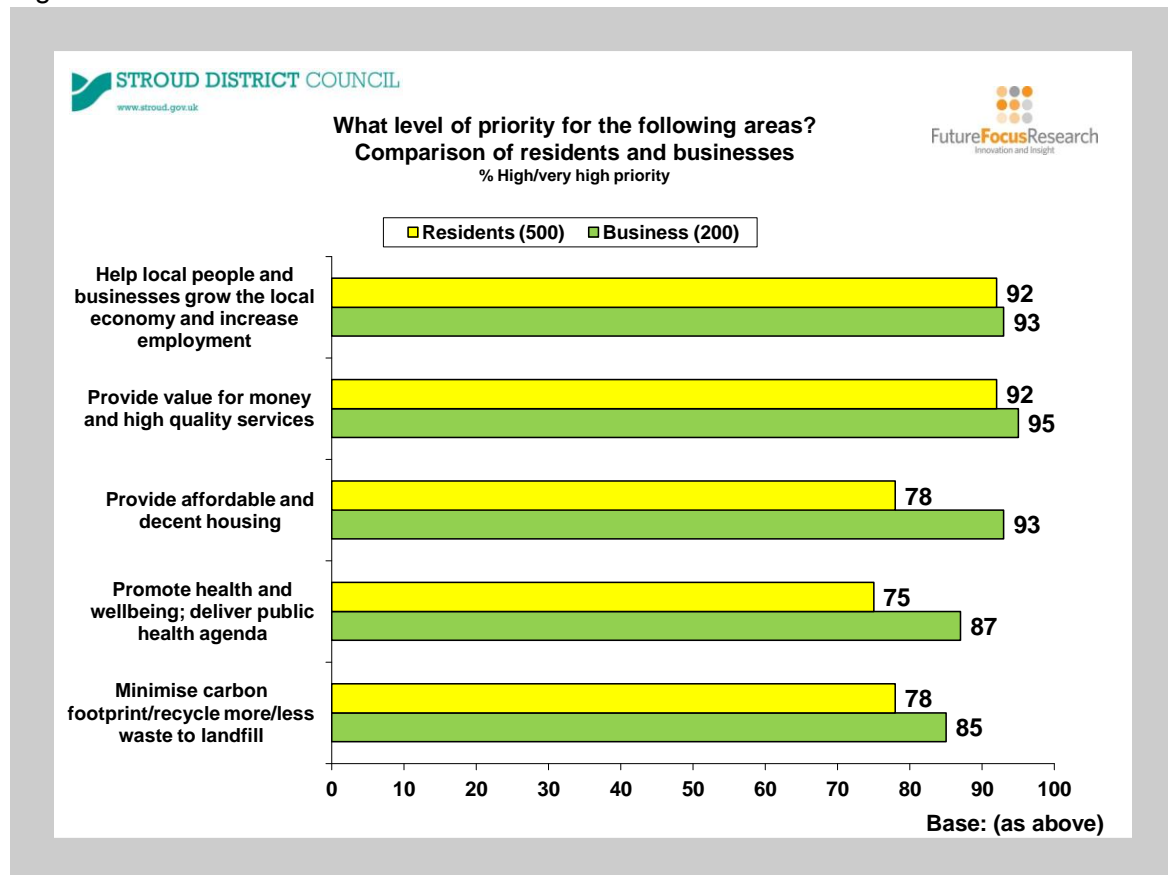
Figure 3.1



3.2 Corporate Delivery Plan

There is consistency between residents and businesses in the high level of priority given to each element of the Corporate Delivery Plan. However, there is more of a difference between the views of businesses and residents regarding housing and health. See figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2



4. Resident Survey

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

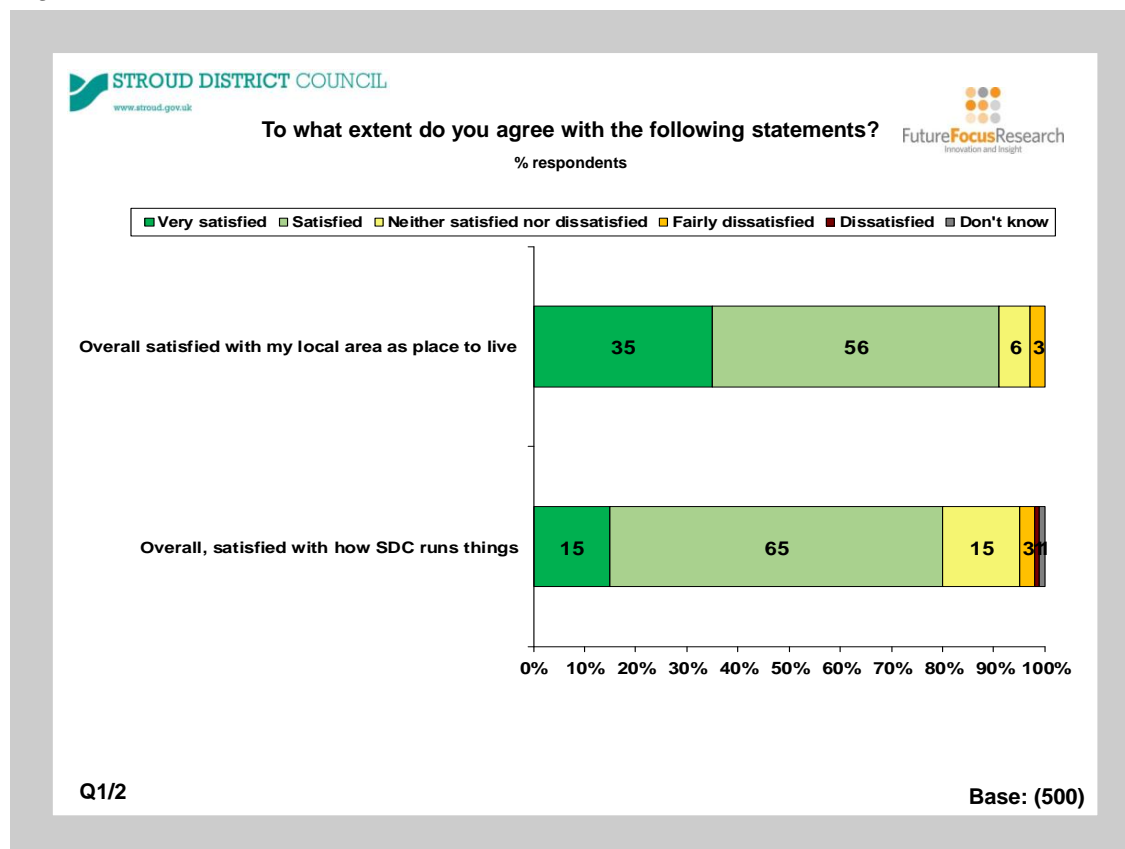
- Satisfaction and Priorities
- Information from Stroud District Council
- Council Tax
- Contact with Stroud District Council
- Council's Website

4.1 Satisfaction and Priorities

The vast majority of respondents were happy with their area as a place to live (91% *very satisfied* or *satisfied*). See figure 4.1. However, there was a difference in viewpoint in the age-groups: younger residents (those aged 18 – 34) were less satisfied (75%, compared to 96% of 35-54s, 95% of 55-74s and 95% of those 75+).

Residents were asked how satisfied they were with the way Stroud DC runs things and 8 in 10 residents (80%) said they were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied*.

Figure 4.1



Again, those aged 18-34 were less satisfied than other groups (63% compared to 85% of 35-54s, 81% of 55-74s and 91% of those 75+)

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). The statement attracting the highest level of agreement was *over the past few years, services have been maintained to a good standard* at 76% (strongly agree/agree).

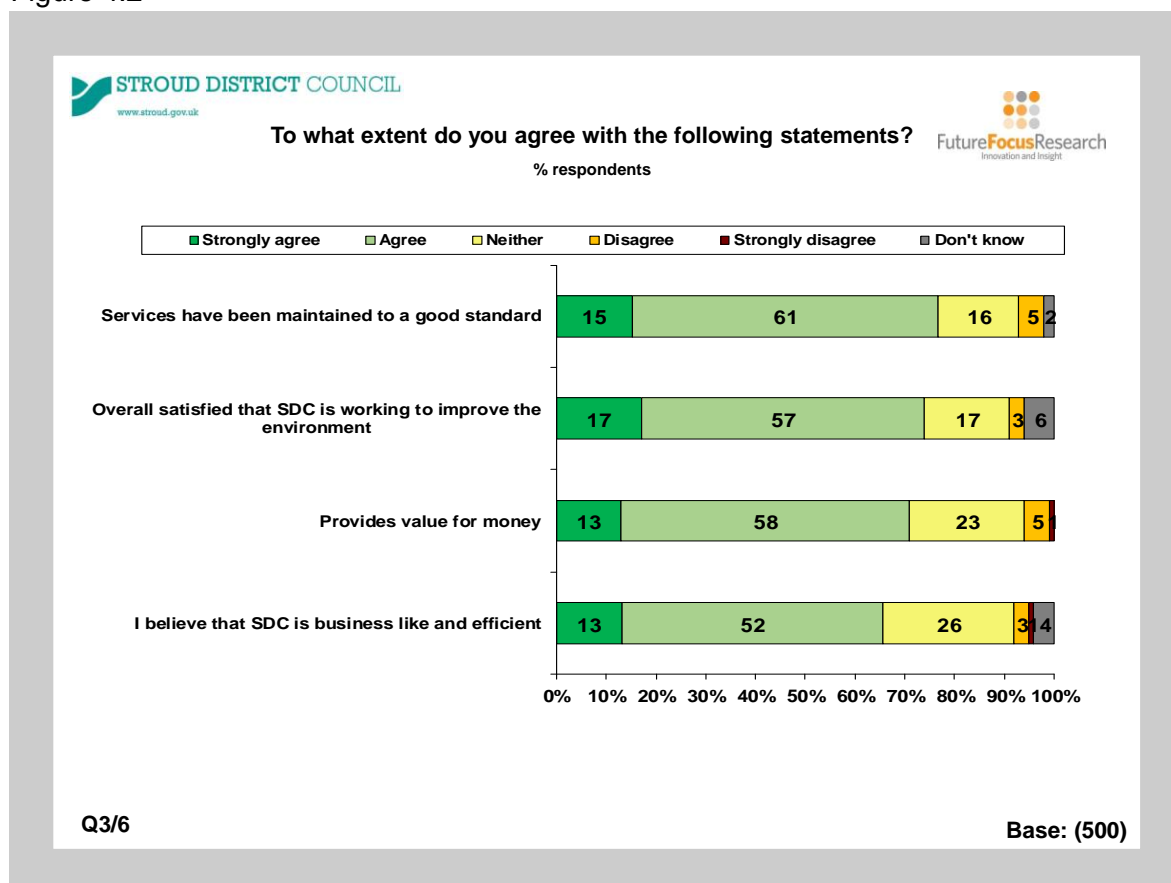
Almost three quarters (74%) agreed (either strongly agree/agree) that *Stroud DC is working to improve the environment*, and 71% agreed that *Stroud DC provides value for money*. The statement with the lowest percentage agreement was *Stroud DC is business like and efficient* (65%).

Those aged 18 – 34 were less likely to agree with most statements than other age groups:

- *Stroud DC is working to improve the environment* (52%)
- *Over the past few years, services have been maintained to a good standard* (60%)
- *Stroud DC provides value for money* (54%)
- *Stroud DC is business like and efficient* (51%)

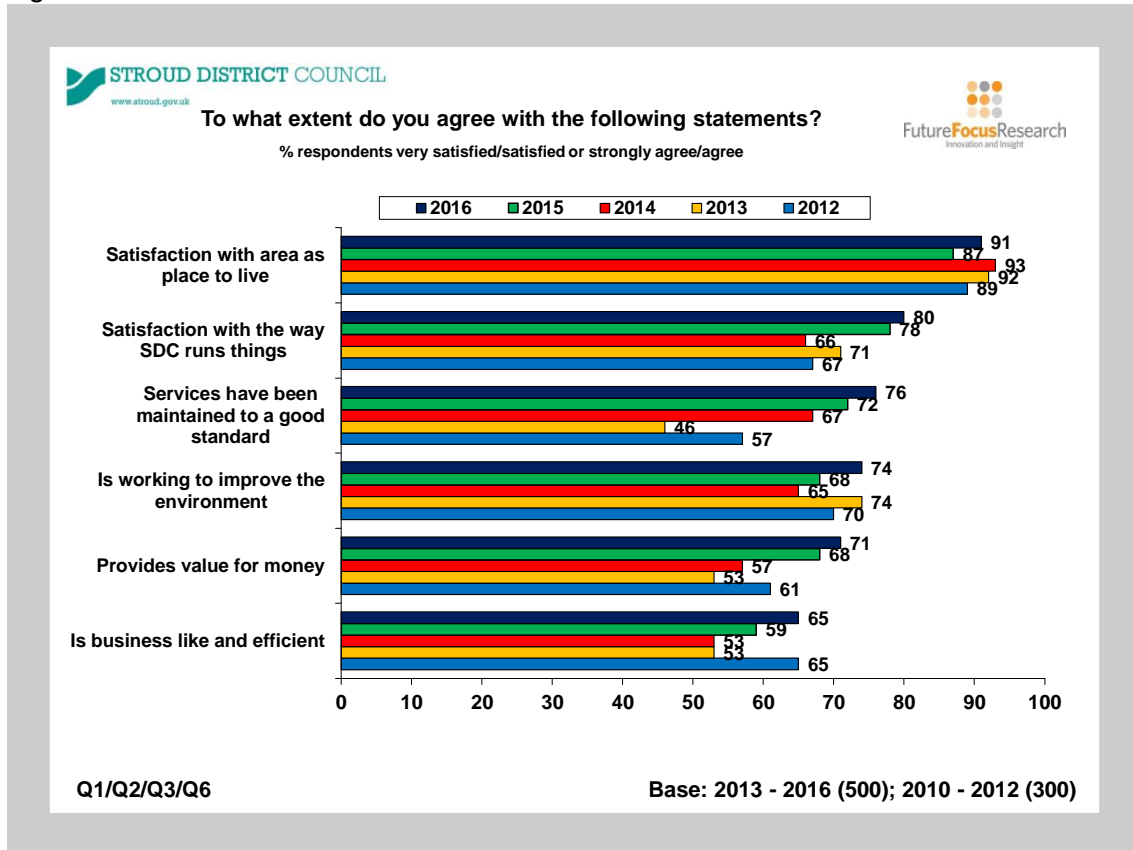
Women and those over 75 were most likely to agree with all statements.

Figure 4.2



Comparing the 2016 findings with previous years, results were an improvement on 2015 with all areas increasing in satisfaction/agreement, some the highest ever. See figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3



Residents were asked to what extent they valued a list of services. The most valued services were *refuse collection* (63% high), *recycling* (55% high) and *housing service* (52% high). The least valued services were *Stroud subscription rooms* (10% high), *tourist information centre* (10% high) and *dog warden and animal welfare* (12% high). Those aged 18-34 were less likely to value services highly than other age groups. See figures 4.4 and 4.5.

Figure 4.4

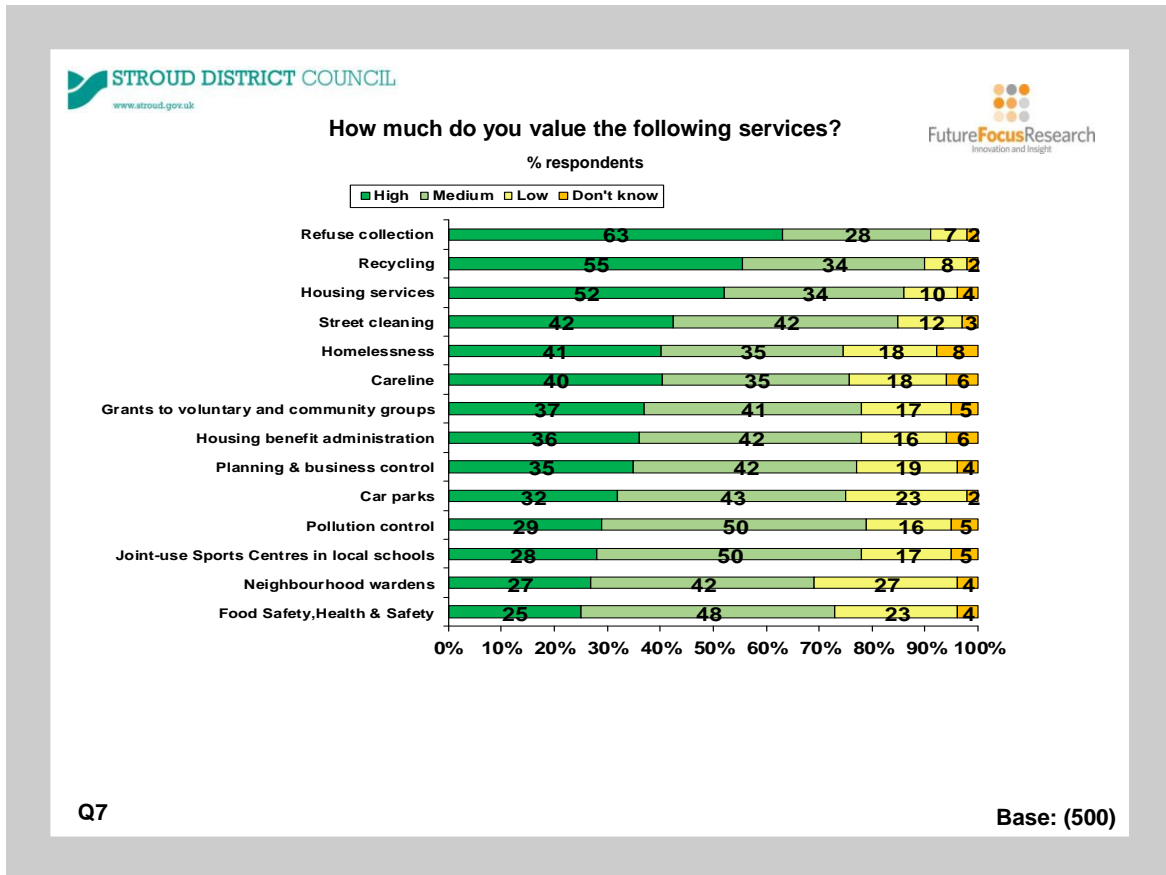
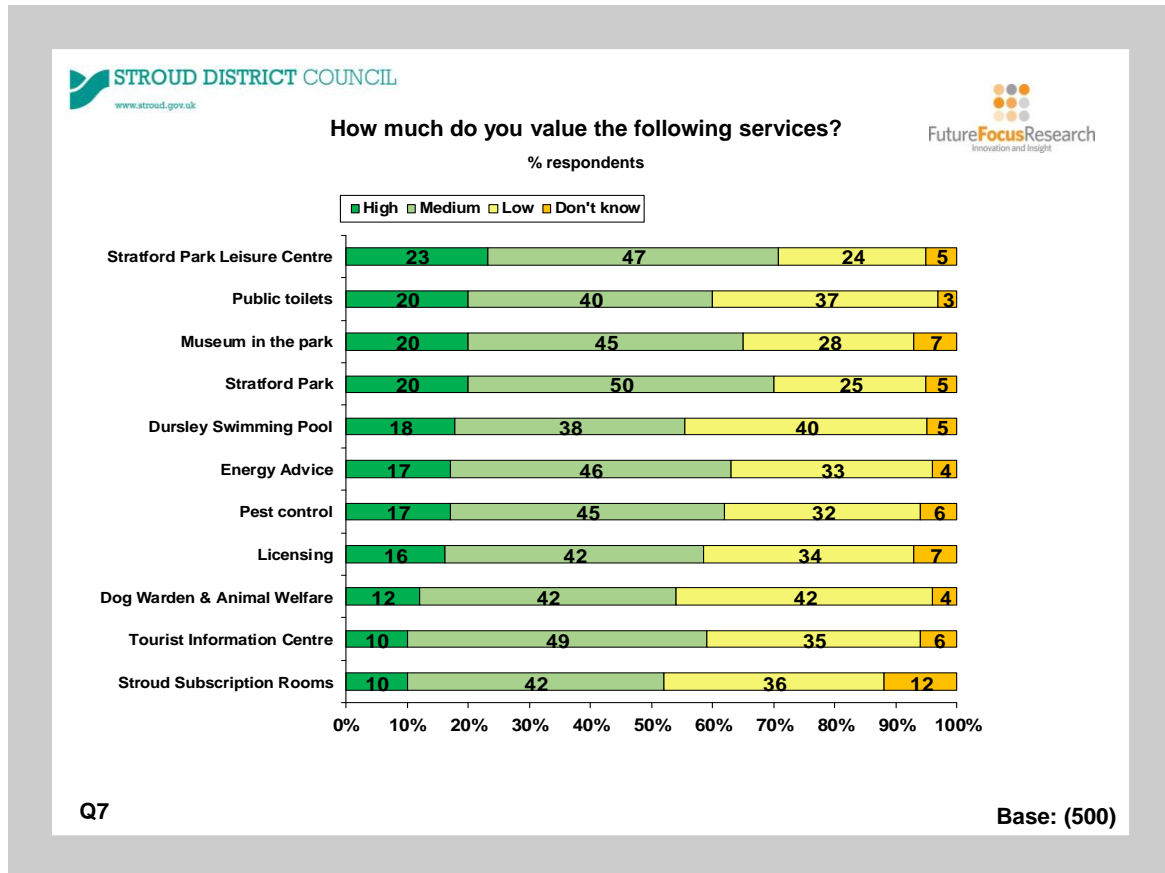
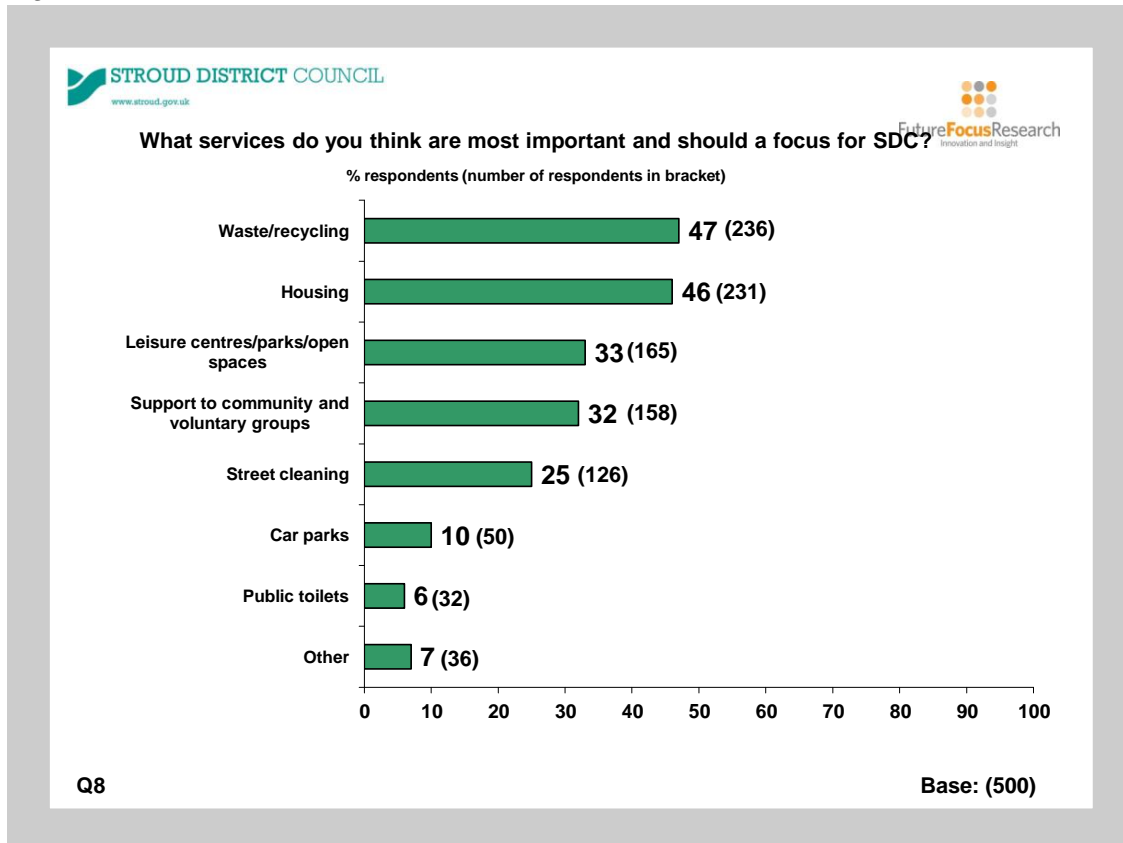


Figure 4.5



Respondents were asked what services they felt were the most important and should be a focus for Stroud DC. The most popular mentions were *waste/recycling* (47%) and *housing* (46%). See figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6



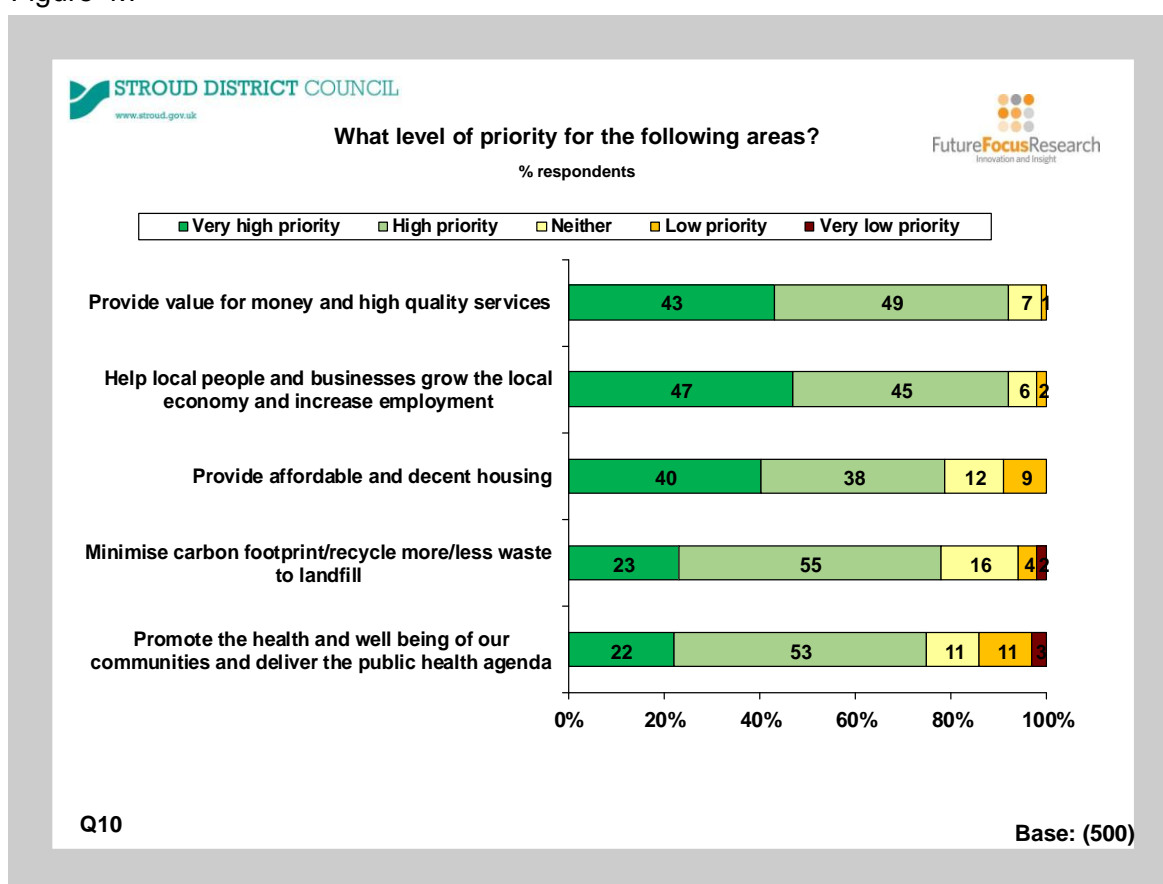
The main focus of those aged 18 – 34 was *leisure centre/parks/open spaces* (52%), with less of a focus to *support to community and voluntary groups* (18%) and *street cleaning* (9%).

Respondents were then asked to indicate the level of priority for each of the five broad areas in the Corporate Delivery Plan. All areas were rated as either a *very high* or a *high* priority by the majority of respondents.

The areas rated the highest priority was *provide value for money to local taxpayers and high quality services to our customers* and *help local people and businesses recover from recession and grow local economy* both with 92% rating it as a *very high* or *high* priority.

78% felt that *provide affordable and decent housing and minimise carbon footprint/recycle more/less waste to landfill* was a *very high* or a *high* priority. The area rated as lowest priority, but still a *high* or *very high* priority for 75% of respondents was *promote health and wellbeing and deliver the public health agenda*. See figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7

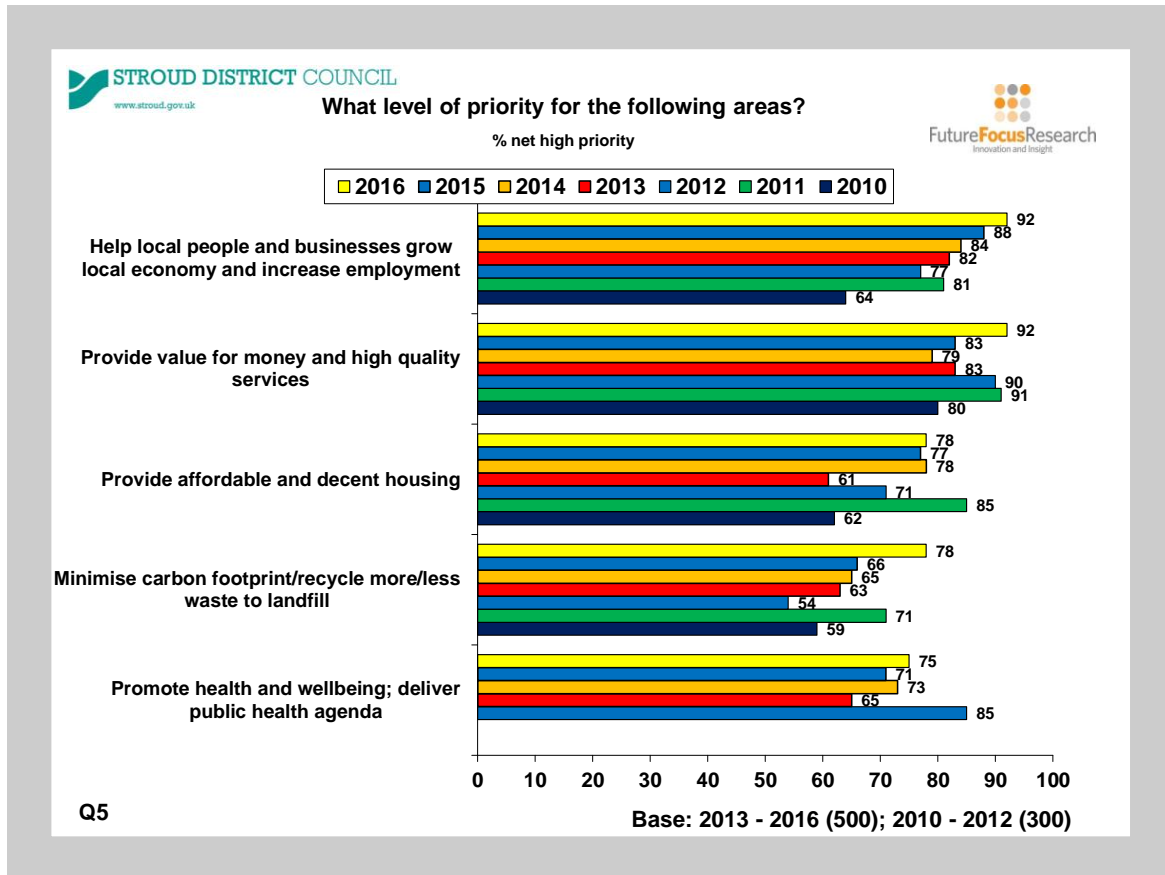


Those aged 18- 34 were less likely than other age groups to rate *minimise carbon footprint/recycle more/less waste to landfill* as a high or a very high priority (53%). Women were more likely than men (84% compared to 70%) to rate this as high or very high.

Those aged 18-34 were also less likely than other age groups to rate *promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and deliver the public health agenda* as a high or very high priority (47%). Those aged 75+ were the most likely (90%).

All areas have increased in priority since 2015, see figure 4.8.

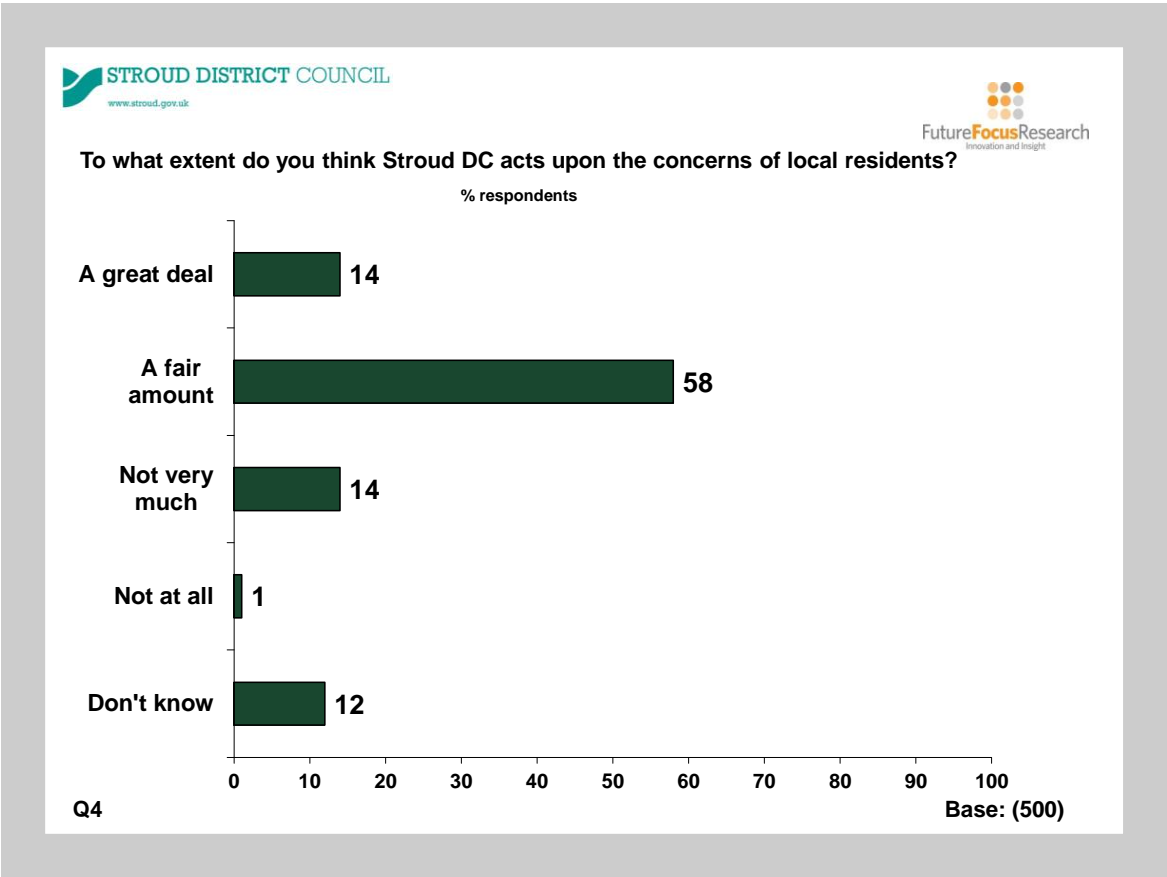
Figure 4.8



4.2 Information from Stroud DC

Residents were asked to what extent they think Stroud DC *acts upon the concerns of local residents*. Over 7 in 10 (72%) felt that they did, either *a great deal* or *a fair amount*. This has increased from 63% in 2015. A further 15% stated *not very much* or *not at all* (22% in 2015). See figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9

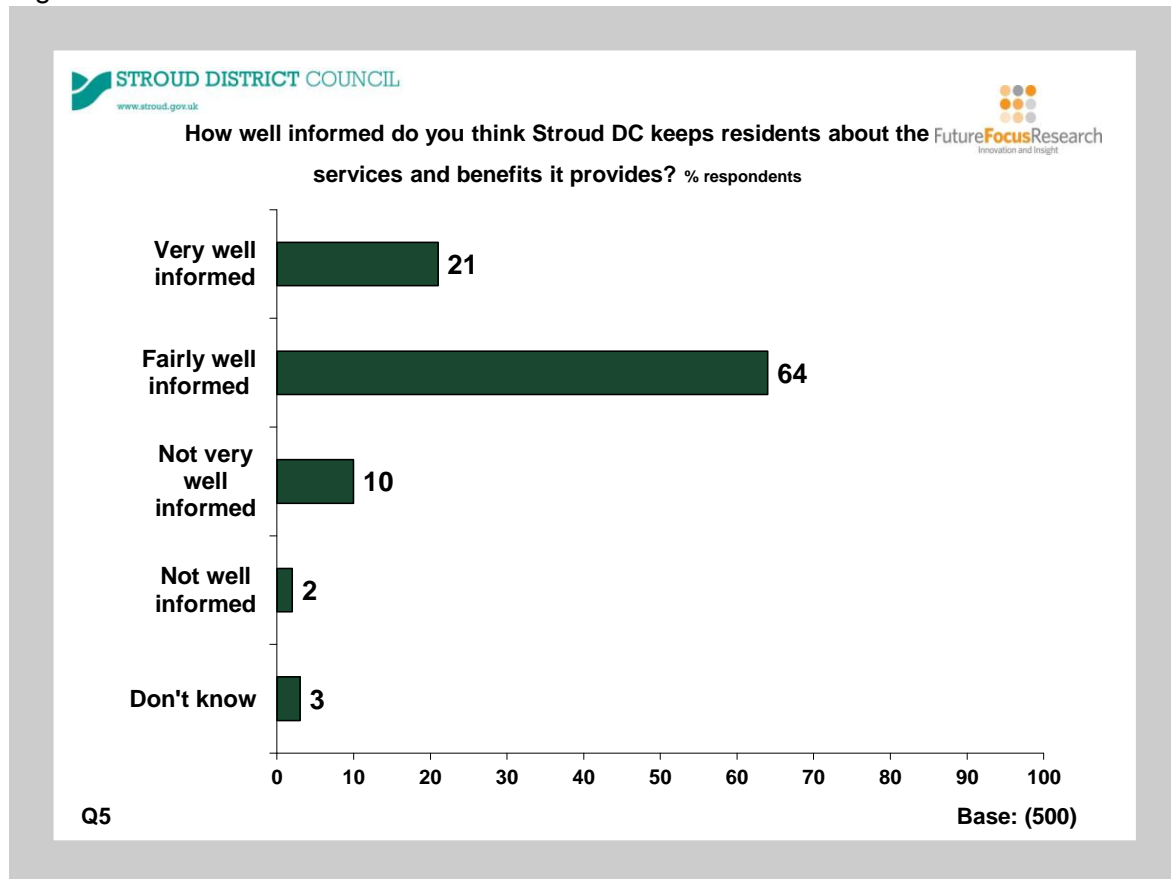


Those aged 18-34 were the least likely to say either *a great deal* or *a fair amount* (56%).

Residents were also asked how well they felt Stroud DC keeps residents informed about the benefits and services it provides. 85% felt that they were either *very well informed* or *fairly well informed*. This has increased from 71% in 2015. See figure 4.10.

Those aged 18 – 34 were least likely to say that they were very or fairly well informed (68%).

Figure 4.10



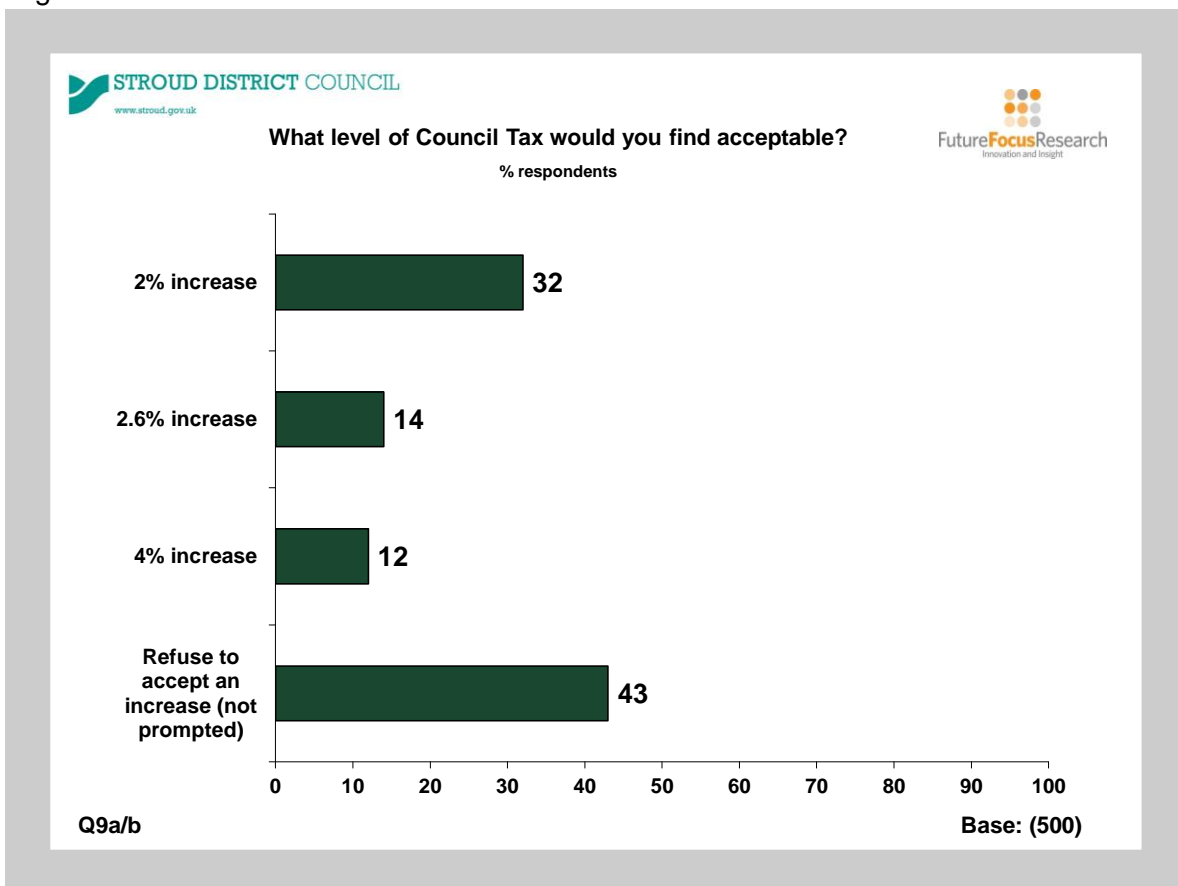
4.3 Council Tax

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

- 2% increase
- 2.6% increase
- 4% increase

Despite it not being offered as a response, 43% would not accept an increase (66% amongst 18-34 year olds). Thirty two percent (32%) of respondents felt that there should be a 2% increase. Just 14% were prepared to accept a 2.6% increase and 12% would accept a 4% increase. In total 56% would accept an increase of 2% or more. See figure 4.11.

Figure 4.11

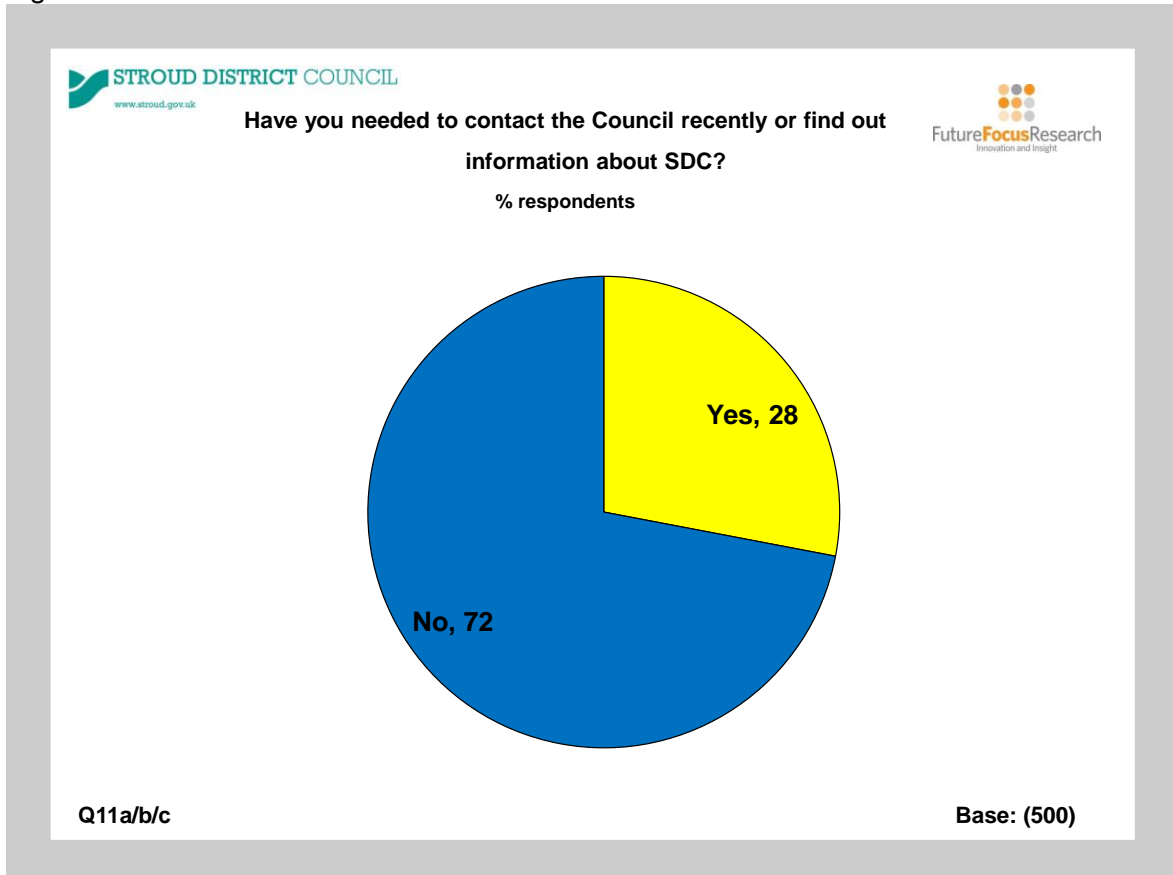


Those who said that they would pay a 4% increase, were asked whether they would be prepared to pay more than 4%. Of these, 8% (40 respondents) said that they would. These were mostly 35 – 54 year olds.

4.4 Contact with Stroud District Council

When asked, over a quarter (28%) said that they had contacted Stroud DC recently or found out information about the Council. See figure 4.12.

Figure 4.12



Of those more women than men had made contact (32% compared to 23% of men).

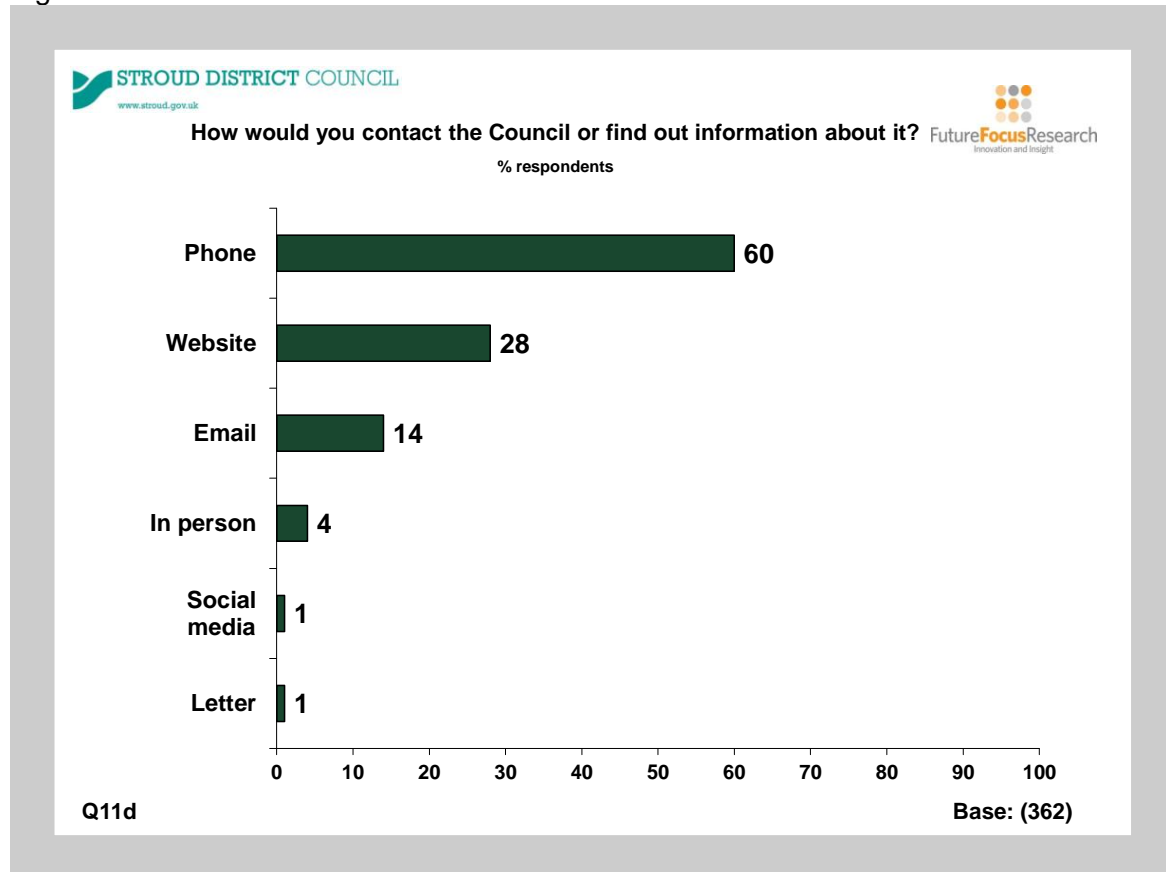
For those who'd had contact with the Council the main method was by telephone (70%). 20% had used the website and 9% had emailed the Council.

The main reasons for contact were:

- Waste & recycling/street cleaning 33%
- Business rates/Council tax 25%
- Planning 13%

Those who had not contacted the Council were asked how they would go about contacting them or finding out any information should they need to. The most popular response was by telephone (60%). See figure 4.13.

Figure 4.13



Women and those over 75 were most likely to phone (68% and 79% respectively).

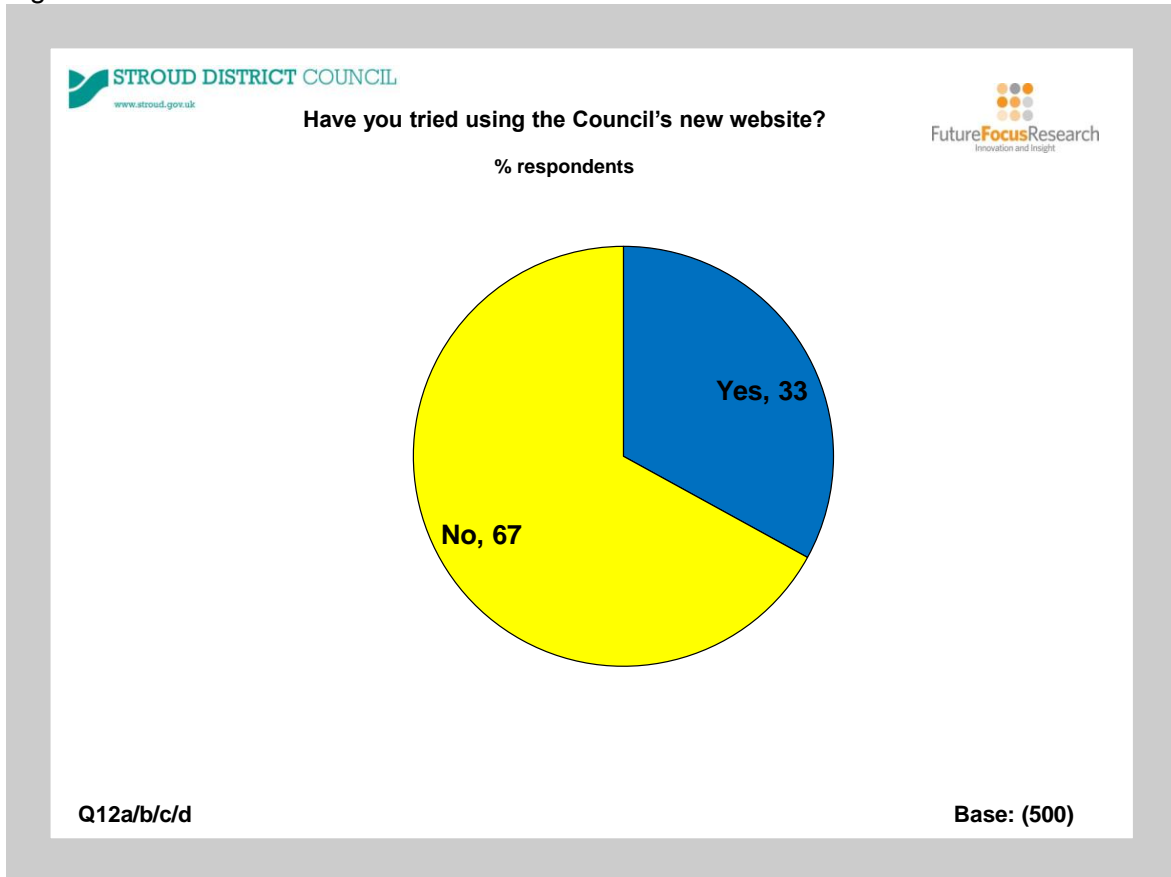
Those aged 18 – 34 and 35 – 55 were most likely to use the website (46% and 32%).

Men and those aged 18 – 34 were most likely to email (17% and 22%).

4.5 Council's Website

A third (33%) said that they had used the Council's new website. See figure 4.14.

Figure 4.14

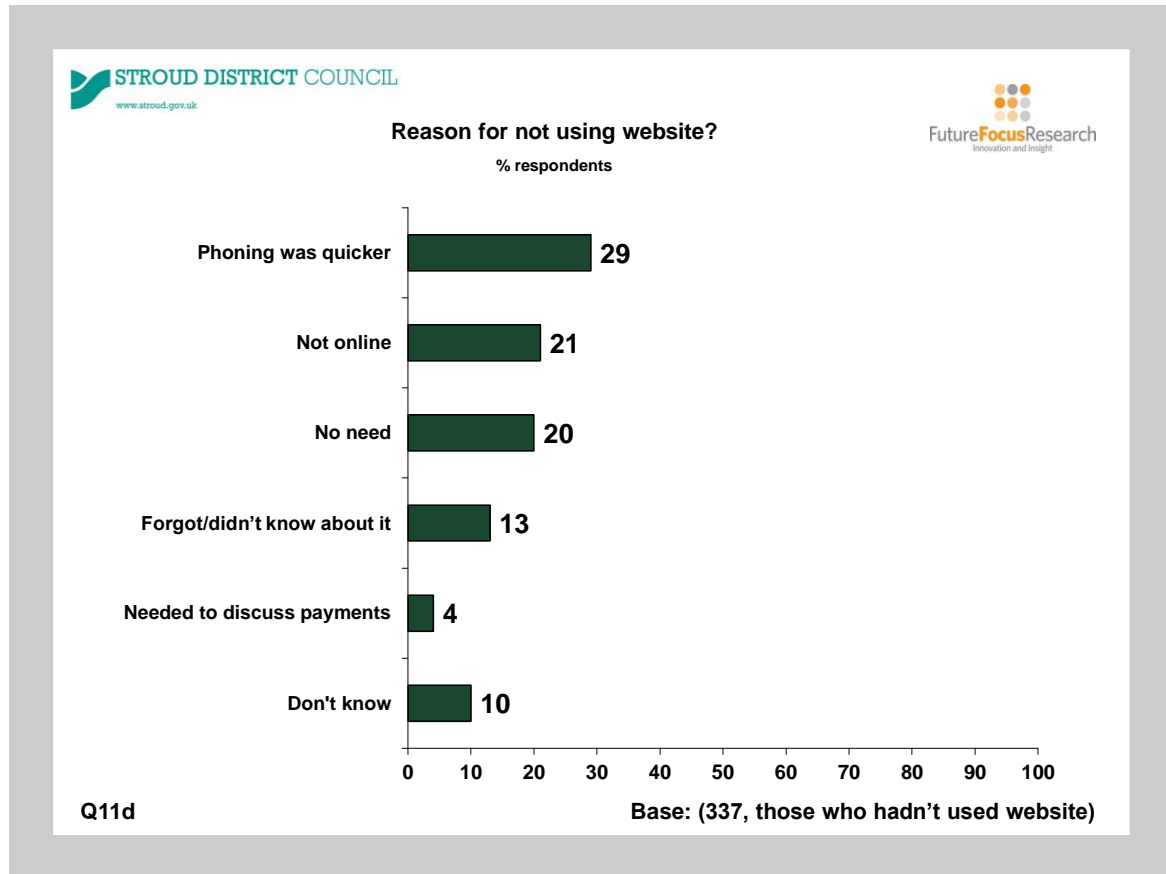


Those aged 35 – 54 were most likely to have used the website (48%) and those aged 75+ the least likely (6%).

Almost all website users (98%) managed to do everything they needed to do on the website and most (96%) had no suggestions on improving the site.

Those who hadn't used the website were asked the reason why. The main reason was that *phoning was quicker* (29%), followed by *not online* (21%) and *no need* (20%). See figure 4.15.

Figure 4.15



The percentage of those giving *not online* as a reason increased to 72% amongst those aged 75+.

5. Business Survey

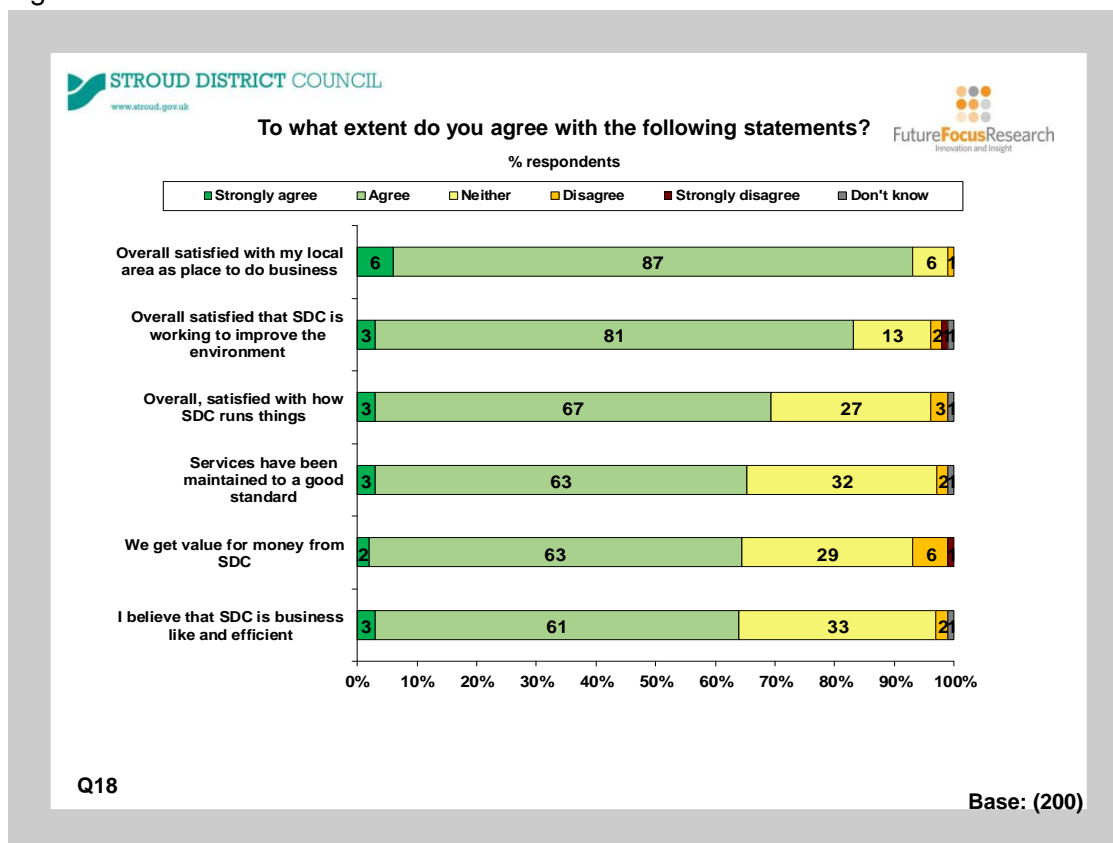
This section details the views and opinions from the business survey, covering:

- Satisfaction and Priorities
- Employment of staff
- Broadband/Mobile phone signal
- Support for businesses
- Working with education providers
- Information from Stroud District Council
- Contact with Stroud District Council
- Stroud District Council's website

5.1 Satisfaction and Priorities

Over 9 in 10 (93%) agreed (strongly agree/agree) that they were *satisfied with their local area as a place to do business* and over 8 in 10 (84%) agreed (strongly agree/agree) that they were *satisfied that Stroud DC is working to improve the environment*. Seven in 10 (70%) agreed (strongly agree/agree) that they were *satisfied with how Stroud DC runs things*. Two thirds (66%) agreed that *services have been maintained to a good standard*, 65% agreed that they *get value for money from Stroud DC* and 64% agreed that they are *business like and efficient*.

Figure 5.1



Comparing this year's results to previous years, the percentage agreement to all statements has risen or stayed the same, the most notable increase being *services have been maintained to a good standard* (risen from 55% in 2015 to 66% in 2016). See figure 5.2. With the exception of *satisfaction with the local area as a place to do business* and *SDC is working to improve the environment*, agreement with all other statements were lower amongst businesses with more than 10 employees.

Figure 5.2

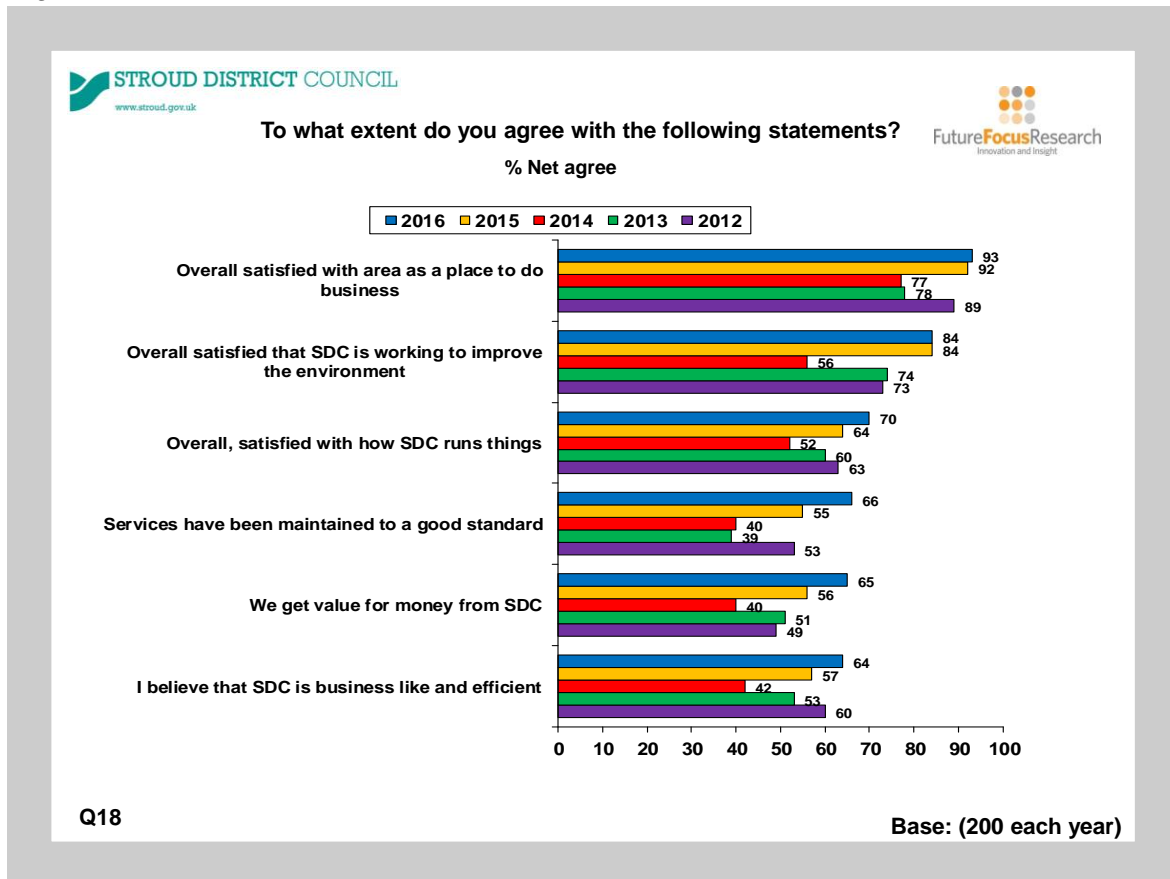
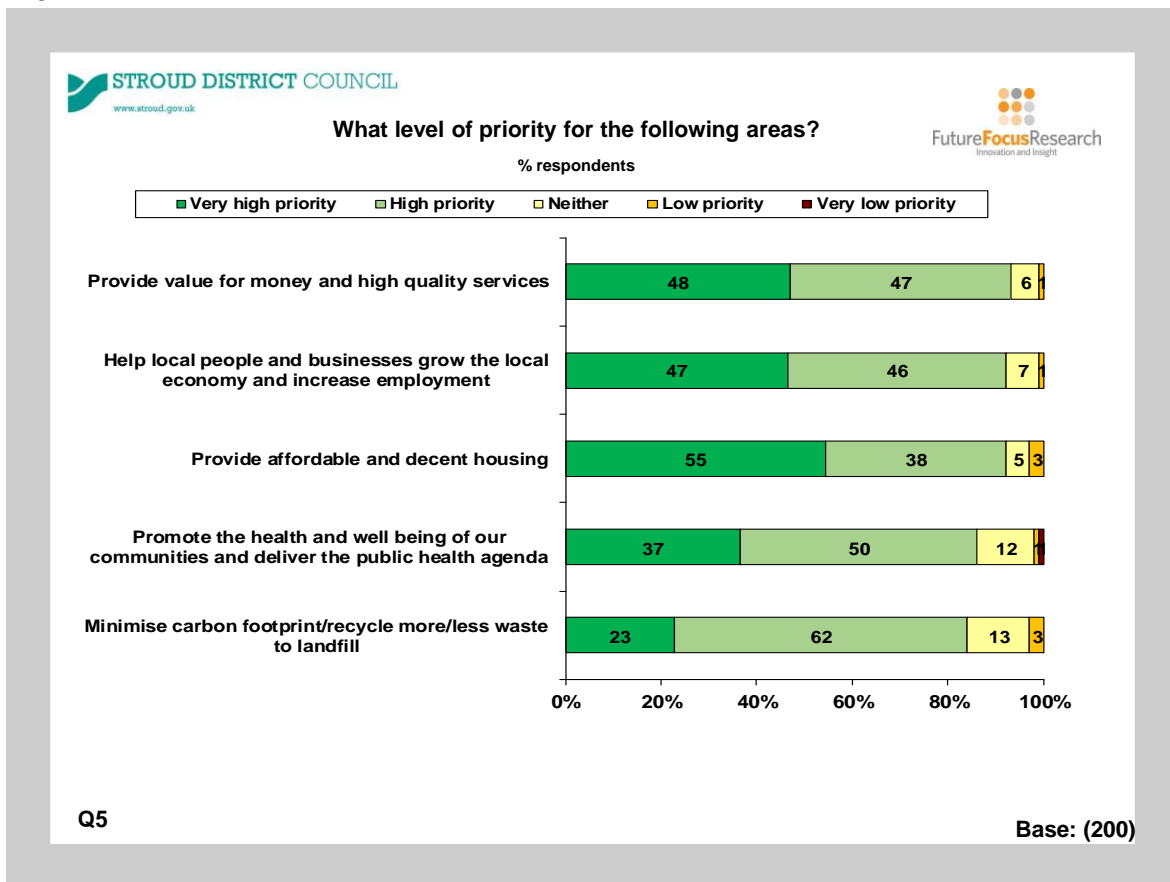


Figure 5.3 illustrates the extent to which respondents felt Stroud DC should prioritise certain areas. The majority of respondents (over 85%) felt that all areas were a priority (either *very high* or *high*).

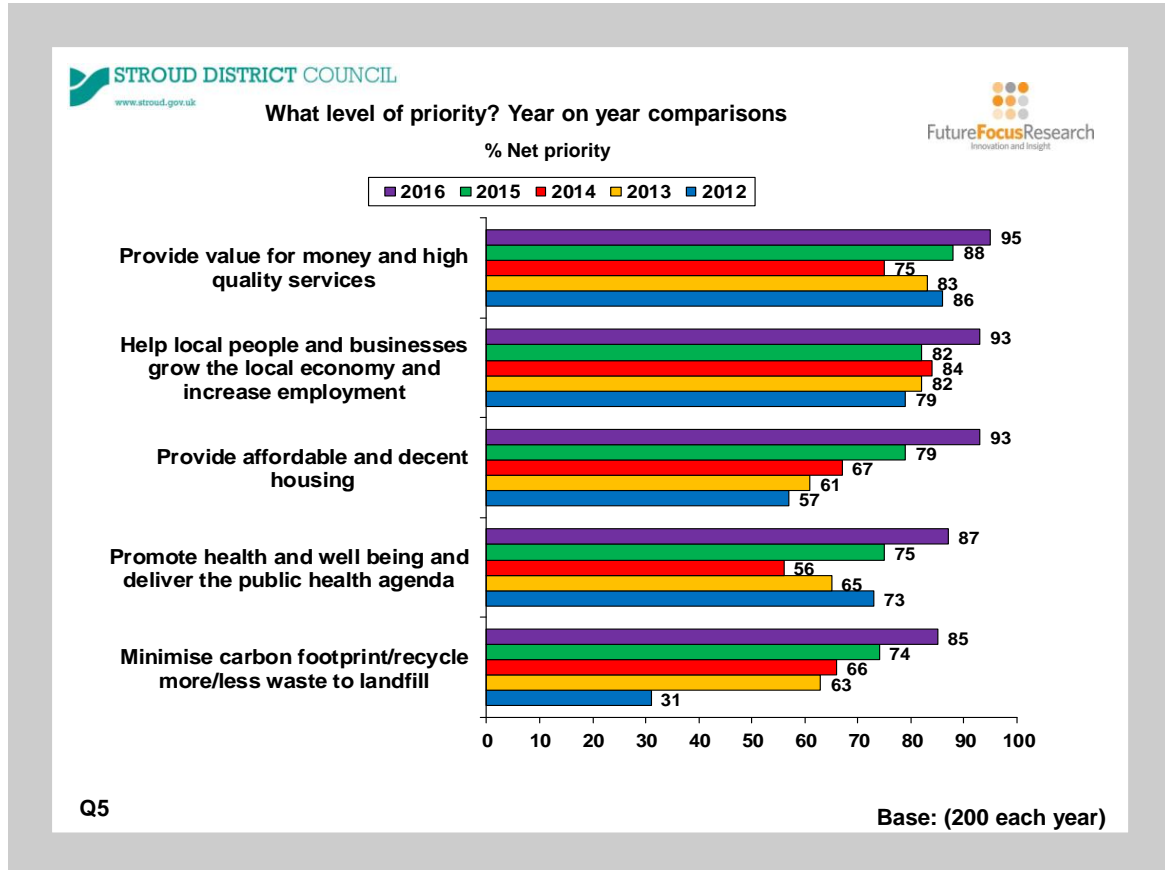
- *Provide value for money and high quality services* :95%
- *Help local people and businesses recover from recession and grow local economy:* 93%
- *Provide affordable and decent housing* :93%
- *Promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and deliver the public health agenda* :87%
- *Minimise carbon footprint/recycle more/less waste to landfill* :85%

Figure 5.3



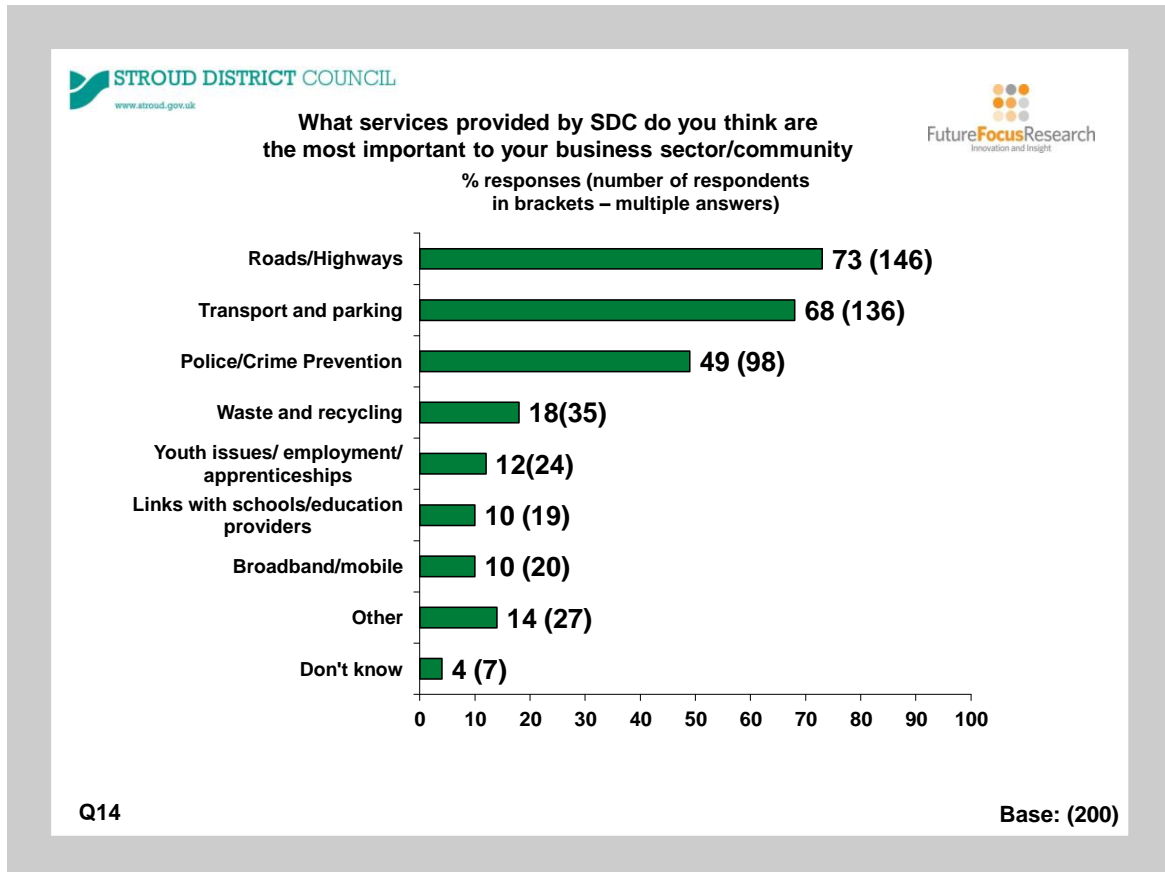
For all areas, the levels of priority have increased significantly since 2015, in particular *provide affordable and decent housing* (increased from 79% to 93%). See figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4



Respondents were then asked what services provided by Stroud DC they thought were most important to their business sector/community. Despite being told what services Stroud DC provides, *roads and highways* was still the most popular response at 73%, followed by *transport and parking* (68%). See figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5



5.2 Employment of Staff

One in 5 businesses (20%) had employed additional staff in the past 12 months (see figure 5.6). This is consistent with 2015. Business with over 10 employees were more likely to have employed staff (33% compared to 14% of smaller businesses). Of these, 90% of them had no difficulty recruiting people with the right skills (see figure 5.7).

Figure 5.6

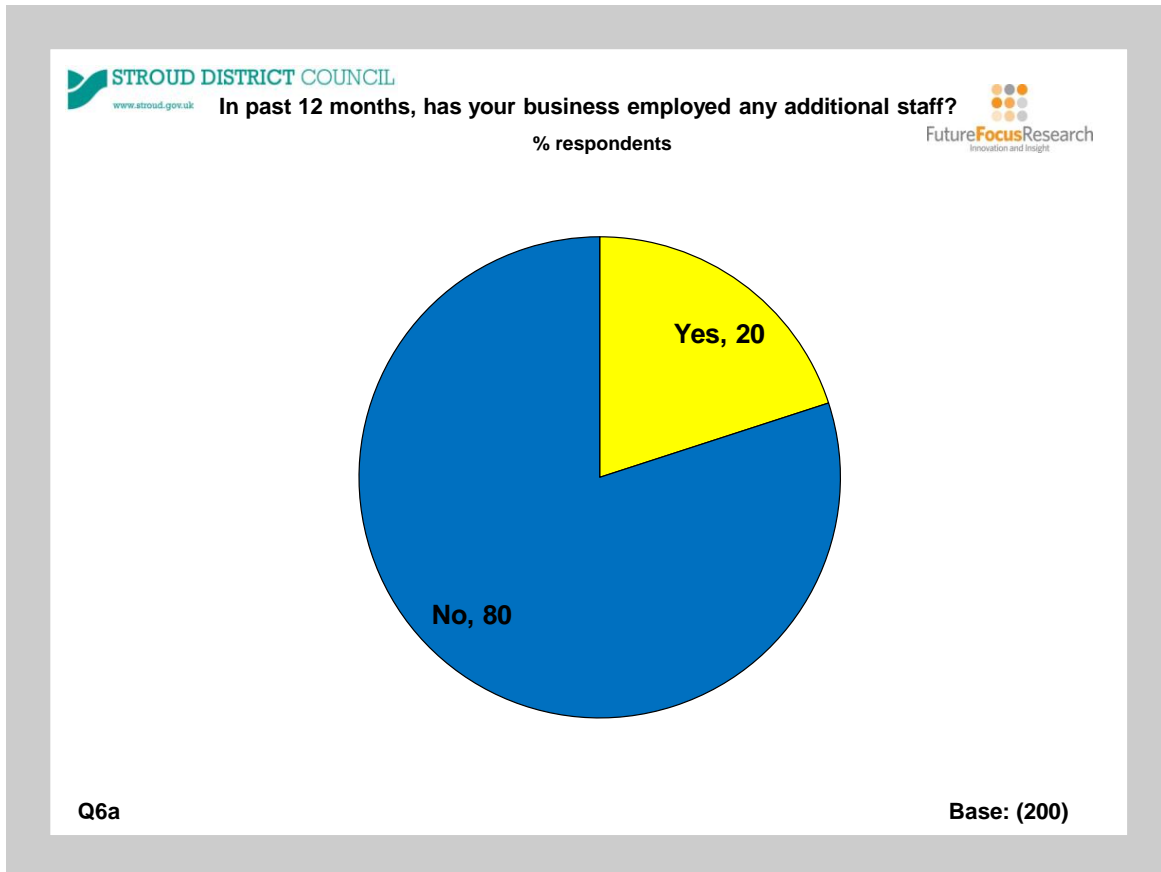
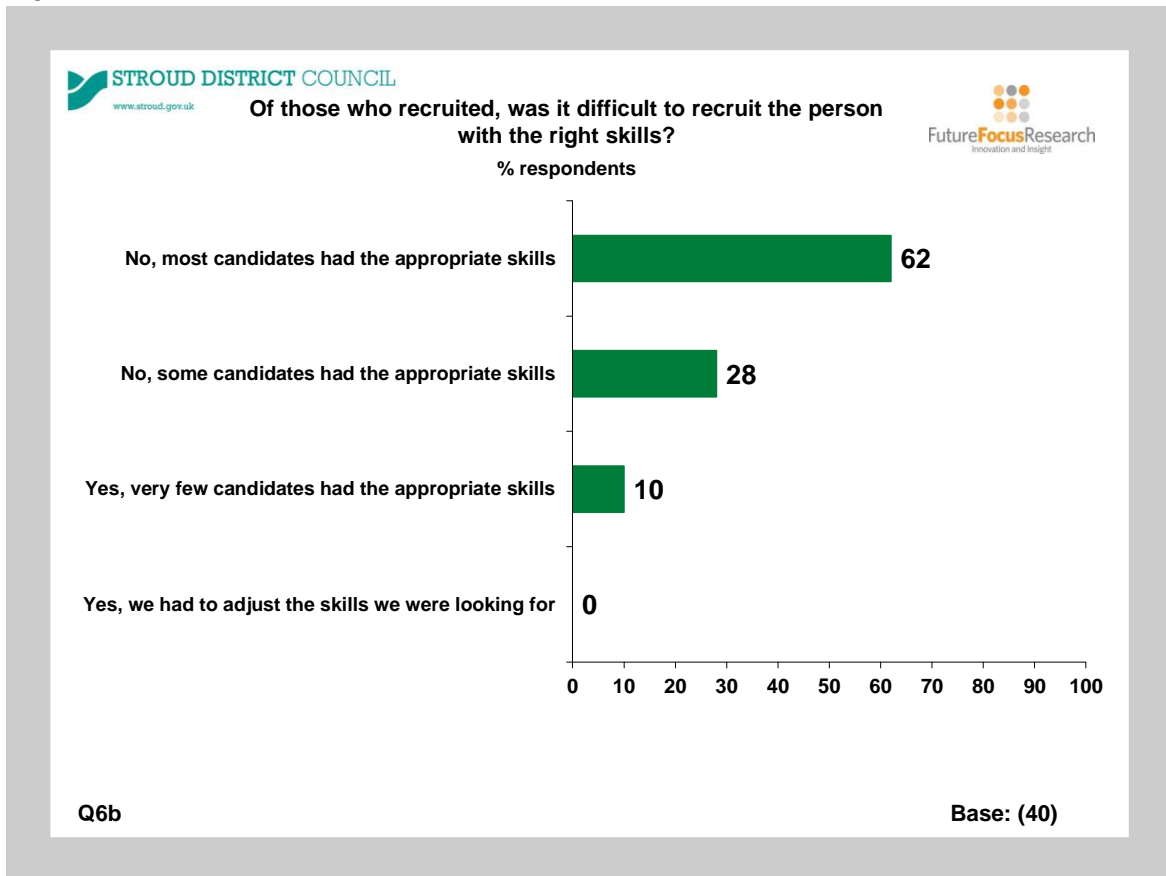


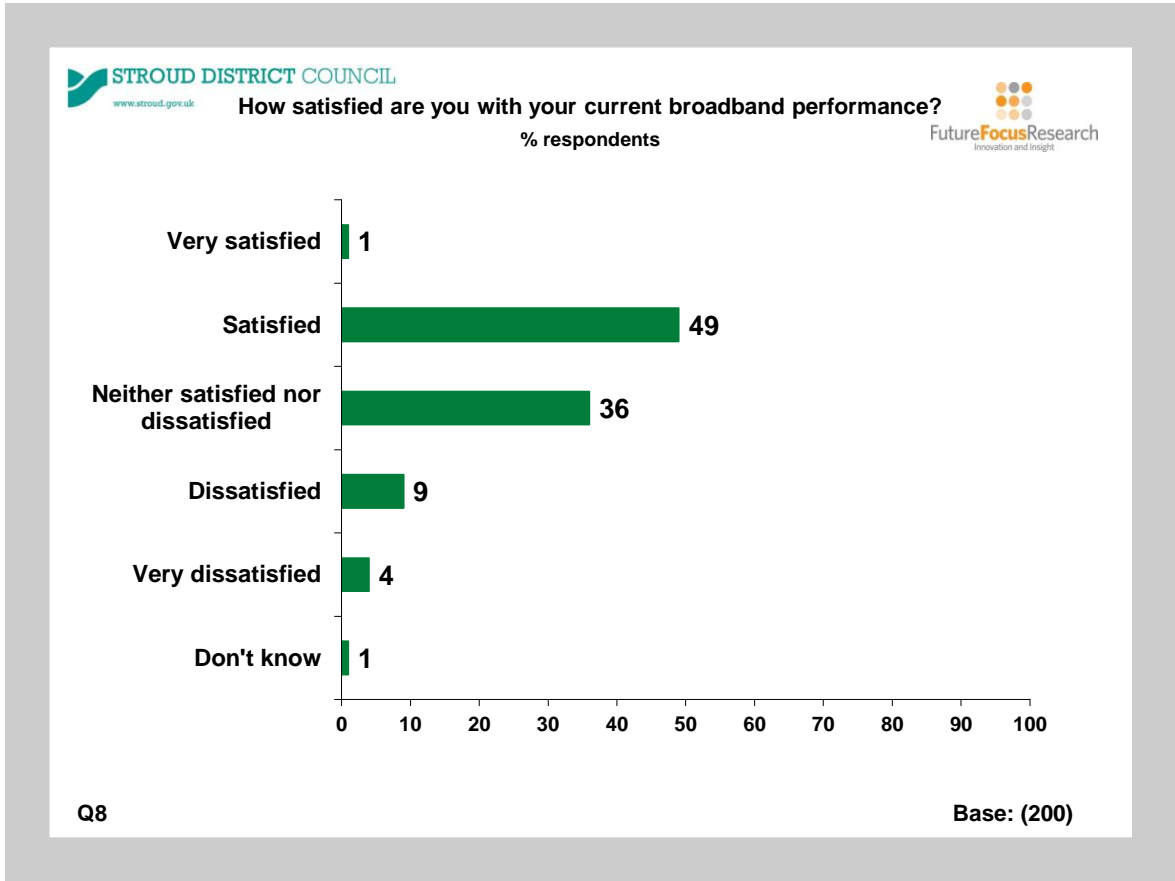
Figure 5.7



5.3 Broadband/Mobile Phone Signal

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the performance of their current broadband. 50% of businesses were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied*. This is lower than in 2015 when 60% were satisfied. However, just 13% were either *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied* with performance (25% in 2015). See figure 5.8.

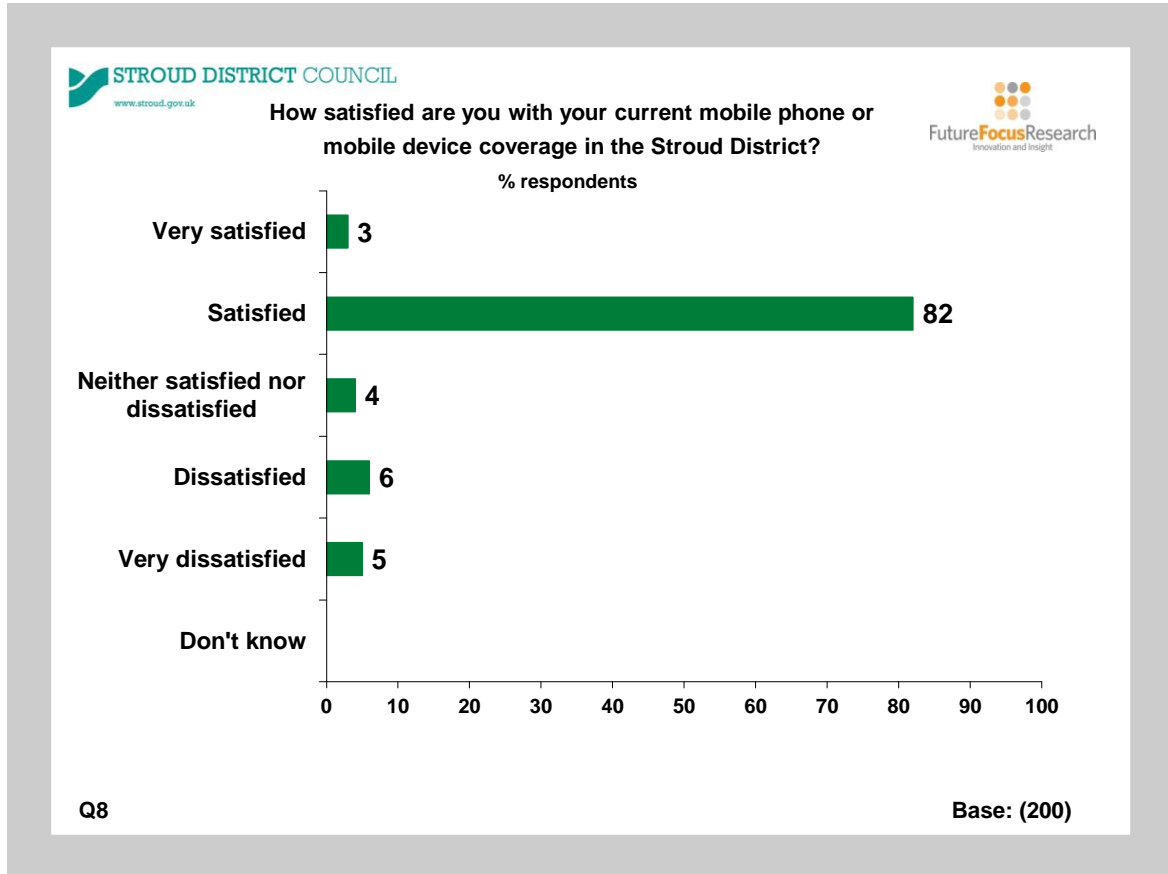
Figure 5.8



Larger businesses (those with over 10 employees) were more likely to be satisfied (57% compared to 47% of those with less than 10 employees).

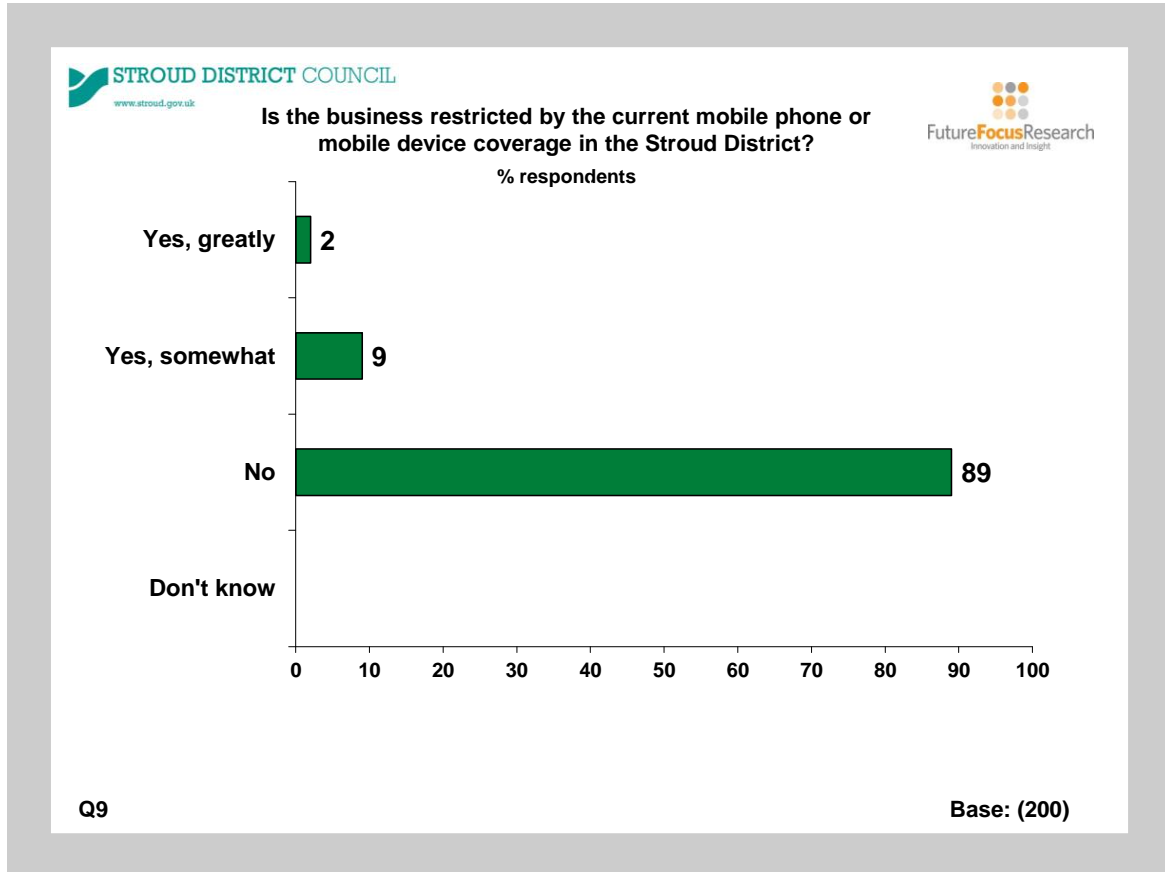
The majority (85%) are satisfied with their mobile phone or mobile device coverage in the Stroud District. Just 11% were dissatisfied. See figure 5.9.

Figure 5.9



Just over 1 in 10 (11%) said that their business is greatly or somewhat restricted by the current mobile phone or mobile device coverage in the Stroud District. See figure 5.10.

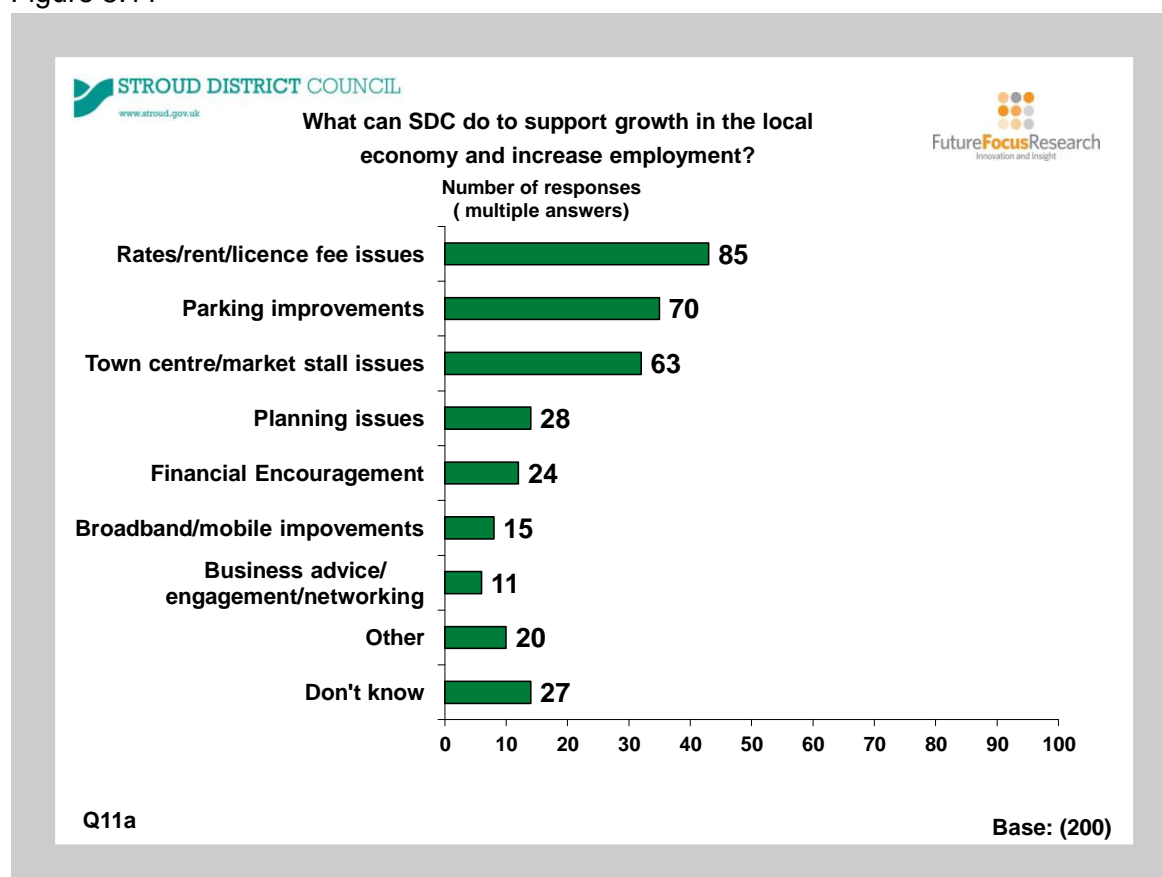
Figure 5.10



5.4 Support for Businesses

Respondents were asked what they felt *SDC could do to facilitate growth in the local economy and support employment*. The main theme to emerge was *rates/rent and licence fees* with 85 of businesses stating this. See figure 5.11.

Figure 5.11



Rates/rent/licence fee issues were more of a priority for smaller businesses with 47% (66) stating this compared to 32% (19) of larger businesses (with more than 10 employees).

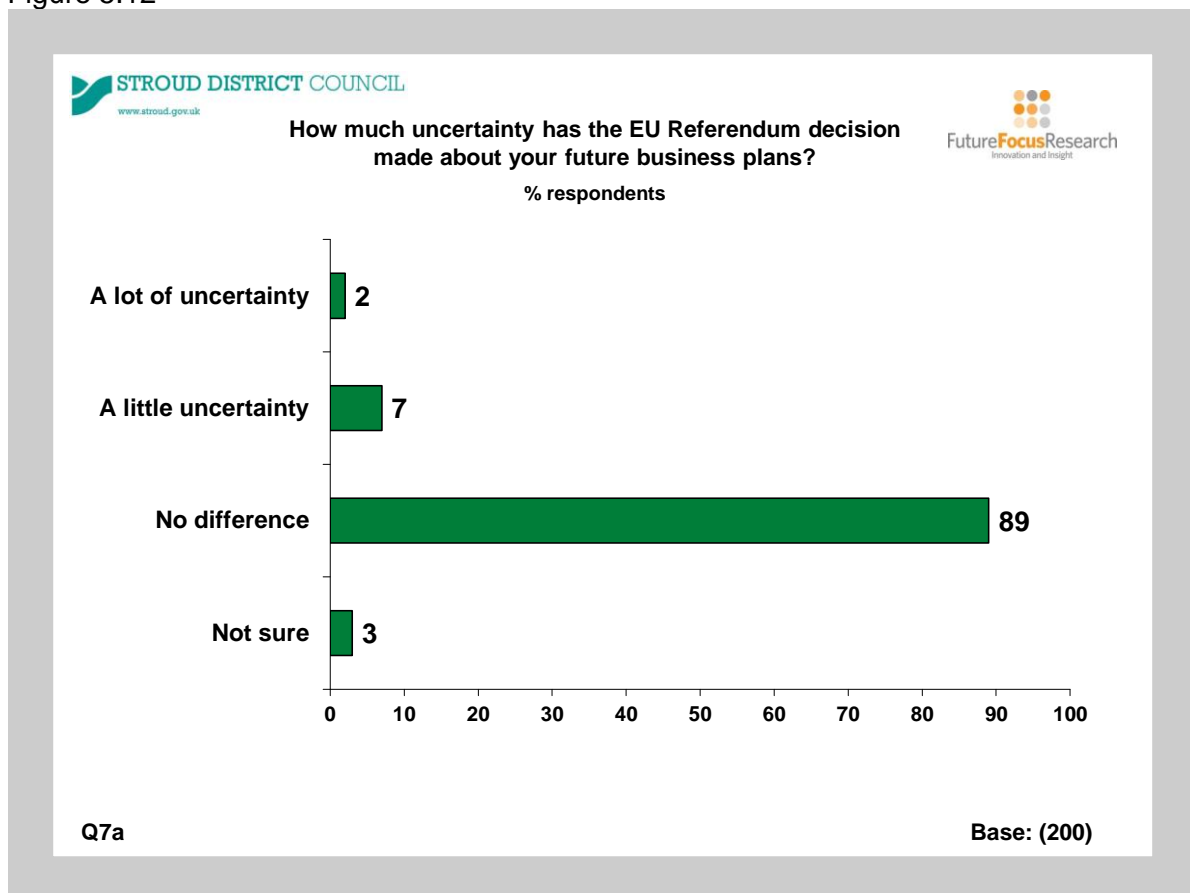
Businesses were asked *how Stroud DC could deliver improvements for residents and businesses without spending money or spending less money*. 26% did not come up with a suggestion (responding 'don't know'). The following summarises the main responses:

- *Stop waste/become more efficient/prioritise/spend less/streamlining*: 63%
- *Staff costs/reduce staff/pay freeze/merge departments/less management*: 46%
- *Local business support/business rates*: 39%
- *Community spirit/educate the public to provide support to council/use volunteers*: 7%
- *Other*: 4%

When asked whether they were aware of 2016 budget changes regarding business rates just 17% said that they were aware.

When asked about the EU referendum, just 9% said that it had made them uncertain about their future business plans (either a little or a lot). See figure 5.12.

Figure 5.12



Businesses with more than 10 employees were slightly more likely to express uncertainty (12% compared to 7% of smaller businesses).

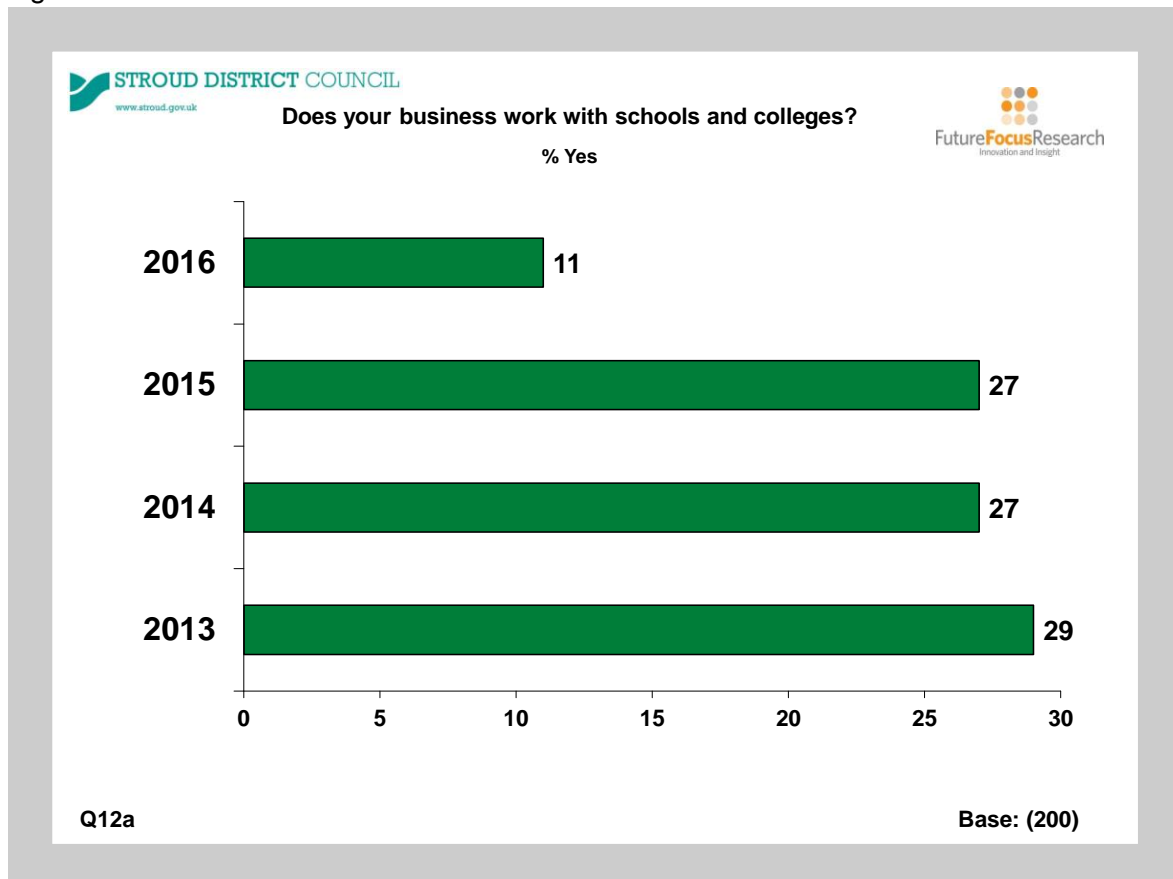
Reasons given for the uncertainty were:

- Retail confidence (6 businesses)
- Lack of markets to sell to (5)
- Cost of raw materials (5)
- Changes in Government Policy (4)
- Exchange rate (2)
- Foreign investment (2)
- Cost of imports (2)
- Security (1)

5.5 Working with Education Providers

Businesses were asked whether they worked with schools and colleges to encourage young people into their business sector. Just over 1 in 10 (11%) said that they did (21 businesses). This is much lower than in previous years where at least 27% had worked with school and colleges. See figure 5.13.

Figure 5.13



Larger businesses (those with over 10 employees) were more likely to have worked with education (17% compared to 8% of smaller businesses).

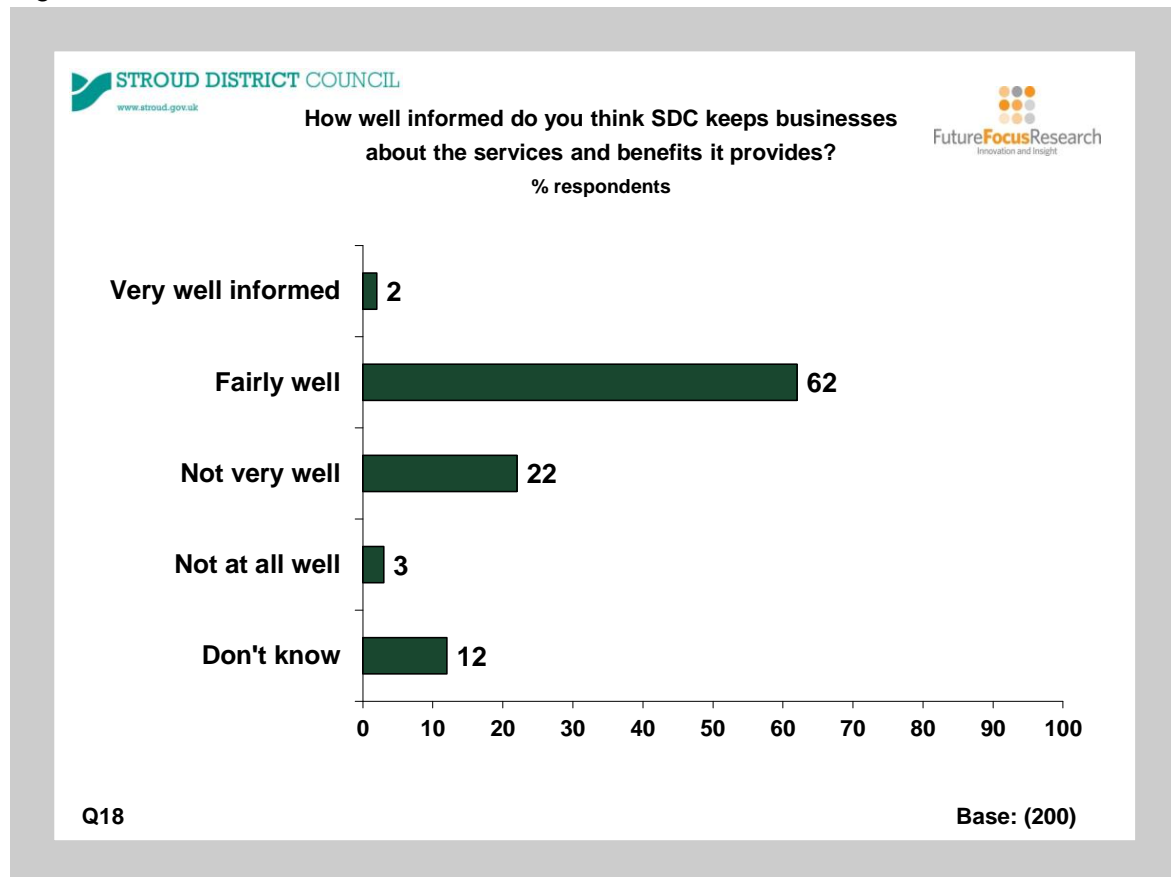
When asked about the work they had undertaken with schools, the following were mentioned (businesses were able to select more than one response):

- *Work experience* : 18 companies
- *Apprenticeships* : 5 companies
- *Other* : 2 companies

5.6 Information from Stroud District Council

Businesses were asked *how well informed do they think SDC keeps businesses about the services and benefits it provides*. Just under two thirds of businesses (64%) said that they were either *very well* or *fairly well informed* which was consistent with 2015 at 65% (although the question was worded slightly differently). See figure 5.14.

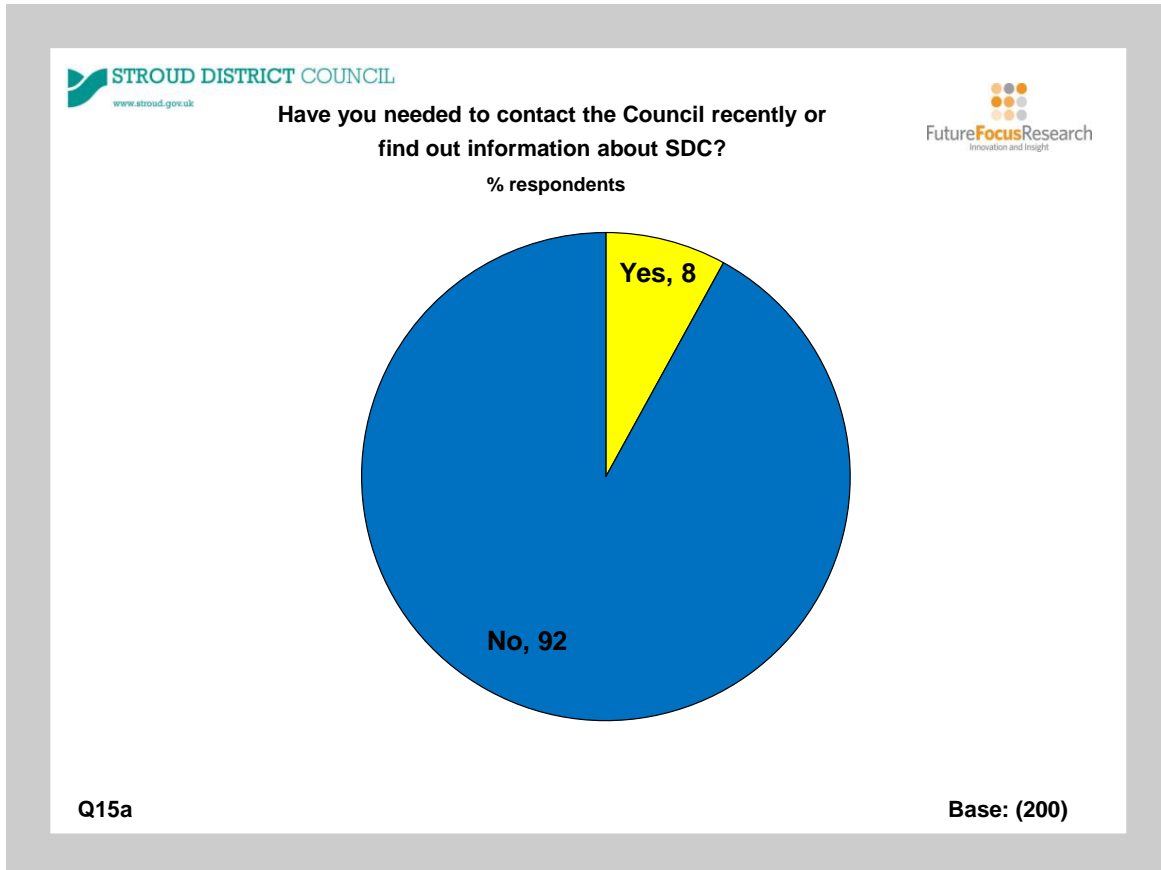
Figure 5.14



5.7 Contact with Stroud District Council

Fewer than 1 in 10 (8%) had contacted the Council recently or needed to find out information about SDC. See figure 5.15

Figure 5.15



Smaller businesses (those with 10 or less employees) were more likely to have contacted the Council (11% compared to 2% of larger businesses).

The main method of contact was by phone (81% - 13 out of 16 businesses).

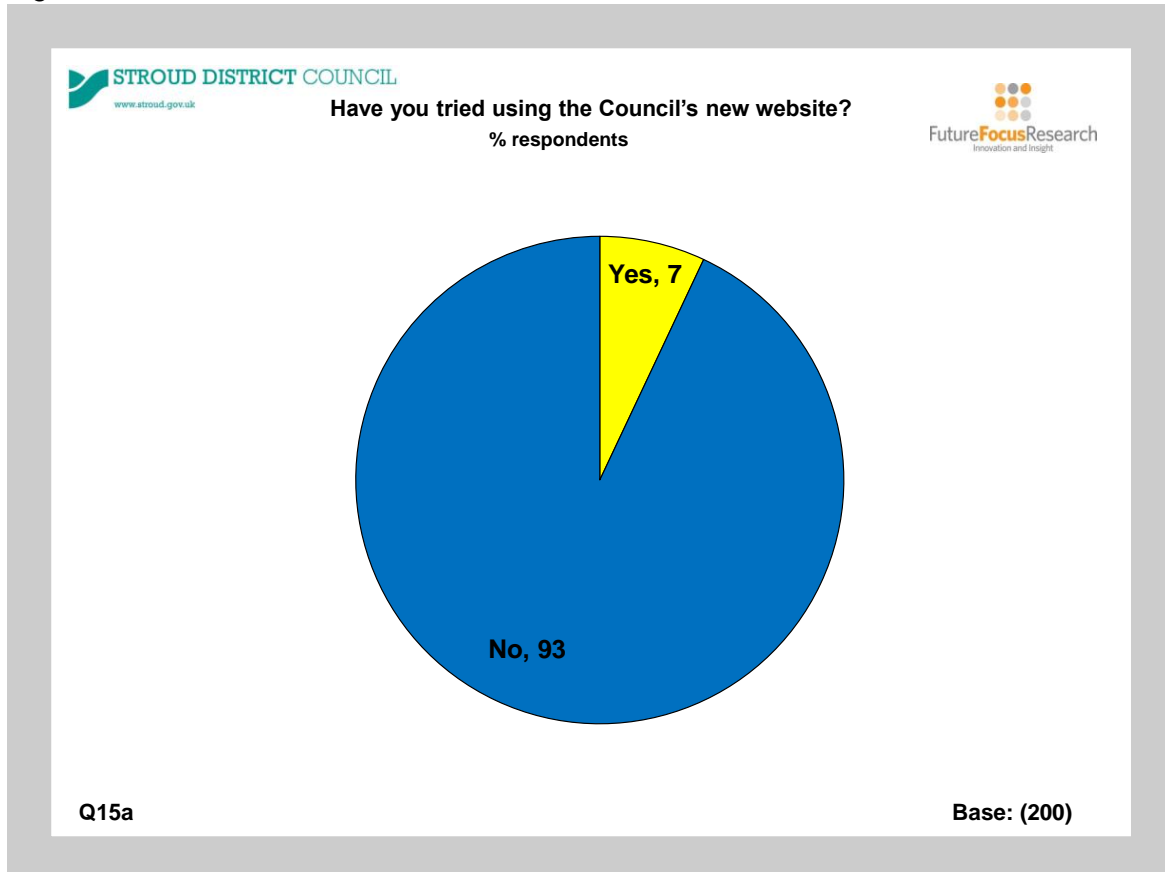
Reasons for contact included:

- Waste & recycling, street cleaning
- Planning
- Business rates/Council tax

Just 7% had used SDC's new website. See figure 5.16.

93% of the 7% who had used the website managed to do what they needed to do.

Figure 5.16



Smaller businesses (those with 10 or less employees) were more likely to have used the website (9% compared to 2% of larger businesses).

The reasons given for not using the website were:

- No need (40%)
- Not online (28%)
- Phoning was quicker (17%)
- Forgotten/didn't know about it (11%)

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