Budget Consultation 2015

Report

November 2015

Prepared For: **Stroud District Council**

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Contents

1. Approach to research

1.1 Research objectives

Stroud District Council commissioned Future Focus Research to conduct a survey of local residents and businesses as part of the budget consultation process. The survey examined their views on Council spending priorities, local priorities, suggestions for future strategies, and satisfaction levels with the Council's activities.

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	11%	54
Stroud Central	28%	139
Stroud Border Areas	22%	109
Stonehouse	12%	60
Dursley	16%	80
Wotton-under-Edge	6%	33
Berkeley	5%	25
Gender		
Male	49%	245
Female	51%	255
Age		
18 – 34	21%	107
35 – 54	35%	175
55 – 74	32%	158
75+	11%	53
Prefer not to say	1%	7
Disability		
Yes	11%	55
No	86%	431
Prefer not to say	3%	14

Working status		
Employed in Stroud district	26%	132
Employed outside Stroud district	14%	69
Unemployed and actively looking for paid employment	11%	54
Unemployed but not looking for paid employment	7%	33
Retired	34%	173
At school/college/university	3%	13
Other (e.g. house person, carer)	4%	21
Prefer not to say	1%	5
Ethnicity		
White or White British	89%	447
Other	11%	53
Total	**100**	**500**

Where there are differences between any of the demographics, these have been highlighted in the report, although as results were very consistent across the board, these are very few.

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	4	8
Business Services	5	9
Construction and Building Services	8	15
Creative Services and Media	<1	1
Financial services	<1	1
Health and Social Work	5	10
Hospitality and Leisure	8	17
IT and Telecoms	2	4
Manufacturing and Engineering	21	41
Personal Services	6	12
Professional Services	3	6
Real Estate	2	4
Retail and Wholesale	33	66
Transport, storage and distribution	2	5
Travel and Tourism	<1	1

Number of employees	%	Number of responses
One	8	16
2 – 4	35	70
5 – 10	27	54
11 – 25	19	39
26 – 50	8	15
51 – 100	2	4
101 – 250	1	2

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 Resident Survey

The majority of residents (89%) were happy with their area as a place to live and are loyal to their local town/village with almost everyone shopping in their local town/village at least once a week (95%).

The majority of residents held positive views of Stroud DC. Three quarters of residents (78%) were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with the way Stroud DC runs things. When asked to what extent they agreed with a series of statements, over half of residents agreed with all of them:

- 72% agreed that *services have been maintained to a good standard*
- 68% agreed that *Stroud DC is working to improve the environment*
- 68% agreed that *Stroud DC provides value for money*
- 59% agreed that *Stroud DC is business like and efficient*

Over 6 in 10 residents (63%) agreed that *Stroud DC acts upon their concerns* and a slightly higher percentage (71%) felt that they were *kept well informed about the benefits and services that Stroud DC provides*.

Services valued the highest were *refuse collection* and *crime prevention. Even though the respondents had been informed that SDC did not have responsibility for roads*, the service most thought to be in need of more funding was roads/highways.

Staff costs/reduce staff/pay freeze/merge departments/less management and *stop waste/become more efficient/prioritise/spend less/stream lining* were the main suggestions given by residents when asked how the Council could deliver improvements for residents and businesses.

Over 6 in 10 residents (62%) did not feel that there should be an increase in Council tax. The majority of the others (30%) would be happy with a 2% increase.

Not surprisingly, when prompted with a list of five areas of focus, all were considered to be a high or a very high priority:

- *Help local people and businesses recover from recession and grow local economy* (88%)
- *Provide value for money to local taxpayers and high quality services to our customers* (83%)
- *Provide affordable and decent housing* (77%)
- *Promote health and wellbeing and delivery of public health agenda* (71%)
- *Help the community minimise its carbon footprint, adapt to climate change, recycle more and send as little waste to landfill as possible* (66%)

Over two thirds of residents were positive about all aspects of the canal restoration.

2.2 Business Survey

Over 9 in 10 businesses (92%) were happy with their area as a place to do business.

Many businesses held positive views of Stroud DC. 64% were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with the way Stroud DC runs things. When asked to what extent they agreed with a series of statements:

- 84% agreed that *Stroud DC is working to improve the environment*
- 56% agreed that *Stroud DC is business like and efficient*
- 56% agreed that *Stroud DC provides value for money*
- 55% agreed that *services have been maintained to a good standard*

Almost two thirds of businesses (65%) felt that they were kept well informed about the benefits and services that Stroud DC provides.

The service most thought to be in need of more funding was roads/highways *even though the respondents had been informed that SDC did not have responsibility for roads,*

Stop waste/become more efficient/prioritise/ spend less/streamlining was the main suggestion given by businesses when asked how the Council could deliver improvements for residents and businesses, and how they could generate income.

Lower rates/rent/licence fee issues were the main suggestions when asked what the Council could do to facilitate growth in the local economy and support employment.

Not surprisingly, when prompted with a list of five areas of focus, all were considered to be a *high* or a *very high priority*:

- *Provide value for money to local taxpayers and high quality services to our customers* (88%)
- *Help local people and businesses recover from recession and grow local economy* (82%)
- *Provide affordable and decent housing* (79%)
- *Promote health and wellbeing and delivery of public health agenda* (75%)
- *Help the community minimise its carbon footprint, adapt to climate change, recycle more and send as little waste to landfill as possible* (74%)

Just a fifth of businesses (20%) had employed more staff in the last year. Encouragingly, over a quarter of businesses envisage expanding within the next 2 – 5 years, and for a half of these, this would involve taking on more staff. For those not planning expansion, the current economic climate was the main reason for not expanding.

Six in 10 businesses (60%) were satisfied with their current broadband performance.

Just over a quarter of businesses (27%) said that they worked with schools and colleges to encourage young people into their business sector.

Over 7 in 10 businesses were positive about all aspects of the canal restoration.

3. Residents v Businesses

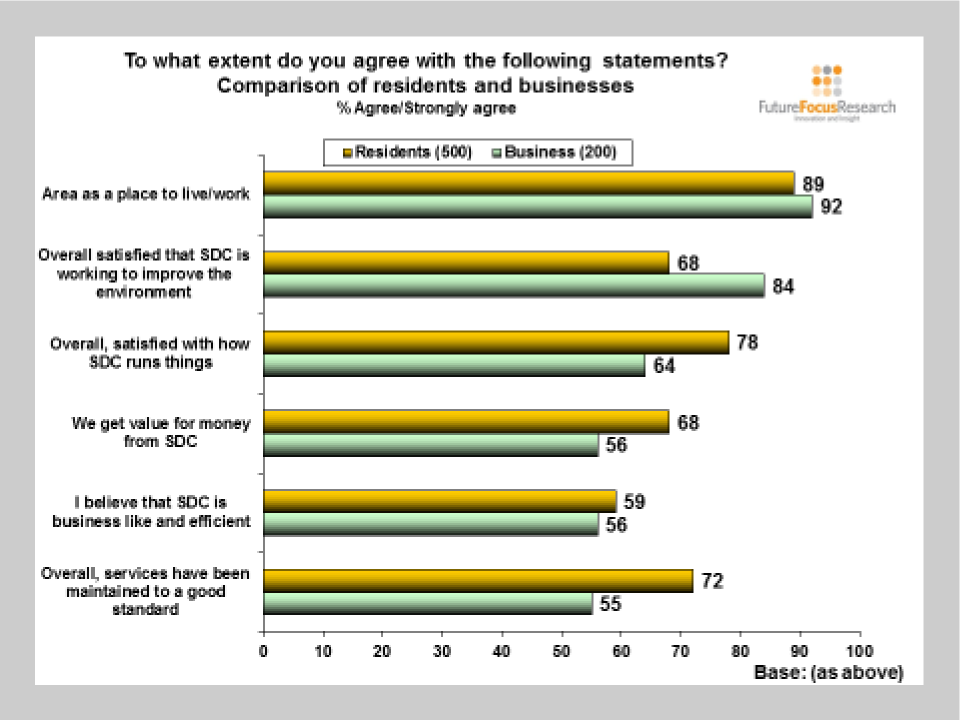
3.1 Opinions of Stroud DC

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 68%).

Residents were more likely to agree that they are *satisfied with the way Stroud DC runs things* (78% compared to 64%), that *services have been maintained over the past few years* (72% compared to 55%) and that they get value for money from Stroud DC (68% compared to 56%). See figure 3.1.

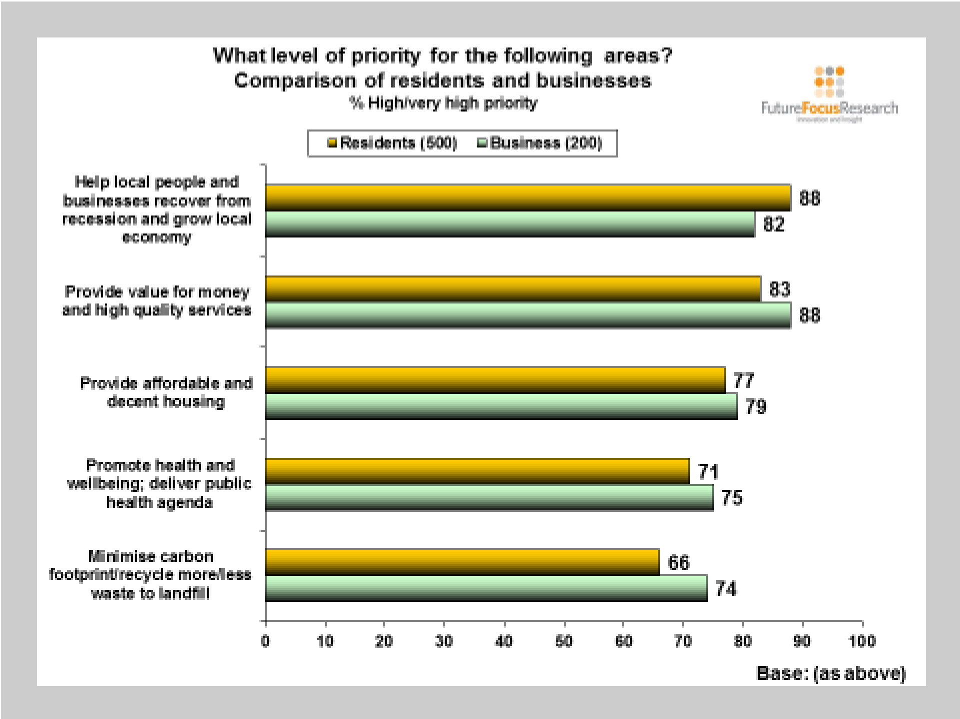
Figure 3.1



3.2 Corporate Delivery Plan

There is a great amount of consistency between residents and businesses in the level of priority given to each element of the corporate plan. See figure 3.2.

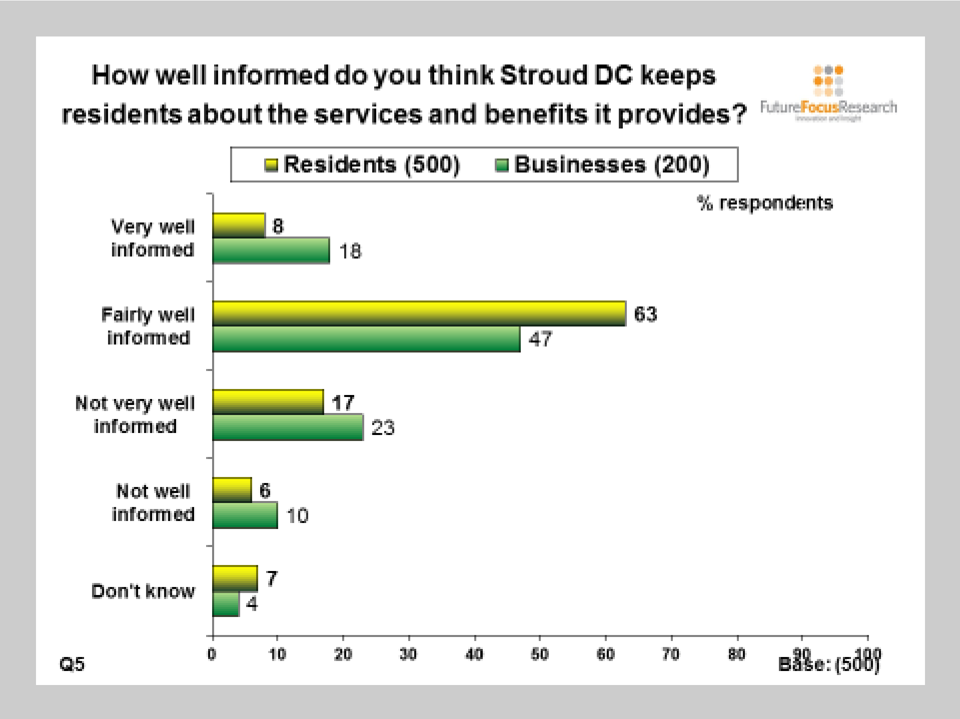
Figure 3.2



3.3 Information from Council

A similar proportion of residents and businesses felt information by the Council about services and benefits (71% residents, 65% businesses), although businesses were more likely to feel very well informed, and residents were more likely to feel fairly well informed. See figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3



4. Resident Survey

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

- Stroud DC as a place to live
- Overall opinions of Stroud DC
- Priorities of local people
- Council spending options
- Council Tax options
- Corporate Delivery Plan
- Use of local facilities
- Views on canal restoration

4.1 Overall Opinions of Stroud DC

The vast majority of respondents are happy with their areas as a place to live (87% *very satisfied* or *satisfied*). See figure 4.1. However, there was a difference in viewpoint in the age-groups: younger residents (those aged 18 – 35) were slightly less satisfied (78%) and those over 75 were the more likely to be satisfied (94%).

Residents were asked how satisfied they were with the way Stroud DC runs things and 8 in 10 residents (78%) said they were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied*.

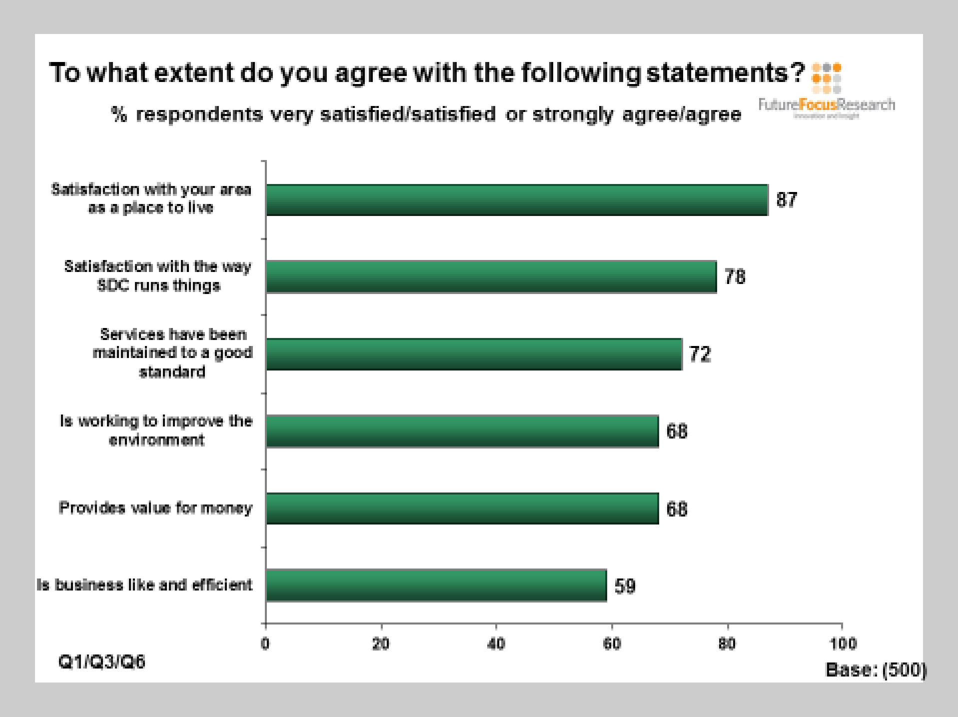
Residents were then asked to what extent they agreed with a range of statements (see figure 4.1 which is ranked in order of agreement). Over a half of respondents agreed with all statements. The statement attracting the highest level of agreement was *over the past few years, services have been maintained to a good standard* at 72% (strongly agree/agree).

Just over two thirds (68%) agreed (either strongly agree/agree) that *Stroud DC is working to improve the environment*, and that *Stroud DC provides value for money*. The statement with the lowest percentage agreement was *Stroud DC is business like and efficient* (59%).

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

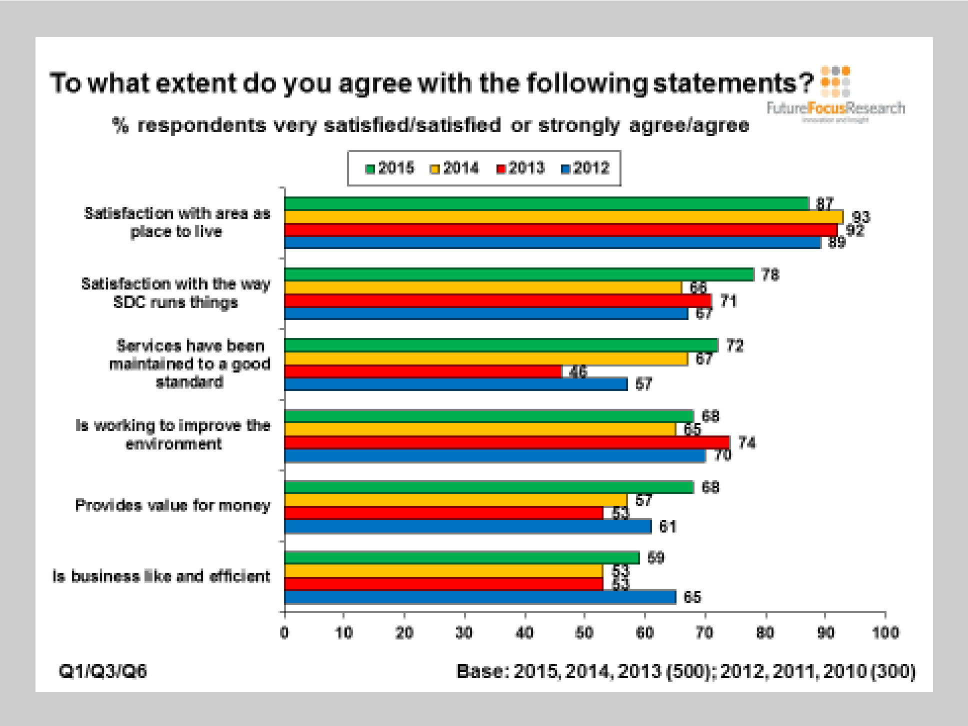
- *Stroud DC is working to improve the environment* (38%)
- *Over the past few years, services have been maintained to a good standard* (39%)
- *Stroud DC provides value for money* (38%)
- *Stroud DC is business like and efficient* (27%)

Figure 4.1



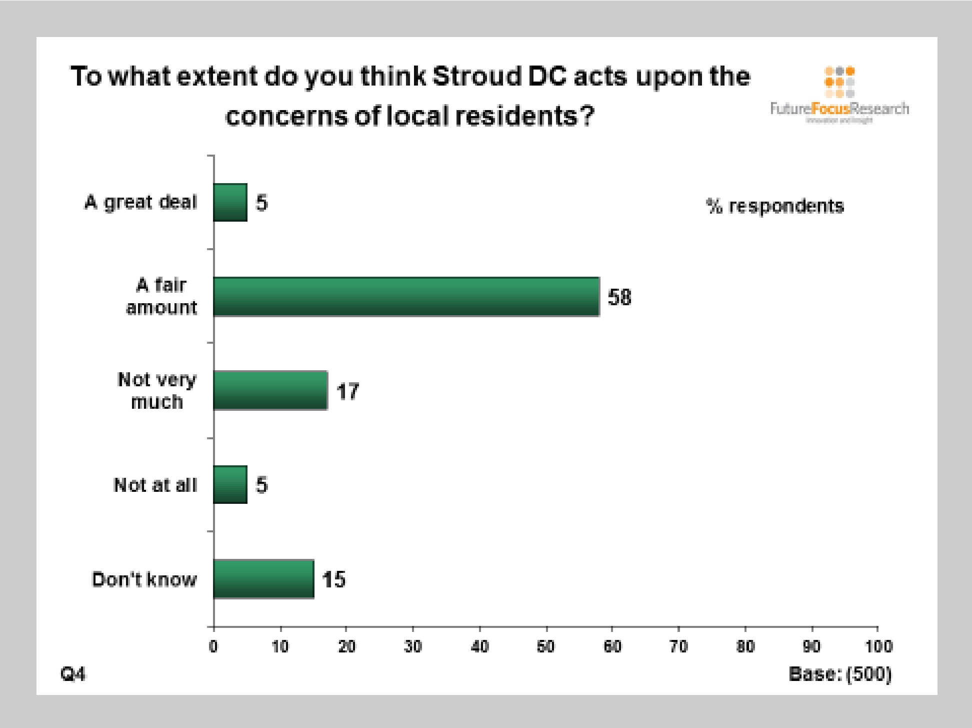
Comparing the 2015 findings with previous years, overall results were an improvement on 2014 – with the exception of satisfaction with your area as a place to live which fell slightly from 93% in 2014 to 87% in 2015. See figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2



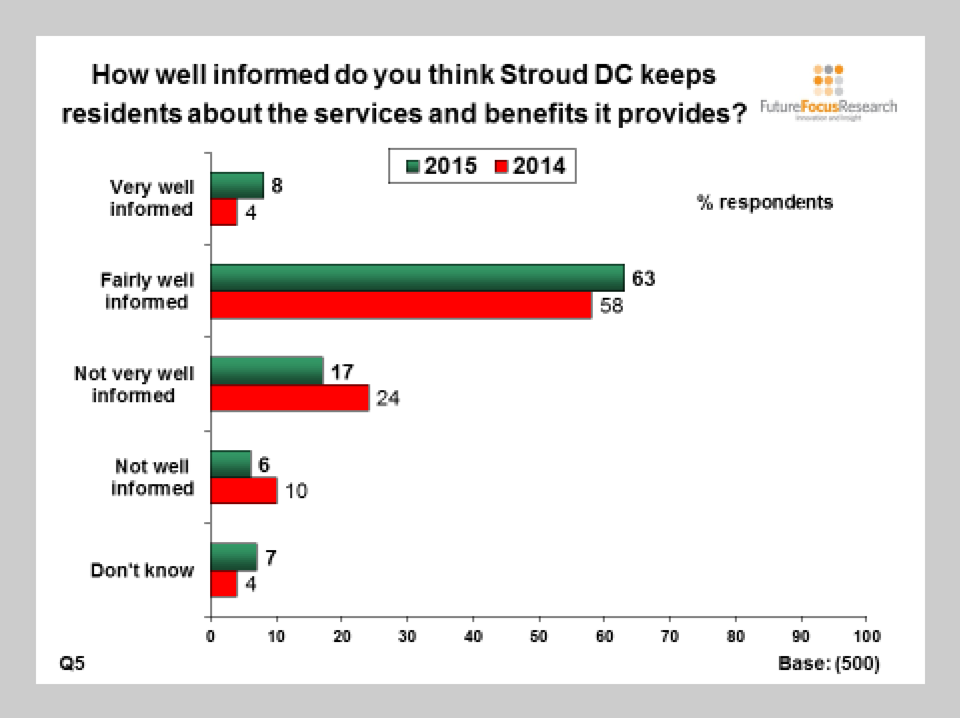
Residents were asked to what extent they think Stroud DC *acts upon the concerns of local residents*. Over 63% felt that it did either *a great deal* or *a fair amount* (56% in 2014). A further 22% stated *not very much* or *not at all* (32% in 2014). See figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3



Residents were also asked how well they felt Stroud DC keeps residents informed about the benefits and services it provides. 71% felt that they were either *very well informed* or *fairly well informed* (62% in 2014). See figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4



Younger residents were much less likely to feel they were kept informed than other age groups (30% compared to 71% of 35 – 54 year olds, 72% of 55 – 74 year olds and 74% of 75+ year olds).

4.2 Priorities of local people

Respondents were asked to rate how much they valued a service as high, medium or low priority. The service given the highest value (rated and high or medium) was *refuse collection* by 93% of residents, followed by *crime prevention* (89%), *street cleaning* (86%), and *recycling* (85%). See table 4.1 where the services are ranked in decreasing order of value (based on the percentage rating high or medium).

The table also show the percentage rating each service as high or medium in 2014 for comparison. The responses were fairly consistent, the only major change being the rating of *Stroud subscription rooms* (decreasing from 60% (high/medium) in 2014 to 42% in 2015).

Table 4.1

Service	2015	2014
	% High/Medium	% High/Medium
Refuse collection	93	92
Crime prevention	89	92
Street Cleaning	86	86
Recycling	85	91
Housing and tenant services	78	81
Homelessness	75	78
Joint-use sport centres in local schools	75	77
Car parks	75	76
Housing benefit administration	74	77
Public conveniences	74	73
Pollution control	73	78
Planning and building control	71	82
Health & Safety	71	77
Grants to voluntary and community groups	70	76
Stratford Park Leisure Centre	70	65
Stroud District Youth Council	68	60
Economic recovery and development	66	67
Tourism Promotion	63	63
Dog Warden & Animal Welfare	62	63
Museum	61	69
Tourist Information Centre	58	66
Pest control	57	66
Parking enforcement	57	63
Licensing	55	62
Energy advice	55	61
Neighbourhood wardens	53	65
Dursley Swimming Pool	53	57
Stroud Subscription Rooms	42	60

4.3 Council Spending Options

Respondents were given the opportunity to indicate how *Stroud DC could deliver improvements for residents and businesses without spending money or spending less money*, without being prompted with options. 24% (109 respondents) did not come up with a suggestion (responding 'don't know' or 'none'). The following summarises the main responses:

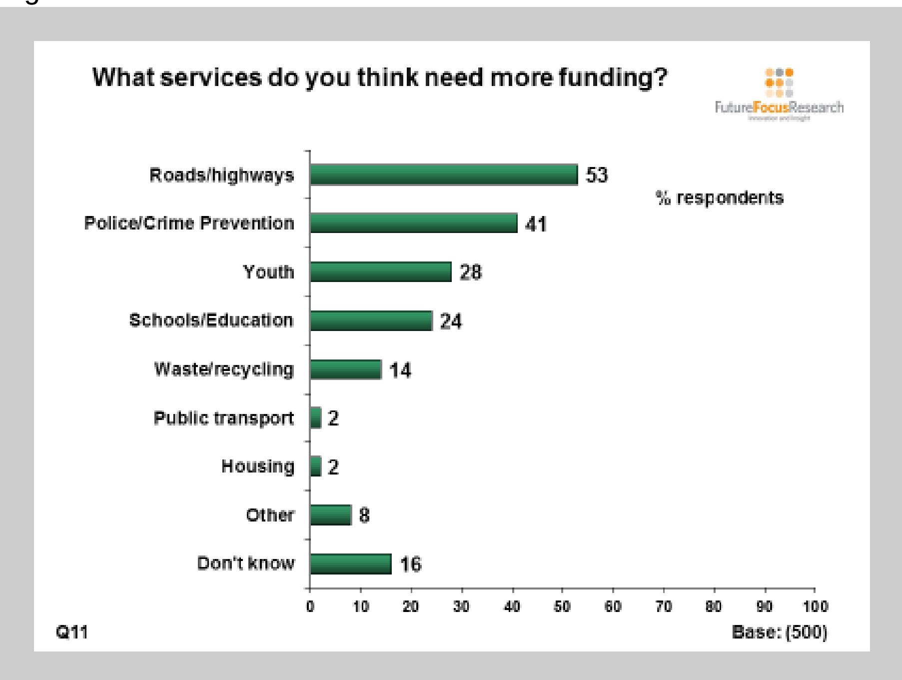
- *Staff Costs/reduce staff/pay freeze/merge departments/less management:* 49%
- *Stop Waste/become more efficient/prioritise/spend less/streamlining:* 43%
- *Local business support/business rates:* 10%
- *Community Spirit/educate the public to provide support to council/use volunteers:* 9%
- *Other:* 1%

Respondents were also given the opportunity to indicate how *Stroud DC could generate income through delivering improved services for residents and businesses*. 26% did not come up with any suggestions (responding 'don't know' or 'none'). The following summarises the main responses:

- *Cut waste/review unnecessary spend/more efficiency:* 52%
- *Tourism/visitors/trade shows:* 26%
- *Review of Business rates:* 10%
- *Increase taxes/charge more:* 8%
- *Estate issues/charge higher rents/rent out/sell estate:* 4%
- *Other:* <1%

Even though respondents were advised that SDC did not have responsibility for roads, highways, education & schools, or social care when asked if the Council could generate more income, which services they thought were in need of more funding the main response given was *roads/highways* by 53% of residents. All responses are shown in figure 4.5. Please note respondents were allowed to give more than one answer.

Figure 4.5



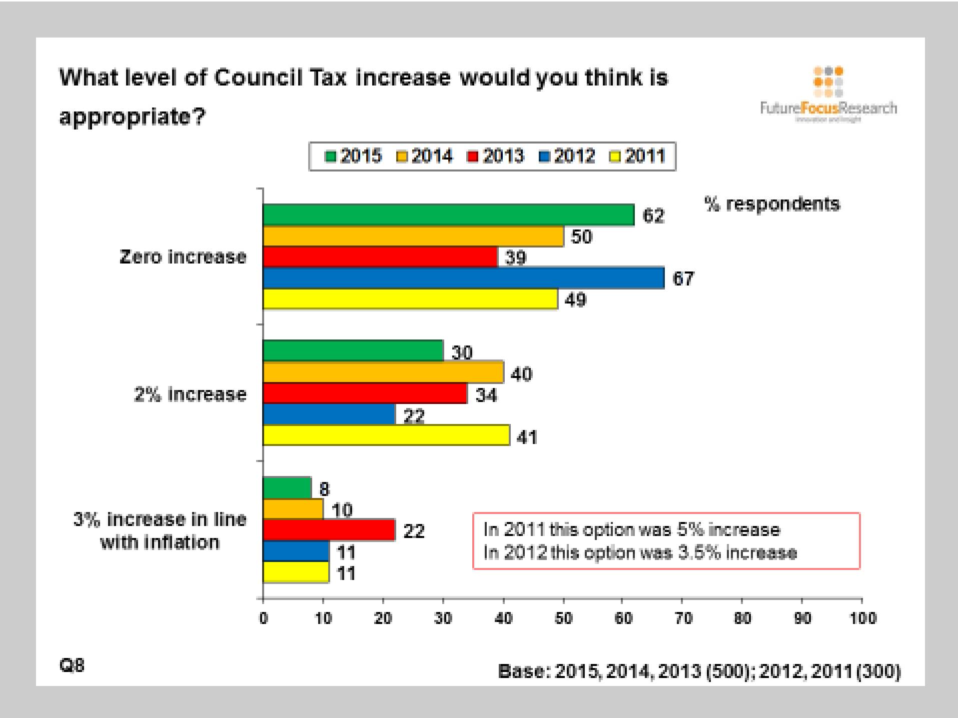
4.4 Council Tax Increase options

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

- *Zero increase*
- *2% increase (7p per week for a Band D property); and*
- *3% increase (11p per week for a Band D property).*

Sixty two percent of respondents felt that there should be a *zero increase* (this compared to 50% in 2014). A further 30% felt there should be a *2% increase*. See figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6



4.5 Corporate Delivery Plan

Respondents were 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.

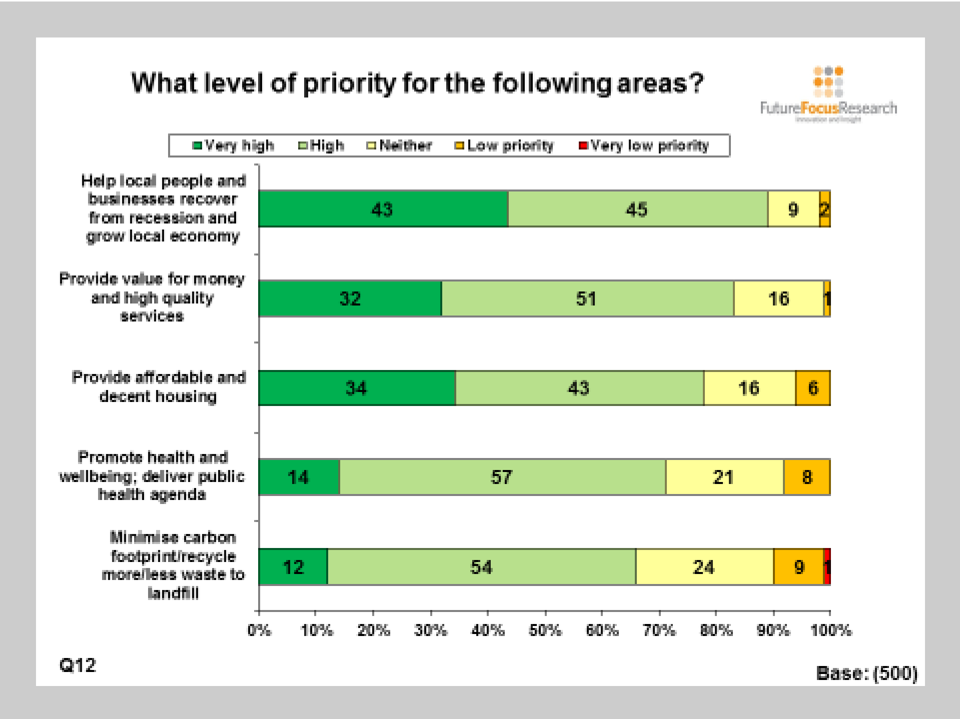
The area rated the highest priority was *help local people and businesses recover from recession and grow local economy* with 88% rating it as a *very high* or *high* priority.

This was followed by *provide value for money to local taxpayers and high quality services to our customers* at 83%.

77% felt that *provide affordable and decent housing* was a *very high* or a *high* priority and 71% rated *promote health and wellbeing and deliver the public health agenda* as a *high* or *very high* priority.

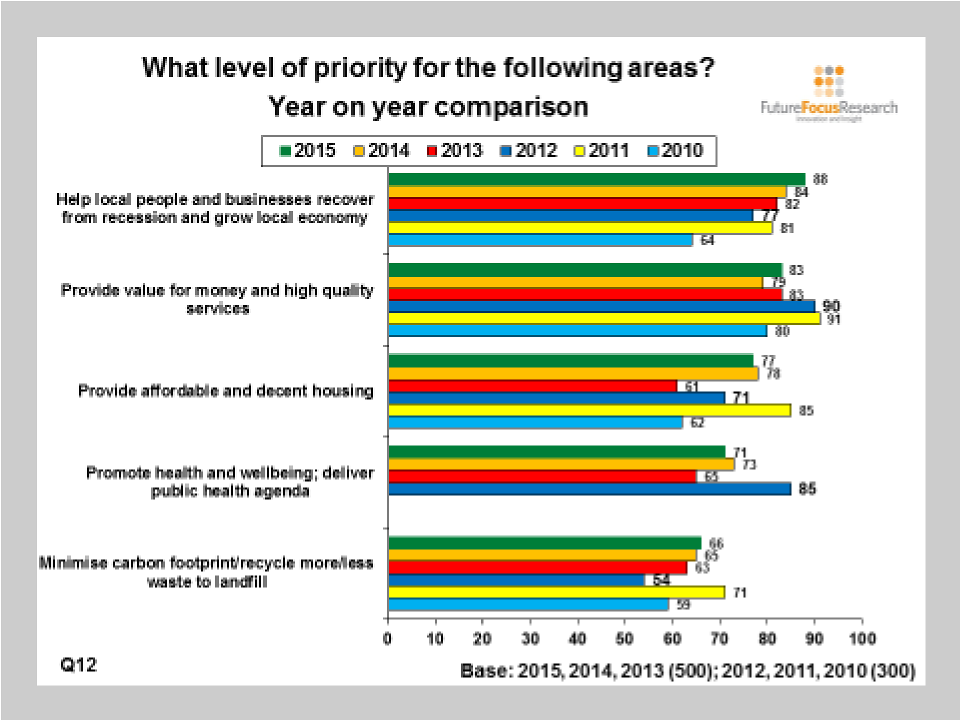
The area rated as lowest priority, but still a *high* or *very high* priority for 66% of respondents was *help the community minimise its carbon footprint, adapt to climate change, recycle more and send as little waste to landfill as possible.* See figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7



Most areas were rated a similar priority to 2014, see figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8



4.6 Use of Local Facilities

To understand the importance of local businesses to local people, we asked how often they shopped in their local town or village. The vast majority of respondents shop in their local town/village on a regular basis – 48% *daily* and a further 47% *at least once a week*, equating to 95% shopping locally at least once a week. See figure 4.9. Younger residents (18-34) were more likely to visit their town/village daily (65%).

Figure 4.9

Respondents were asked which types of businesses they had used locally within the last 12 months. The following table (table 4.2) shows the percentage of respondents who visited each type of business (respondents could select all the businesses that they had visited). The most popular was *retail food businesses* (95%), followed by *restaurants/catering/banqueting* (62%). The table also shows the corresponding figures from 2014. With the exception of *food businesses* usage of other types of business was lower than in 2014.

Table 4.2

Local Business	% 2015	% 2014
Retail – food	95	94
Restaurant/catering/banqueting	62	72
Transport	40	46
Retail – clothing	39	63
Leisure including leisure/sport centres/visitor attractions	36	57
Building construction/maintenance – repair/installations	29	41
Financial services/insurance	19	28
Domestic services – cleaning/ironing/gardening	17	23
Stationery/office supplies	12	35
Telecommunications	9	20
Legal services	9	16
Printing	5	13
IT software/hardware/ IT support	4	19

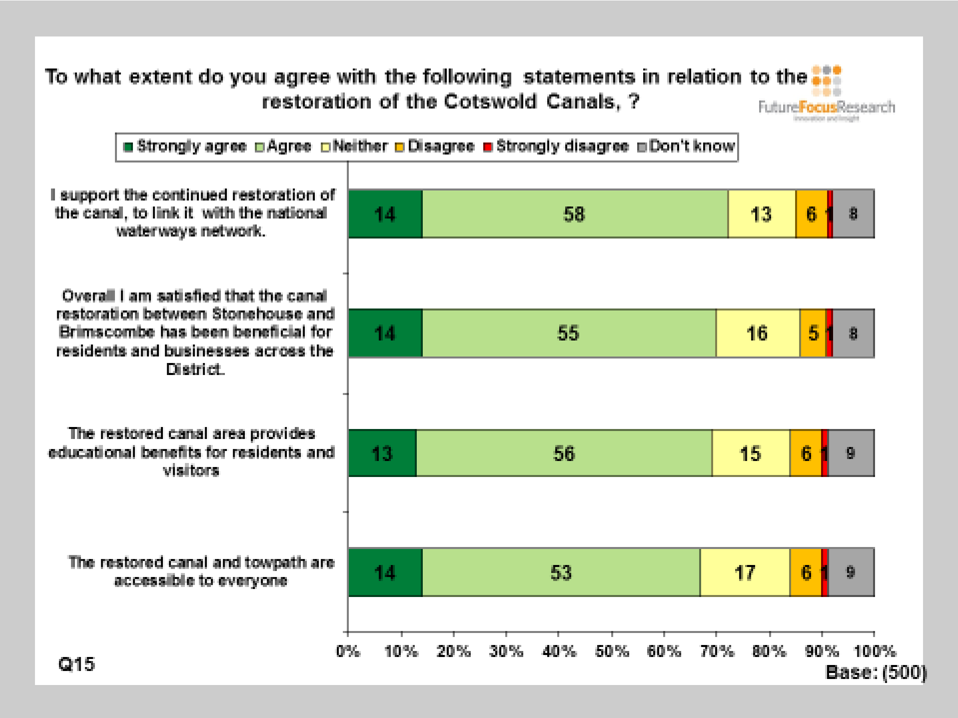
4.7 Restoration of the Canal

Residents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements in relation to the restoration of the Cotswold Canal between Stonehouse and Brimscombe. Between 67% and 72% agreed with each statement as follows:

- *I support the continued restoration of the canal, to link it with the national waterways network (72% strongly agree/agree)*
- *Overall I am satisfied that the canal restoration between Stonehouse and Brimscombe has been beneficial for residents and businesses across the District (69% strongly agree/agree)*
- *The restored canal area provides educational benefits for residents and visitors (69% strongly agree/agree)*
- *The restored canal and towpath are accessible to everyone (67% strongly agree/agree)*

See figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10



5. Business Survey

This section examines the views and opinions of the businesses surveyed, covering:
- Overall opinions of Stroud DC
- Council spending options
- Priorities
- Employment in last year
- Future plans
- Broadband
- Working with education
- Support for businesses
- Restoration of Cotswolds Canals
- Information from Stroud DC

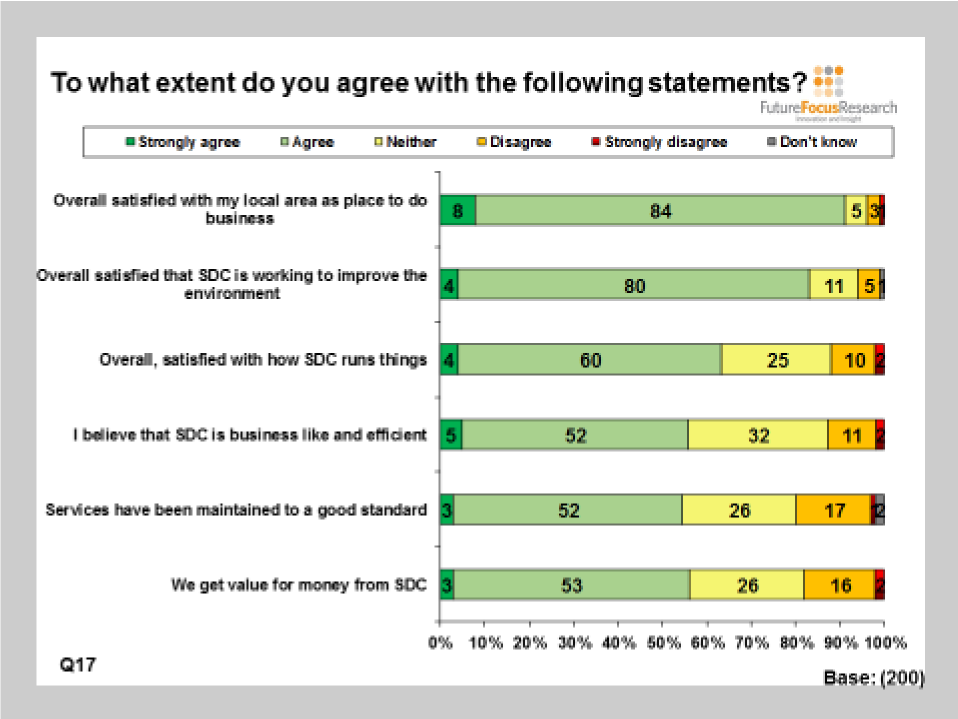
5.1 Overall opinions on Stroud DC

Figure 5.1 examines the extent to which respondents agree with the following six statements:
- *I believe that Stroud District Council is business like and efficient*
- *Overall, I am satisfied with the way Stroud District Council runs things*
- *Overall, the services provided by Stroud District Council have improved over the past few years*
- *I think that we get value for money from Stroud District Council*
- *Overall, I am satisfied that Stroud District Council is working to improve the environment*
- *Overall, I am satisfied with my local area as a place to do business*

Over 9 in 10 (92%) 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*. Just under two thirds (64%) agreed (strongly agree/agree) that they were *satisfied with how Stroud DC runs things.*

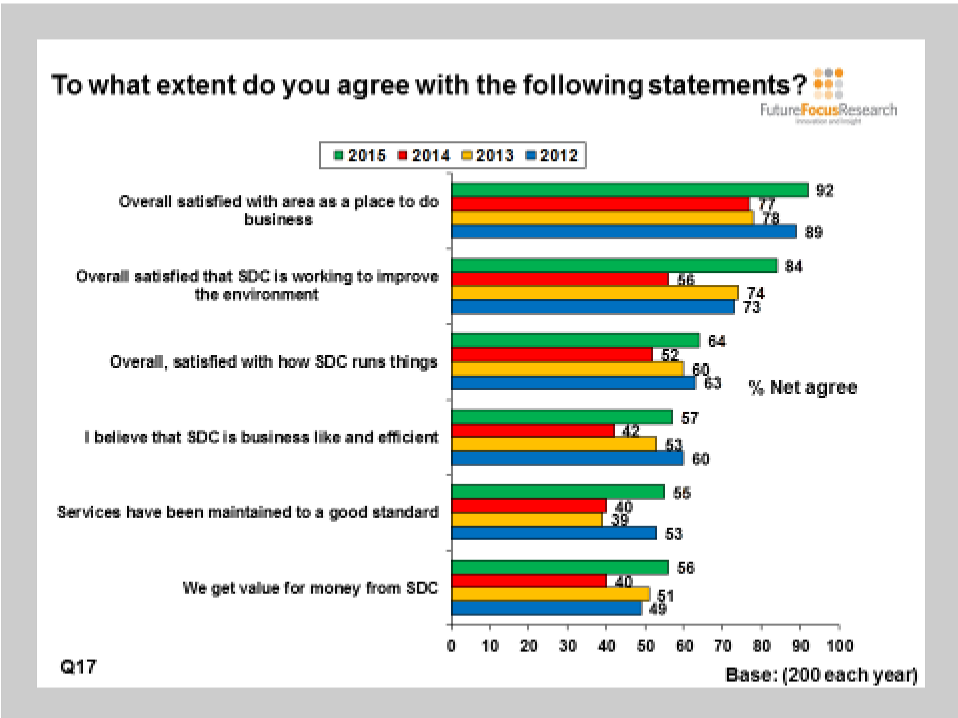
Over a half (56%) agreed that they *get value for money from Stroud DC* and that they are *business like and efficient*. A similar proportion (55%) agreed that *services provided have improved over the past few years.*

Figure 5.1



Comparing this year's results to previous years, the percentage agreement to all statements has risen, the most notable increase being *Stroud DC is working to improve the environment* (risen from 56% in 2014 to 84% in 2015). See figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2



5.2 Council Spending Options

All 200 respondents were given the opportunity to indicate *how Stroud DC could deliver improvements for residents and businesses without spending money or spending less money*. 43% (85 respondents) 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:* 41%
- *Local business support/business rates:* 30%
- *Staff Costs/reduce staff/pay freeze/merge departments/less management:* 28%
- *Community Spirit/educate the public to provide support to council/use volunteers:* 1%
- *Other:* 5%

All 200 respondents were given the opportunity to indicate *how Stroud DC could generate income through delivering improved services for residents and businesses*. 45% (90 respondents) didn't come up with any suggestions (responding don't know). The following summarises the main responses:

- *Review of Business rates:* 32%
- *Tourism/visitors/trade shows:* 28%
- *Cut waste/review unnecessary spend/more efficiency:* 22%
- *Waste and recycling:* 2%
- *Estate issues/charge higher rents/rent out/sell estate:* 1%
- *Increase taxes/charge more:* 1%
- *Other:* 5%

Even though respondents were advised that SDC did not have responsibility for roads, highways, education & schools, or social care when asked *if the Council could generate more income, which services they thought were in need of more funding*, the main response given was *roads/highways* by 55% of businesses. Other responses are shown in figure 5.3. A quarter said nothing or didn't know.

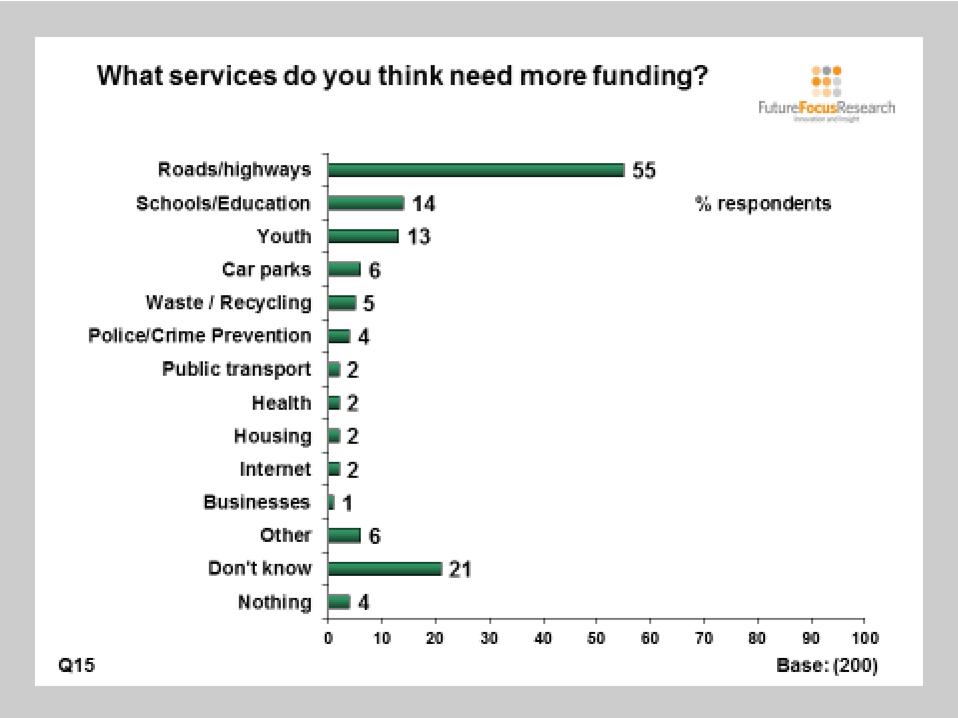


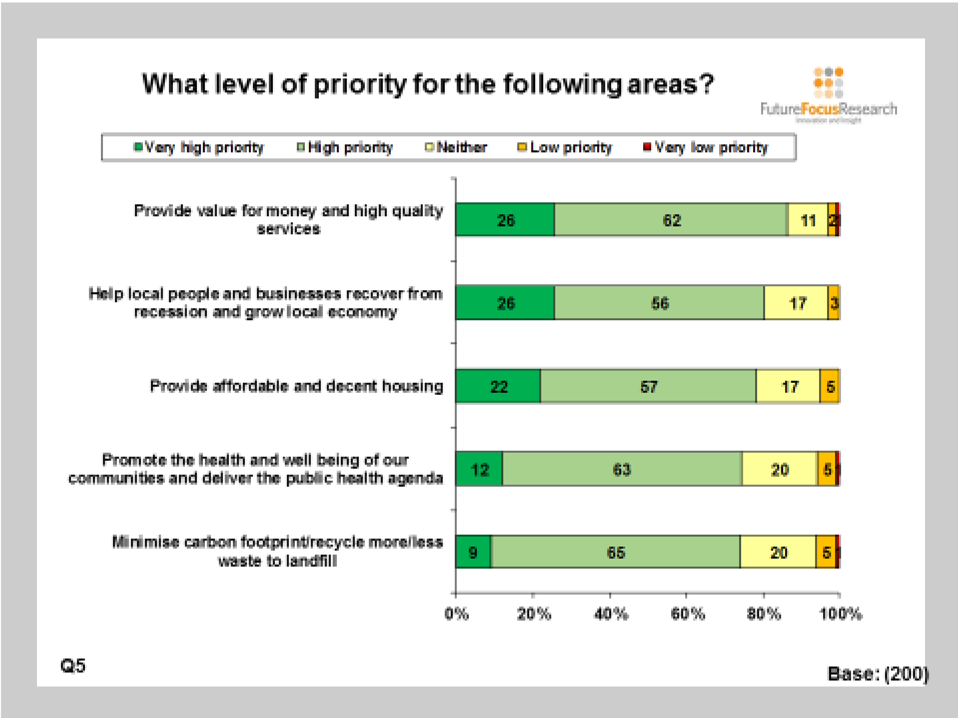
Figure 5.3

5.3 Corporate Delivery Plan

Figure 5.4 illustrates the extent to which respondents felt Stroud DC should prioritise certain areas.
The majority of respondents (over 70%) felt that all areas were a priority (either *very high* or *high*).

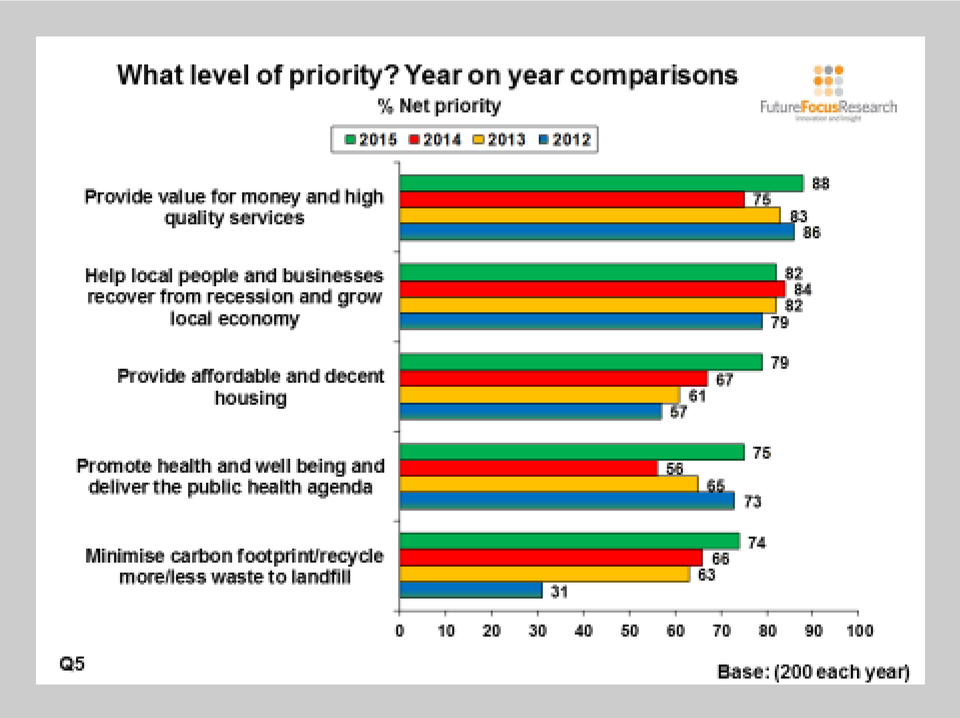
- *Provide value for money and high quality services* :88%
- *Help local people and businesses recover from recession and grow local economy:* 82%
- *Provide affordable and decent housing* :79%
- *Promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and deliver the public health agenda* :75%
- *Minimise carbon footprint/recycle more/less waste to landfill* :74%

Figure 5.4



For most areas, the level of priority increased in 2015, with the exception of *help local people and businesses recover from recession and grow local economy* which was consistent with 2014. It is worth noting that *provide affordable and decent housing* and *minimise carbon footprint/recycle more/less waste to landfill* has increased year on year since 2012. See figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5



5.4 Local Economy

To help understand the current economic trends within the District, respondents were asked whether they had employed any additional staff in the past year: 20% said that they had. See figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6

Of the 39 companies who had employed someone in the past 12 months, 21 of them had employed 1 person, 8 companies had employed 2 people and 10 companies had employed 3 or more people. Just 2 companies said they had employed apprentices.

Larger companies were more likely to have employed someone in the last year than smaller companies (40% of those employing more than 10 people compared to 11% of those employing 1 - 10 people).

5.5 Future Growth Plans

Just less than a quarter of businesses (24%) envisage expanding within the next 2 – 5 years. 56% said that they won't be expanding and 20% did not know.

The percentage envisaging expansion is similar to 2014 (27%).

Larger companies were more likely to be considering expansion than smaller companies (35% of those employing more than 10 people compared to 19% of those employing 1 - 10 people).

Of those who envisage expanding, 53% of them (25 out of 47 companies) said that they would be taking on more staff.

Of the 25 companies, no-one said that they were going to employ an apprentice.

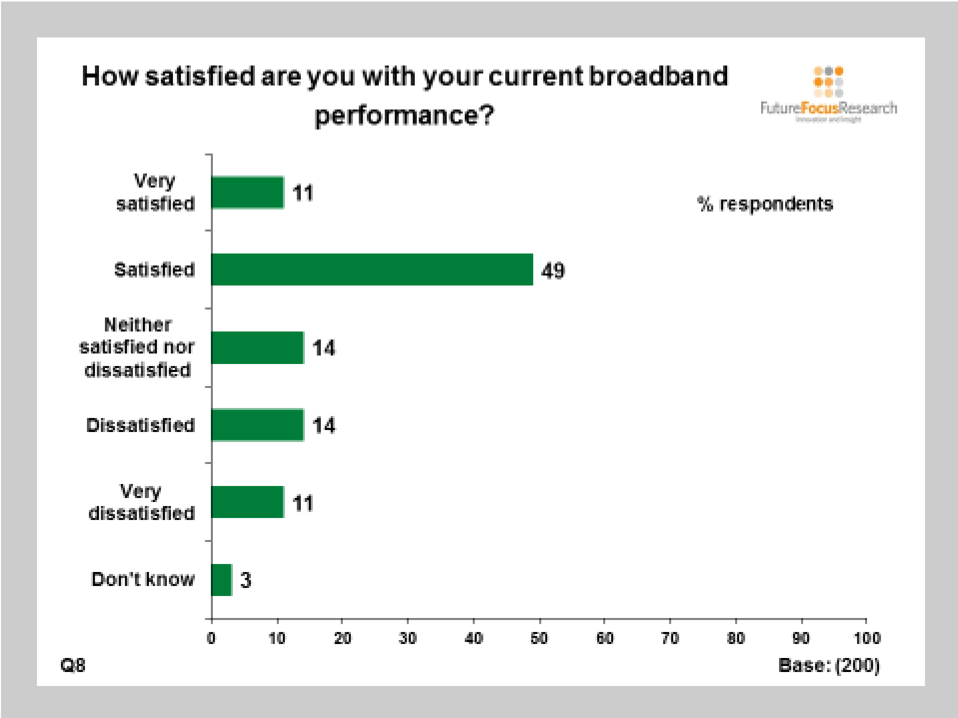
Those who did not envisage their business expanding in the next 2 – 5 years (112 companies) were asked the reason why (please note businesses were able give more than one reason). The main reasons were as follows:

- *Current economic climate* (59 businesses)
- *Availability/affordability of bigger premises/equipment* (35 businesses)
- *Lack of financial support* (8 businesses)
- *Fine as we are* (15 businesses)
- *Big enough* (8 businesses)
- *Planning retirement* (8 businesses)
- *Lack of skilled workforce* (1 business)
- *Other* (11 businesses)

5.6 Broadband

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the performance of their current broadband. Six in 10 businesses (60%) were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied*. This is lower than in 2014 when 72% were satisfied. However, a quarter (25%) were either *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied* with its performance (22% in 2014). See figure 5.7.

Figure 5.7



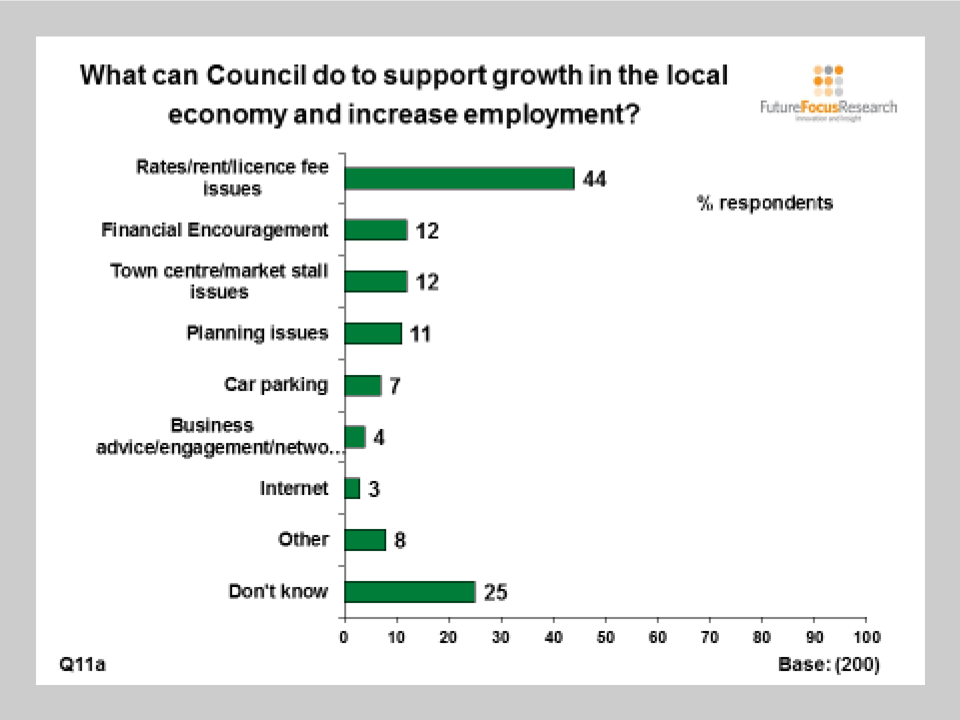
Just under 8 in 10 businesses (76%) did not believe that their broadband provision was restricting the performance of their business (81% in 2014), however, nearly a quarter 23% said that it was, an increase of 8% since 2014 (15% in 2014).

Over 4 in 10 businesses (41%) did not know whether the broadband in their area was due to be upgraded in the near future and just over a half (51%) said that it was not.

5.7 Support for Businesses

Respondents were asked what they felt *the Council could do to facilitate growth in the local economy and support employment*. The main theme to emerge was *rates/rent and licence fees* with 44% of businesses stating this. See figure 5.8.

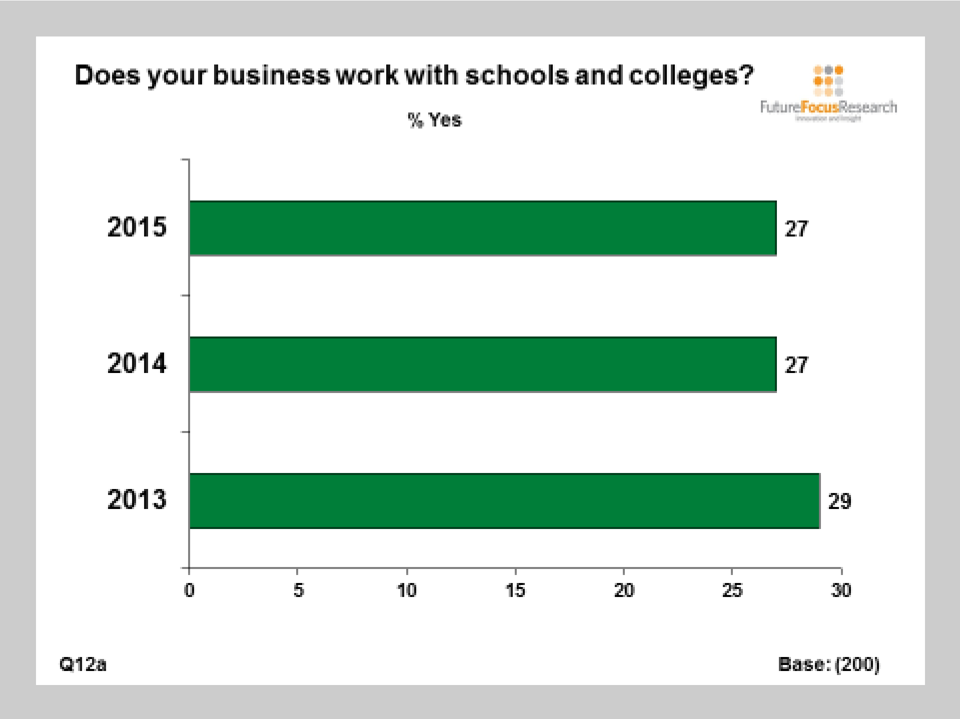
Figure 5.8



5.8 Working with Education

Businesses were asked whether they worked with schools and colleges to encourage young people into their business sector. Just over a quarter (27%) said that they did (54 companies). This is consistent with 2014 (27%). See figure 5.9.

Figure 5.9



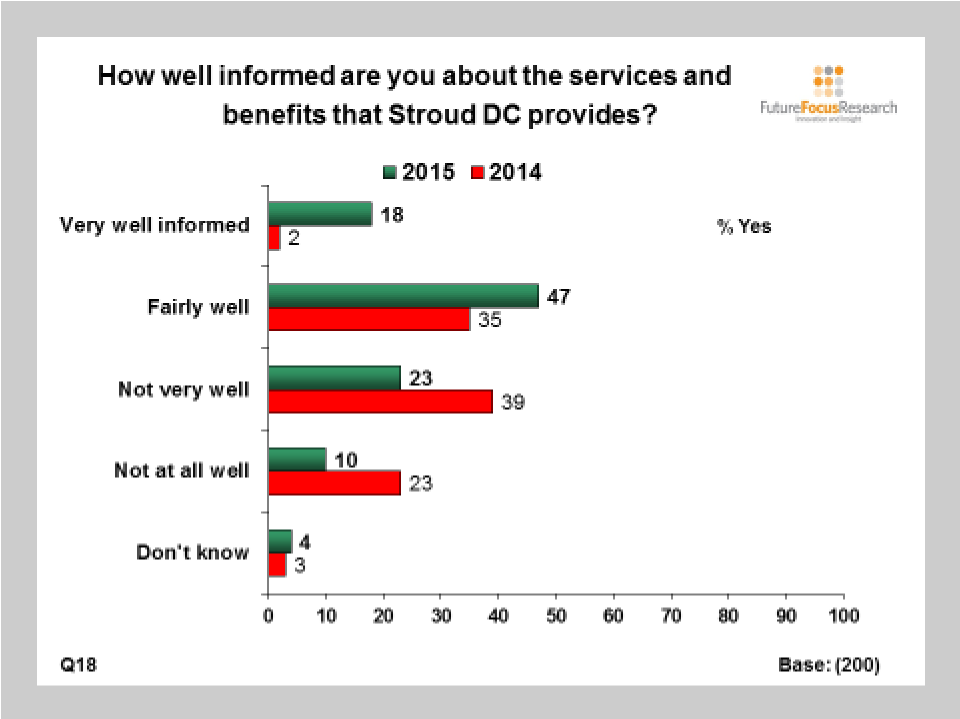
When asked about the work they had undertaken with schools, the following were mentioned (businesses were able to select more than one response):

- *Work experience* : 42 companies
- *Apprenticeships* : 20 companies
- *Jobs fairs, careers evenings, in-school activities, student placements, trainee programmes etc* : 7 companies
- *Visits from schools* : 1 company
- *Working on a project with the school* : 1 company

5.9 Information from the Council

Businesses were asked *how well informed they felt about the services and benefits the Council provides*. Just under two thirds of businesses (65%) said that they were either *very well* or *fairly well* informed which was a big increase on 2014 where only 37% felt informed. However, a third (33%) felt that they were not informed (either *not very well* or *not at all*). See figure 5.10.

Figure 5.10



When asked how they preferred to be communicated with by the Council, 79% said by leaflet/letter and 25% said by email. (Note: respondents were allowed to select more than one answer)

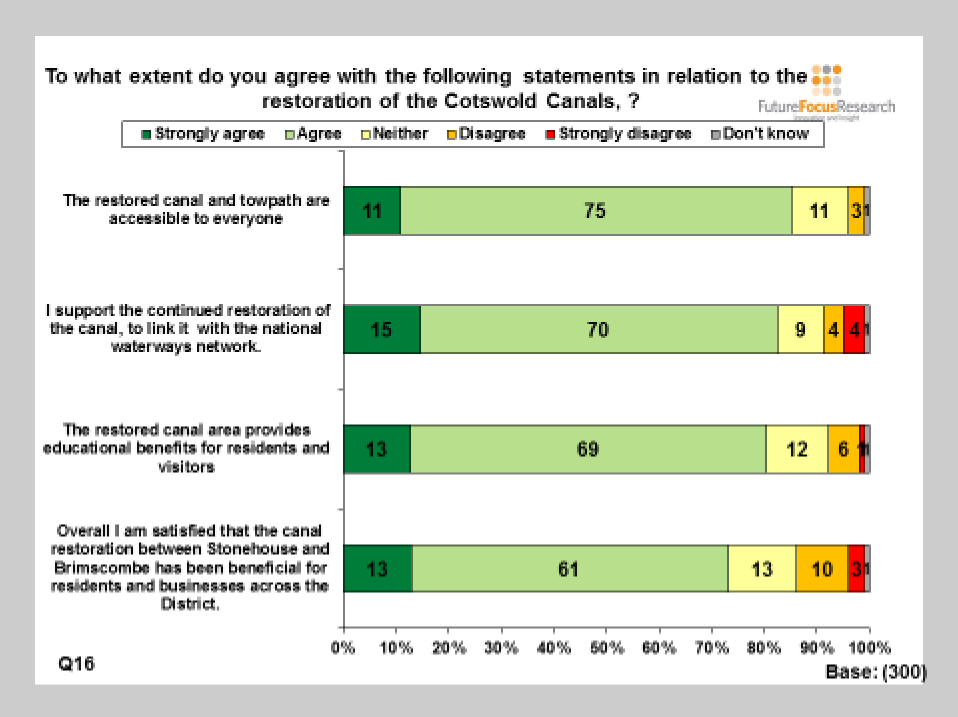
5.10 Restoration of the Canal

Businesses were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements in relation to the restoration of the Cotswold Canal, between Stonehouse and Brimscombe. Between 74% and 86% agreed with each statement as follows:

- *The restored canal and towpath are accessible to everyone (86% strongly agree/agree)*
- *I support the continued restoration of the canal, to link it with the national waterways network (85% strongly agree/agree)*
- *The restored canal area provides educational benefits for residents and visitors (82% strongly agree/agree)*
- *Overall I am satisfied that the canal restoration between Stonehouse and Brimscombe has been beneficial for residents and businesses across the District (74% strongly agree/agree)*

See figure 5.11.

Figure 5.11



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 GL7.6
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