Budget Consultation 2017

Report

November 2017

Prepared For: **Stroud District Council**

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

Contents

Page

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 less than 10 employees; and
- 60 interviews with businesses with 10 or more 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%.

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 <u>Resident Survey</u>

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%	104
35 – 54	37%	184
55 – 74	31%	153
75+	10%	52
Prefer not to say	1%	7

Disability		
Yes	9%	45
No	88%	440
Prefer not to say	3%	15
Working status		
Employed in Stroud district	29%	146
Employed outside Stroud district	17%	85
Unemployed and actively looking for paid employment	8%	38
Unemployed but not looking for paid employment	2%	11
Retired	35%	175
At school/college/university	3%	17
Other (e.g. house person, carer)	4%	19
Prefer not to say	2%	9
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.

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
Retail and Wholesale	36	72
Hospitality and Leisure	16.5	33
Professional Services	13	26
Manufacturing and Engineering	8.5	17
Personal Services	6	12
Construction and Building Services	6	12
Health and Social Work	2.5	5
Business Services	2.5	5
Agriculture and Fishing	2	4
Transport, storage and distribution	1.5	3
Real Estate	1	2
Travel and Tourism	1	2
Charity	1	2
Creative Services and Media	1	2
IT and Telecoms	.5	1
Education	.5	1
Energy and Water	.5	1
Total	**100**	**200**

Number of employees	%	Number of responses
One	8	16
2 – 4	26	52
5 – 9	36	72
10 – 25	23.5	47
26 – 50	5	10
51 – 100	1.5	3
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

- 95% are *satisfied with their local area as a place to live* (91% in 2016).
- 79% are *satisfied with the way SDC runs things* (80% in 2016).
- 74% agree that *services have been maintained to a good standard* (76% in 2016).
- 76% are satisfied that *SDC is working to improve the environment* (74% in 2016).
- 72% agree that they *get value for money from SDC* (71% in 2016).
- 66% agree that *SDC is business like and efficient* (65% in 2016).
- **Agreement with all statements have remained consistent with 2016**
- 82% are satisfied with *the voting process in the national and local elections.*
- The services valued the most were *refuse collection* (61% high), *recycling* (44%) and *street cleaning* (42%).
- Waste/recycling (70%) was the service considered to be most in need of funding followed by *housing* (37%) and *street cleaning* (33%).
- 96% rated *provide value for money and high quality services* as a very high/high priority (92% in 2016).
- 93% rated *help create a sustainable and vibrant economy that works for all* as a very high/high priority (92% in 2016).
- 78% rated *provide affordable, energy efficient homes for our diverse and changing population* as a very high/high priority (78% in 2016).
- 83% rated *minimise carbon footprint/adapt to climate change/recycle more* as a very high/high priority (78% in 2016).
- 64% rated *promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and deliver the public health agenda* as a very high/high priority (75% in 2016).
- **Most areas were considered to be the same or a higher priority than in 2016 apart from Health and Well Being.**

Information from Stroud DC

- 74% think that SDC *acts upon the concerns of local residents* a great deal or a fair amount. This was similar to 2016 (72%).
- 78% think that SDC keeps residents very or fairly well informed, which was lower than in 2016 (85%).

Council Tax

- Just 5% receive their Council Tax bill by email.
- 50% would not accept any level of increase in Council tax (43% in 2016), whilst 38% would accept a 2% increase. Just 1% would accept 5% or more.

Contact with SDC

- 8% had either contacted the Council or had found out information about the Council recently (28% in 2016). The main method was by phone (81%). Just 5% used the website.

- When asked why they didn't consider using the website, the main reason was that *phoning was quicker* (80%).
- When asked how they would make contact with the Council if they needed to, most said they would do so by phone (86%).

<u>Canal Restoration</u>
- 70% agreed that the *canal restoration between Stonehouse and Brimscombe has been beneficial for residents and businesses across the District.*
- 70% agreed that *they support the continued restoration of the canal, to link it with the national waterways network.*
- 68% agreed that *the restored canal area provides educational benefits to resident and visitors.*
- 67% agreed that *the restored canal and towpath are accessible to everyone.*

<u>Health and Well-being</u>
- In a typical week the most popular forms of exercise were *housework* (34%), *walking* 33%) and *gardening* (22%).
- Of those who exercised, over two thirds (68%) exercised for around 30 minutes every day.
- The main reason for exercising was to *get fitter* (37%).

2.2 Business Survey

<u>Satisfaction and priorities</u>
- 94% are *satisfied with their local areas as a place to do business* (93% in 2016).
- 85% are *satisfied that SDC is working to improve the environment* (84% in 2016).
- 72% agree that *services have been maintained to a good standard* (66% in 2016).
- 70% are satisfied with the way SDC runs things (70% in 2016).
- 64% agree that they *get value for money from SDC* (65% in 2016).
- 62% agree that *SDC is business like and efficient* (64% in 2016).
- **Agreement with all statements are consistent with 2016, the biggest change being an increase of 6% agreeing that services have been maintained to a good standard.**
- 96% rated *provide value for money and high quality services* as a very high/high priority (95% in 2016).
- 89% rated *help create a sustainable and vibrant economy that works for all* as a very high priority (wording different to 2016)
- 89% rated *provide affordable and decent housing* as a very high/high priority (93% in 2016).
- 88% rated *promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and deliver the public health agenda* as a very high/high priority (87% in 2016).
- 81% rated *minimise carbon footprint/adapt to climate change/recycle more* as a very high/high priority (84% in 2015).
- **A similar percentage of businesses rated each area as very high/high priority to 2016.**
- *Roads/Highways* (55%), *Transport and parking* (54%) & *Youth issue/ employment/ apprenticeships* (51%) were considered the most important services to businesses.

Employment of staff

- 32% had employed additional staff in the last 12 months (an increase from 20% in 2016) with around three quarters (73%) having had no difficulty recruiting people with the right skills (90% in 2016).

Support for businesses

- *Rates/rent/licence fee issues* (29%), *parking improvements* (20%) and *town centre/market stall issues* (11%) were the most common suggestions on what the Council can do to support growth and increase employment.
- 26% said that the EU Referendum decision has made them somewhat uncertain about their future business plans (9% in 2016), 73% said it would make no difference.
- The main reason for uncertainty was *retail confidence* (44%).
- Just 16% were aware of the free business directory on the SDC website.

Working with education providers

- 21% worked with schools colleges (11% in 2016). The most common link was work experience.

Information from Stroud DC

- 69% said they are very well/fairly well informed about services and benefits the Council provides (64% in 2016).

Contact with Council

- 16% had recently contacted the Council (8% in 2016).
- The main method of contact was by phone (78%).
- 19% used the Councils new website (6 people).
- All of those using the website managed to do what they needed (base:6).
- The main reason given for not using the website was that *phoning is quicker.*
- Just 13% said that they receive their business rate bill by email
- Many of those who don't currently receive their bill by email had no specific reason as to why (45%) while 25% said that they preferred paper bills.

Promoting Staff Well-being

- 14% of business offered at least one of the health/well-being initiatives asked about, whilst 86% of business did not offer any

Canal Restoration

- 72% agreed that they *support the continued restoration of the canal, to link it with the national waterways network*
- 67% agreed that *the restored canal area provides educational benefits to resident and visitors*
- 66% agreed that *the canal restoration between Stonehouse and Brimscombe has been beneficial for residents and businesses across the District*
- 66% agreed that *the restored canal and towpath are accessible to everyone*

3. Residents v Businesses

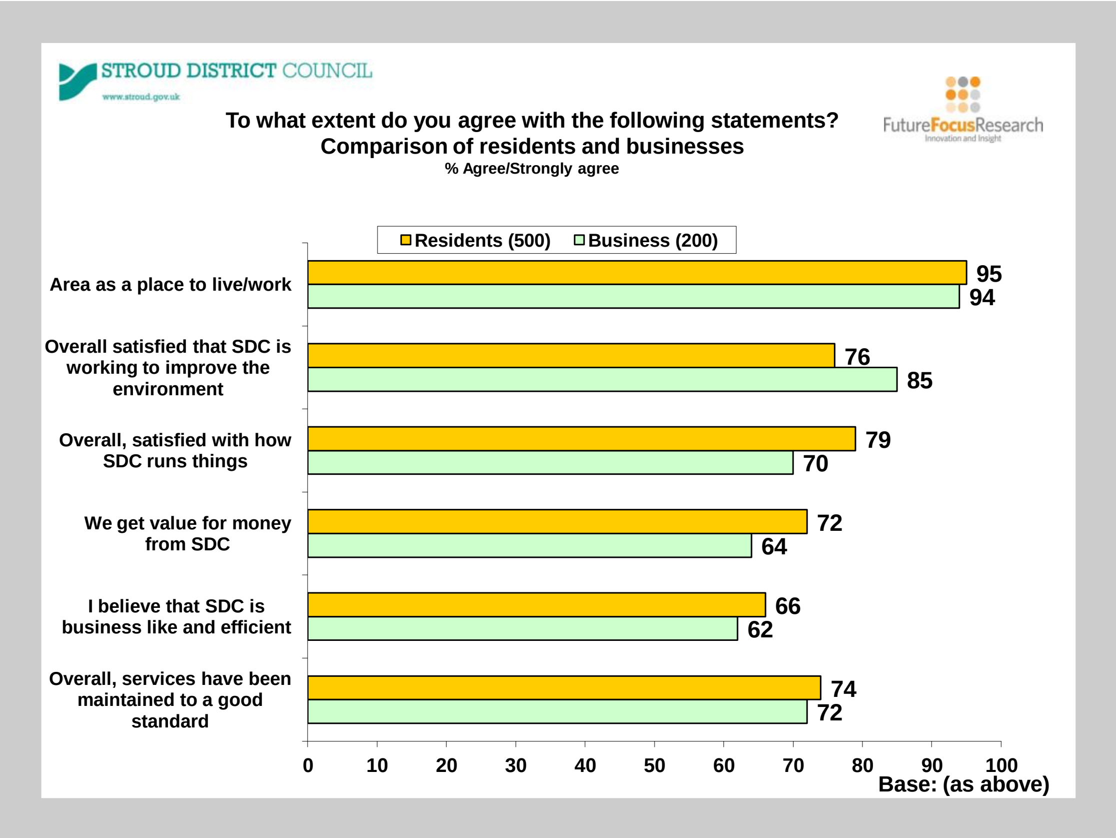
3.1 Opinions of Stroud DC

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* (85% compared to 76% for residents).

Residents were more likely to agree that they are *satisfied with the way Stroud DC runs things* (79% compared to 70%) and that *we get value for money from SDC* (72% compared to 64%). See figure 3.1.

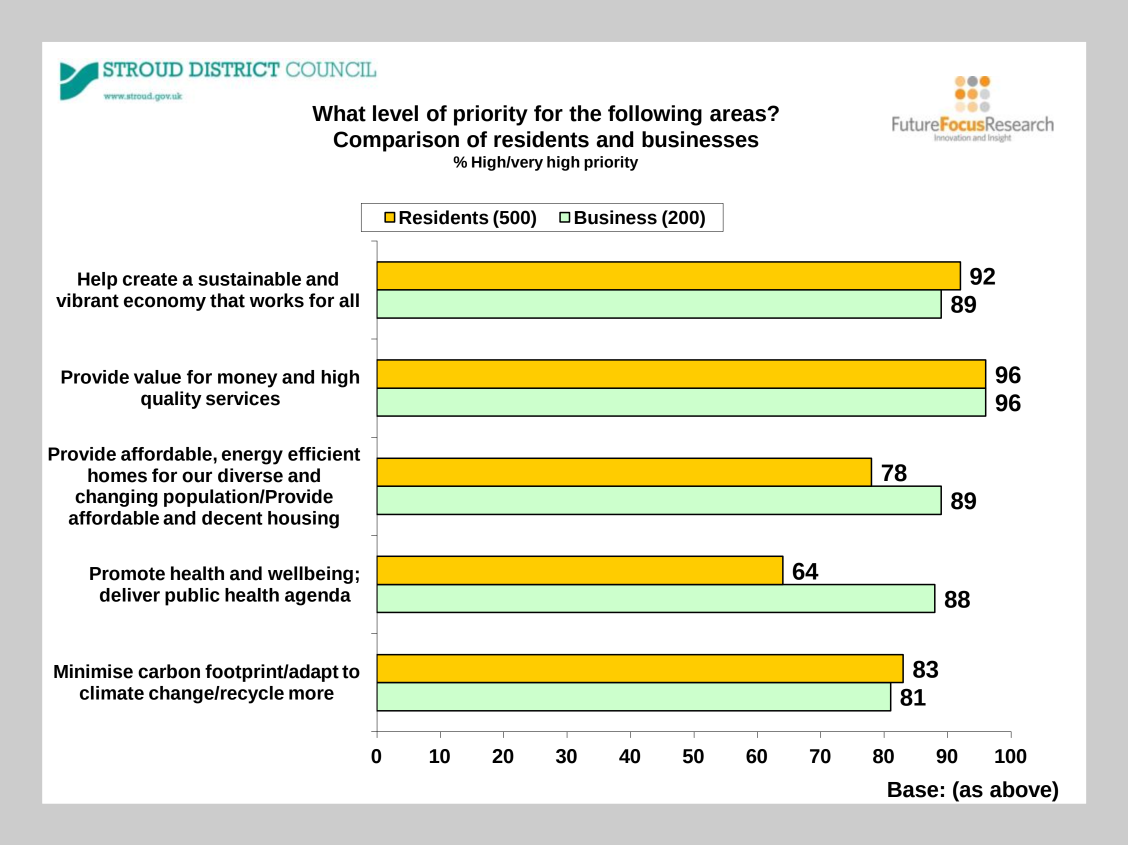
Figure 3.1



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 Delivery Plan, with the exception of *promote health and wellbeing: deliver public health agenda* where businesses were much more likely to rate this as a high priority (88% compared to 64% of residents) and *provide affordable, energy efficient homes for our diverse and changing population* (89% compared to 78% of residents) See figure 3.2.

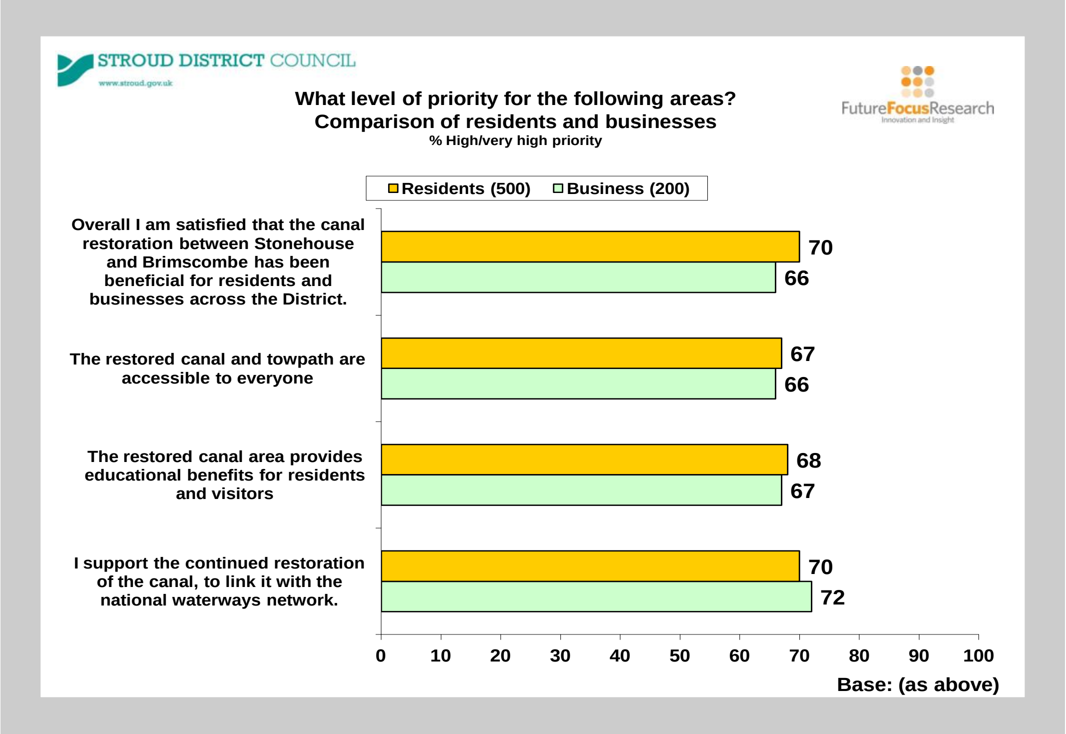
Figure 3.2



3.3 Canal Restoration

Residents and businesses were very consistent in their views on the canal restoration. See figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3



4. Resident Survey

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

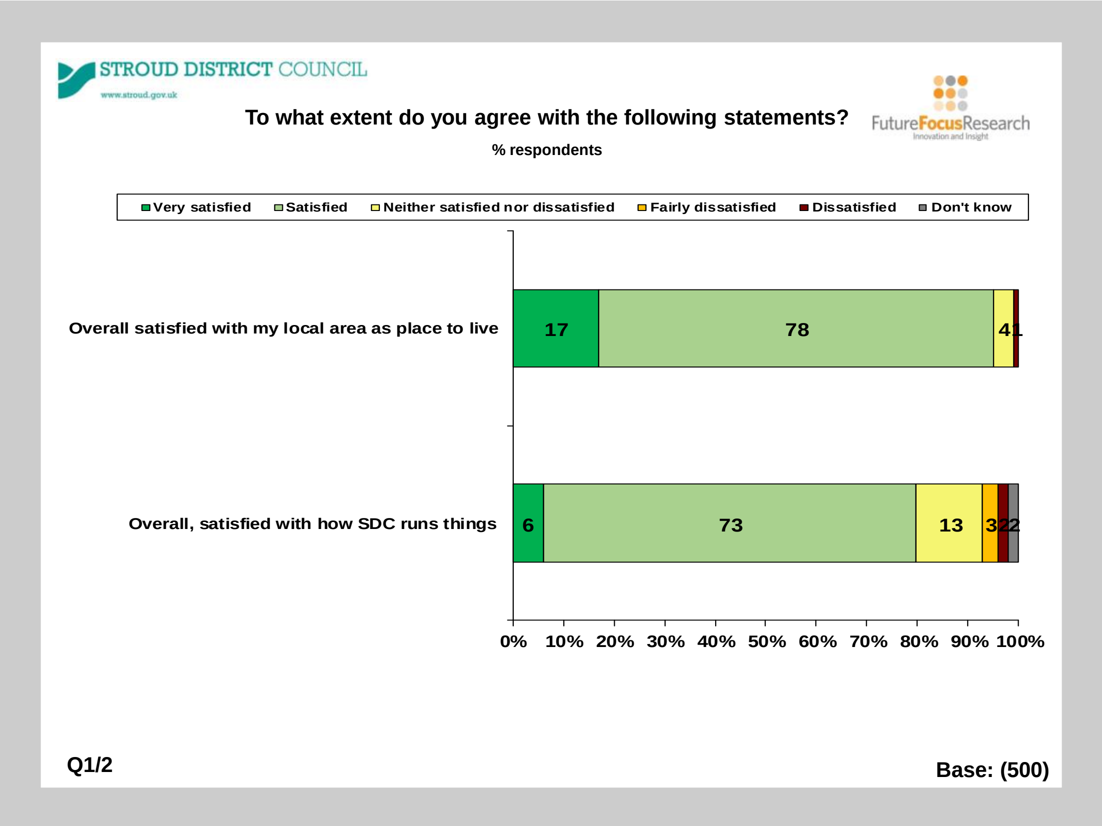
- Satisfaction and Priorities
- Information from Stroud District Council
- Council Tax
- Contact with Stroud District Council
- Canal Restoration
- Health and Well-being

4.1 Satisfaction and Priorities

The vast majority of respondents were *happy with their area as a place to live* (95% *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 (84%, compared to 98% of 35-54s, 96% of 55-74s and 100% of those 75+).

Residents were asked how satisfied they were *with the way Stroud DC runs things* almost 8 in 10 residents (79%) said they were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied*. Again, there were differences by age, with younger residents (18-24s) being least satisfied (55% compared to 81% of 35-54s, 92% of 55-74s and 85% of those 75+).

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). The statement attracting the highest level of agreement *was overall I am satisfied with the voting process in the national and local elections* (82%).

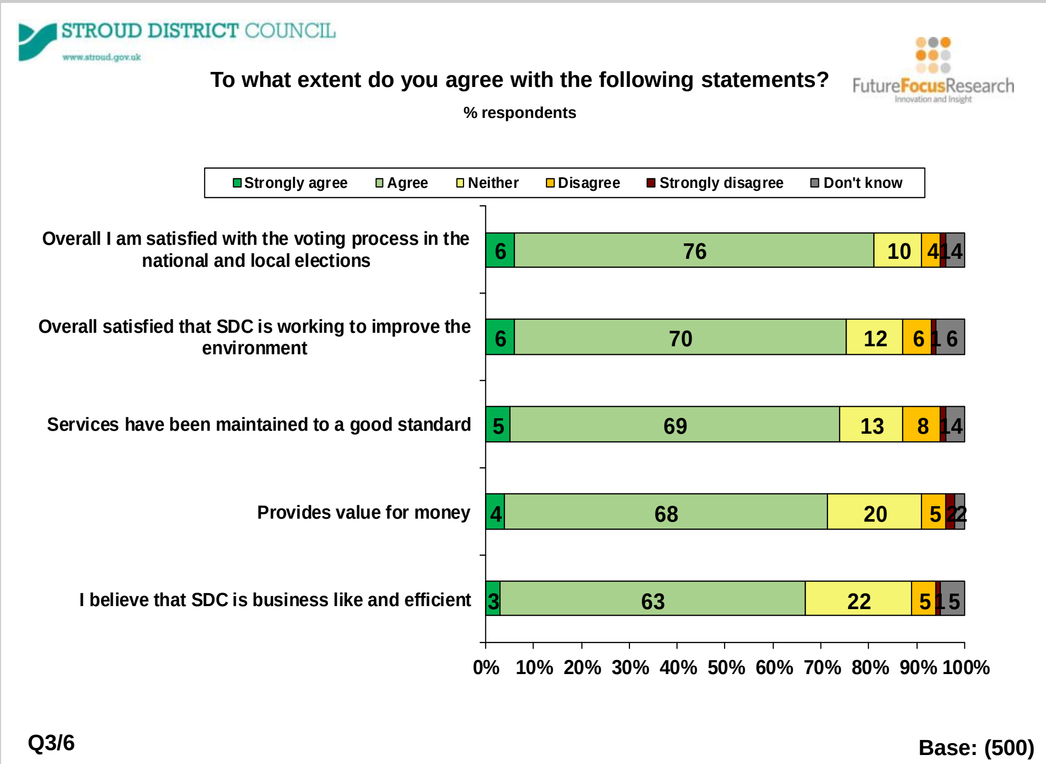
Around three quarters agreed (either strongly agree/agree) that *Stroud DC is working to improve the environment* (76%) and *services have been maintained to a good standard (74%).*

Over 7in 10 (72%) agreed that *Stroud DC provides value for money*. The statement with the lowest percentage agreement was *Stroud DC is business like and efficient* (66%).

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

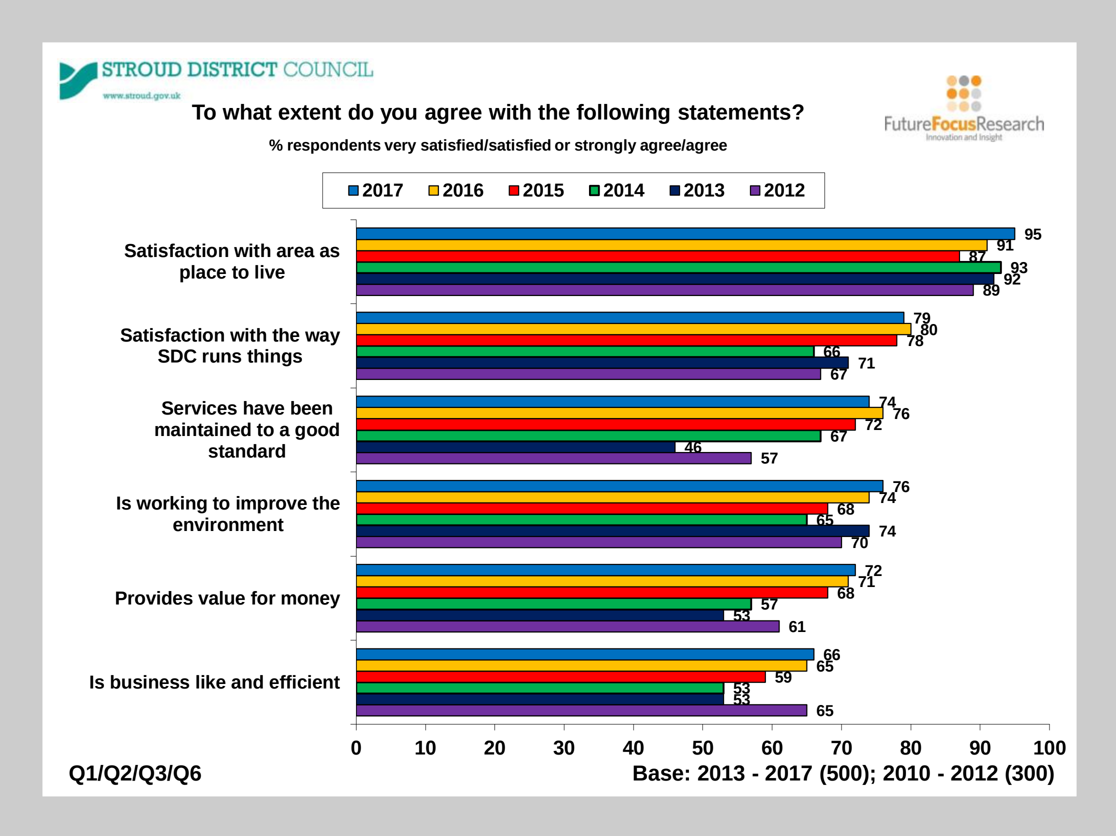
- *Stroud DC is working to improve the environment* (49%)
- *Over the past few years, services have been maintained to a good standard* (46%)
- *Stroud DC provides value for money* (42%)
- *Stroud DC is business like and efficient* (32%)
- *Overall I am satisfied with the voting process in the national and local elections (53%).*

Figure 4.2



Comparing the 2017 findings with previous years, results were consistent with 2016, the biggest change being *satisfaction with area as place to live,* increasing to the highest ever at 95%. See figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3


STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
www.stroud.gov.uk
To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
% respondents very satisfied/satisfied or strongly agree/agree
FutureFocusResearch
2017
2016
2015
2014
2013
2012
Satisfaction with area as place to live
95
91
87
93
92
89
Satisfaction with the way SDC runs things
79
80
78
66
71
67
Services have been maintained to a good standard
74
76
72
67
46
57
Is working to improve the environment
76
74
68
65
74
70
Provides value for money
72
71
68
57
53
61
Is business like and efficient
66
65
59
53
53
65
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
Q1/Q2/Q3/Q6
Base: 2013 - 2017 (500); 2010 - 2012 (300)

Residents were asked to what extent they valued a list of services. The most valued services were *refuse collection* (61% high), *recycling* (44% high), *street cleaning* (42% high) and *pollution control (39%* high). The least valued services were *Stroud subscription rooms* (4% high), *tourist information centre* (4% high) and *museum in the park* (7% high). See figures 4.4 and 4.5.

Figure 4.4

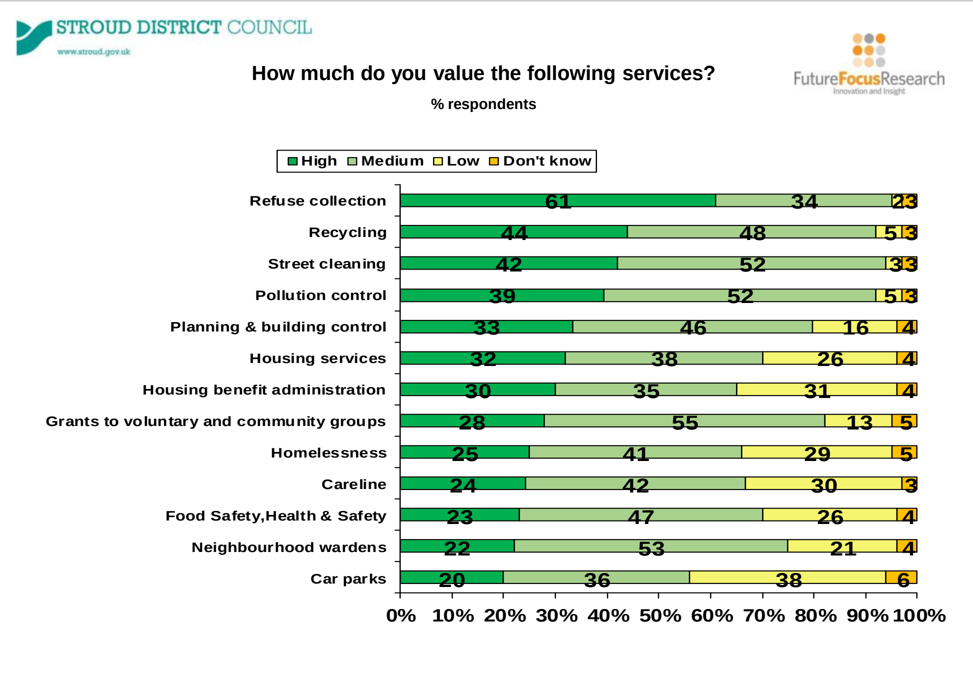
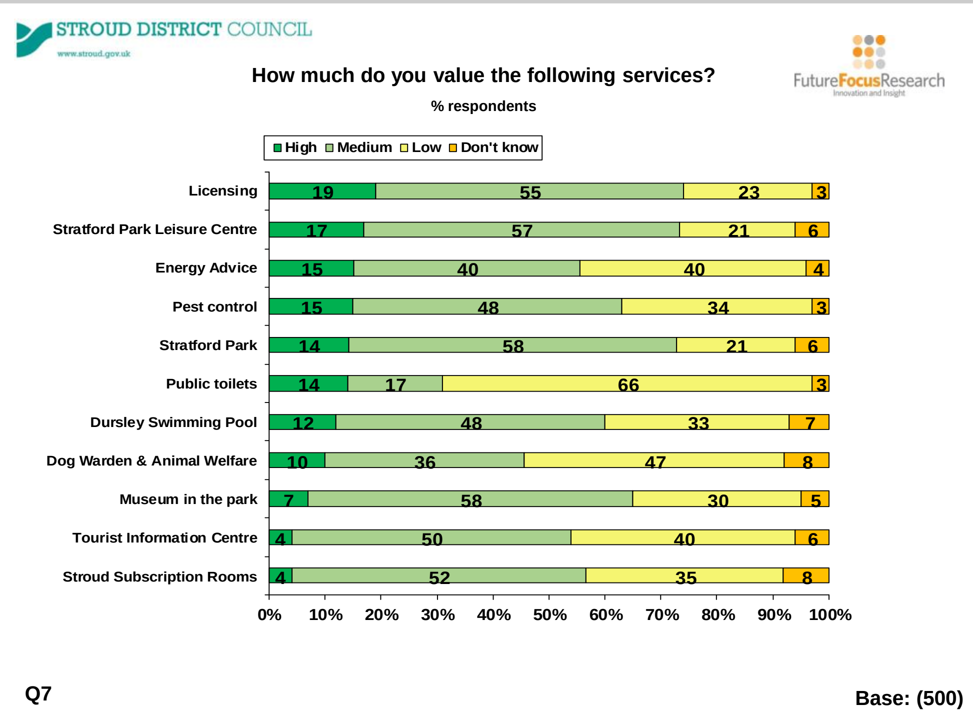
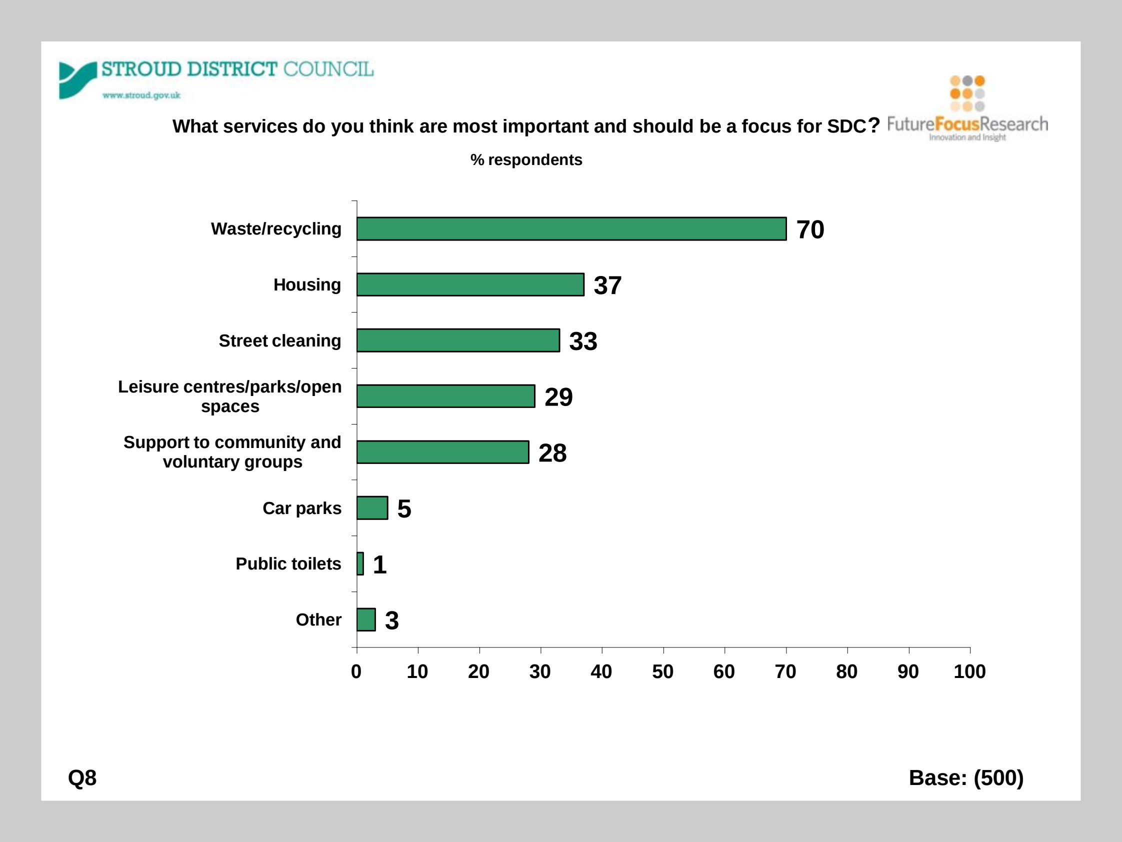


Figure 4.5



Respondents were asked what services they felt were the most important and should be a focus for SDC. The most popular mentions were *waste/recycling* (70%) followed by *housing* (37%). See figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6



Those aged 18 – 34 were more likely to state *leisure centre/parks/open spaces* as needing more funding (46%). This age group were also less likely to think that *support to community and voluntary groups* (10%) needed funding.

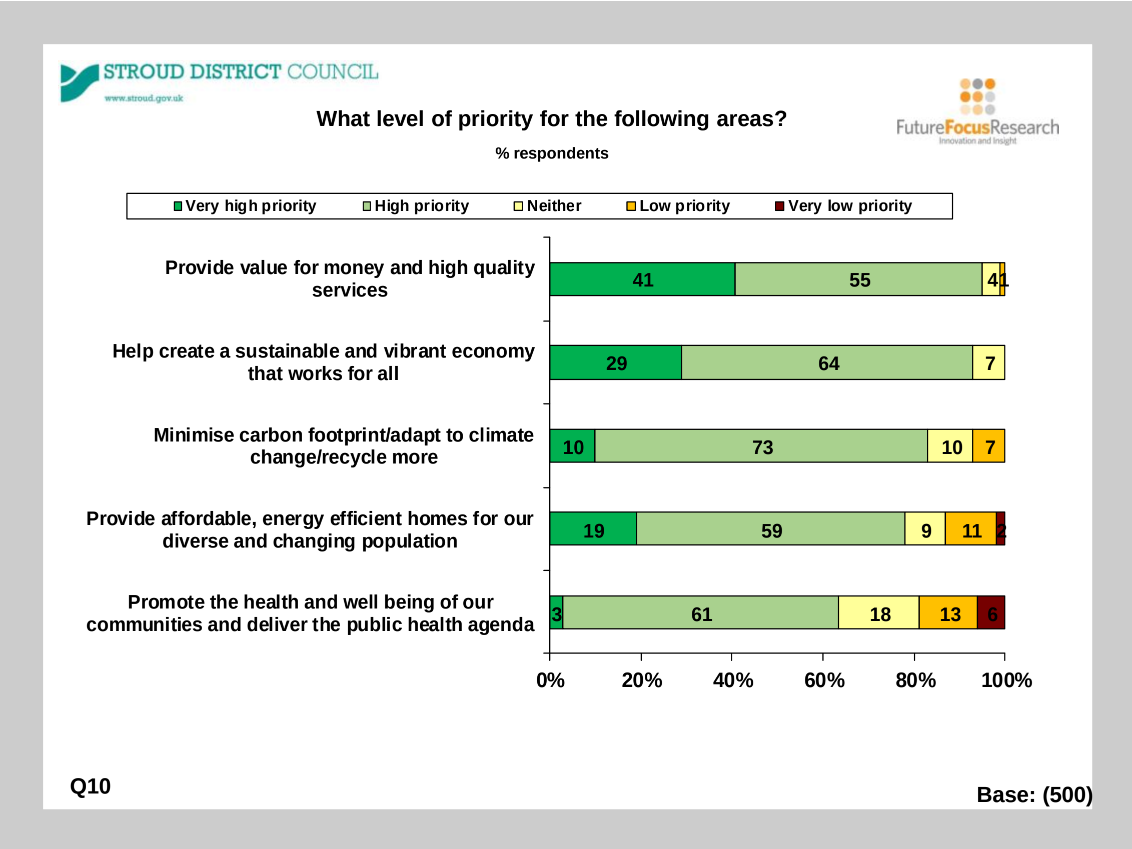
Respondents were then asked to indicate the level of priority for each of the five broad areas in the Corporate Delivery Plan. All areas were rated as either a *very high* or a *high* priority by the majority of respondents.

The area rated the highest priority was *provide value for money to local taxpayers and high quality services to our customers* (96% very high or high) followed by *help create a sustainable and vibrant economy that works for all* (93%).

Over 8 in 10 (83%) felt that *minimise carbon footprint/adapt to climate change/recycle more* was a high or very high priority, whilst 78% felt that *provide affordable, energy efficient homes for our diverse and changing population.*

The area rated as lowest priority, but still a *high* or *very high* priority for 64% of respondents was *promote health and wellbeing and deliver the public health agenda*. See figure 4.7.

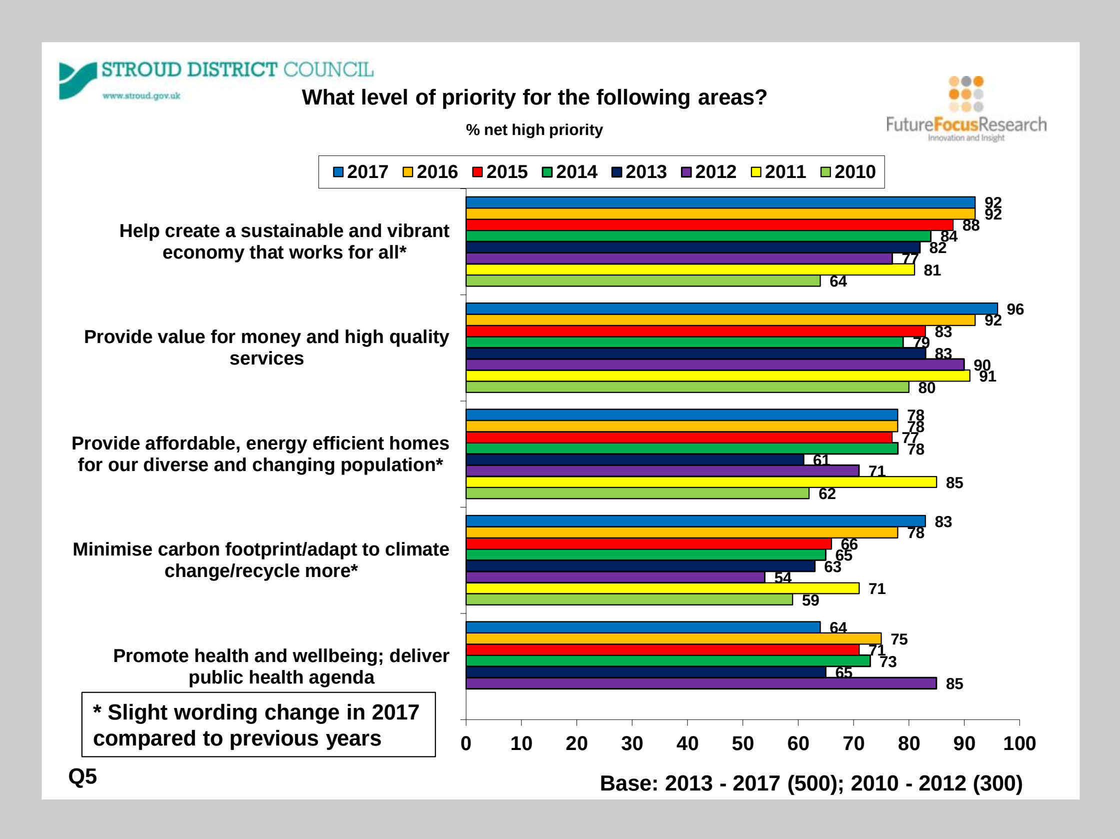
Figure 4.7



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 (63%) and *promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and deliver the public health agenda* (34%).

Most areas have increased in priority since 2016, with the exception of *promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and deliver the public health agenda* which fell from 75% (high/very high priority) to 64%. See figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8


STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
www.stroud.gov.uk
What level of priority for the following areas?
% net high priority
FutureFocusResearch
Innovation and Insight
2017
2016
2015
2014
2013
2012
2011
2010
Help create a sustainable and vibrant economy that works for all*
92
92
88
84
82
77
81
64
Provide value for money and high quality services
96
92
83
79
83
90
91
80
Provide affordable, energy efficient homes for our diverse and changing population*
78
78
77
78
61
71
85
62
Minimise carbon footprint/adapt to climate change/recycle more*
83
78
66
65
63
54
71
59
Promote health and wellbeing; deliver public health agenda
64
75
71
73
65
85
* Slight wording change in 2017 compared to previous years
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
Q5
Base: 2013 - 2017 (500); 2010 - 2012 (300)

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 (74%) felt that they did, either *a great deal* or *a fair amount*. This has remained more or less consistent with 2016 (72%). A further 17% stated *not very much* or *not at all* (15% in 2016). See figure 4.9.

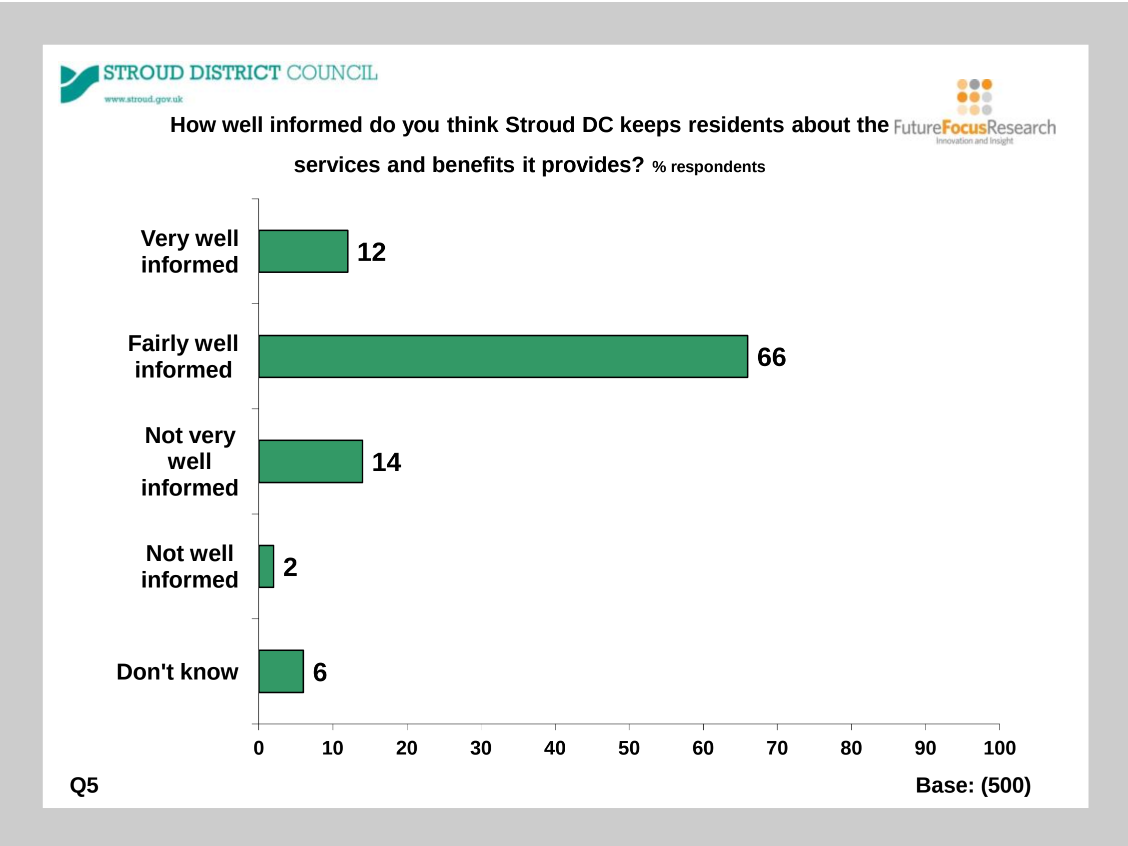
Figure 4.9

Those aged 18-34 were the least likely to say either *a great deal* or *a fair amount* (54%).

Residents were also asked how well they felt *Stroud DC keeps residents informed about the benefits and services it provides*. 78% felt that they were either *very well informed* or *fairly well informed*. This has decreased from 85% in 2016. See figure 4.10.

Those aged 18 – 34 were least likely to say that they were very or fairly well informed (54%).

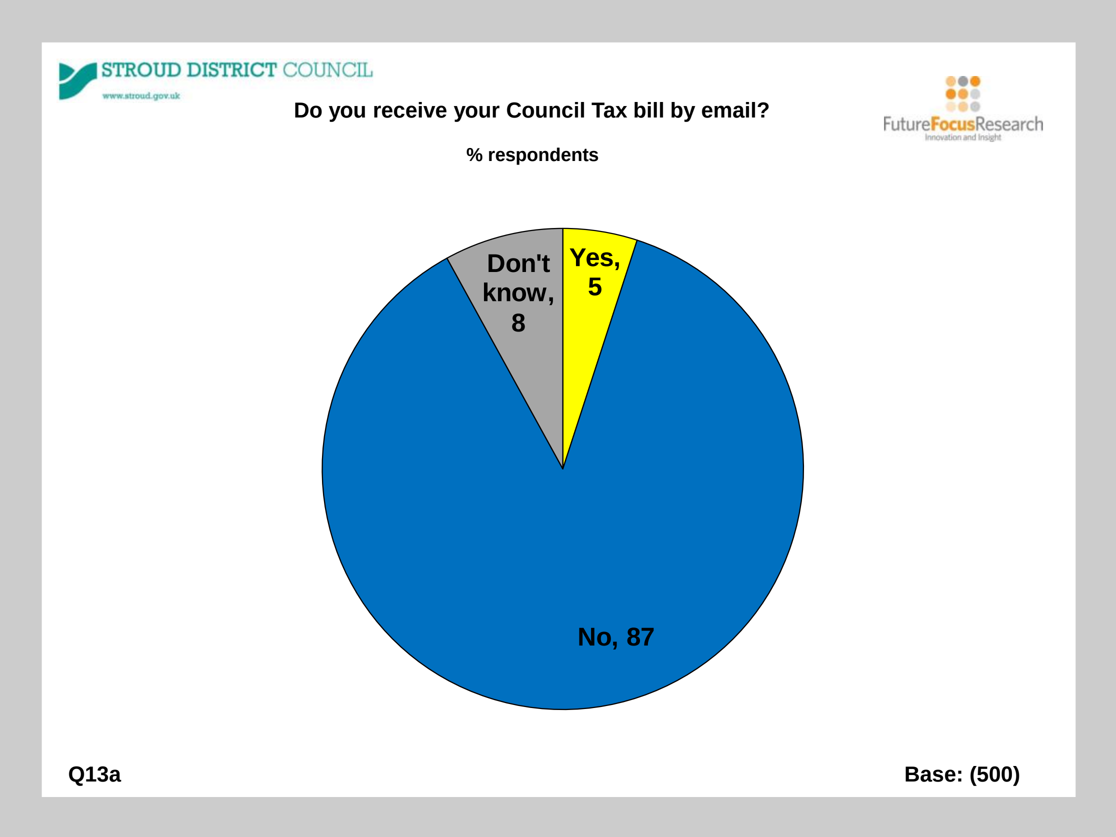
Figure 4.10



4.3 Council Tax

Just 5% said that they received their Council Tax bill by email. Those aged 18 – 34 were most likely to receive this bill by email (12%).

Figure 4.11

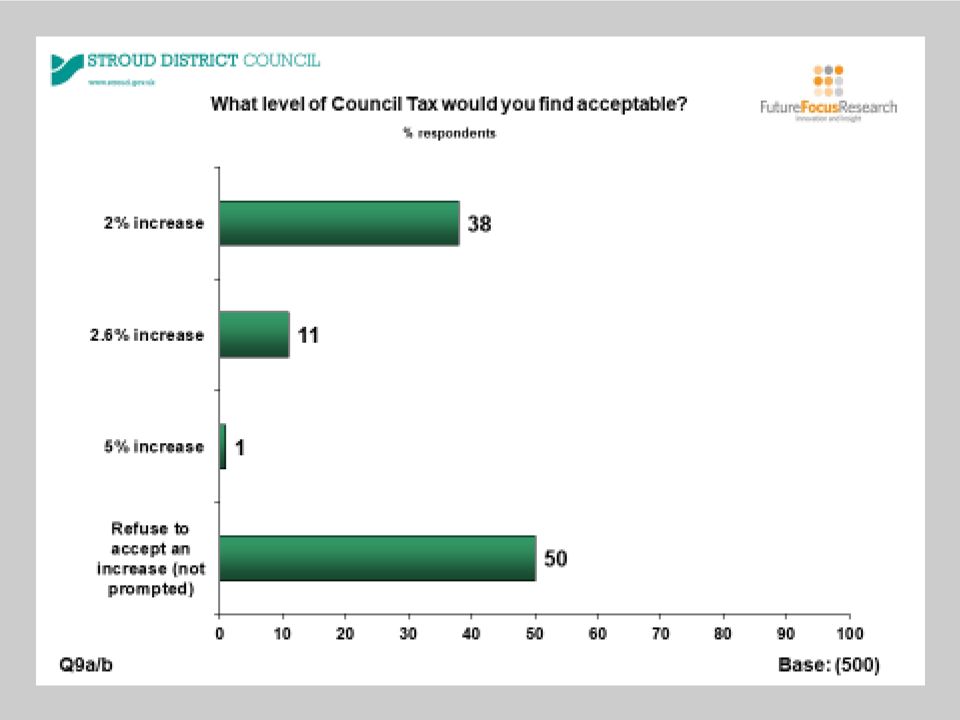


Respondents were presented with the following three options for the District element of the Council Tax:

- *2% increase*
- *2.6% increase*
- *5% increase*

Despite it not being offered as a response, 50% would not accept an increase (89% amongst 18-34 year olds). Thirty eight percent (38%) of respondents felt that there should be a *2% increase*. Just 11% were prepared to accept a 2.6% increase and 1% would accept a 5% increase. In total 50% would accept an increase of 2% or more. See figure 4.12.

Figure 4.12

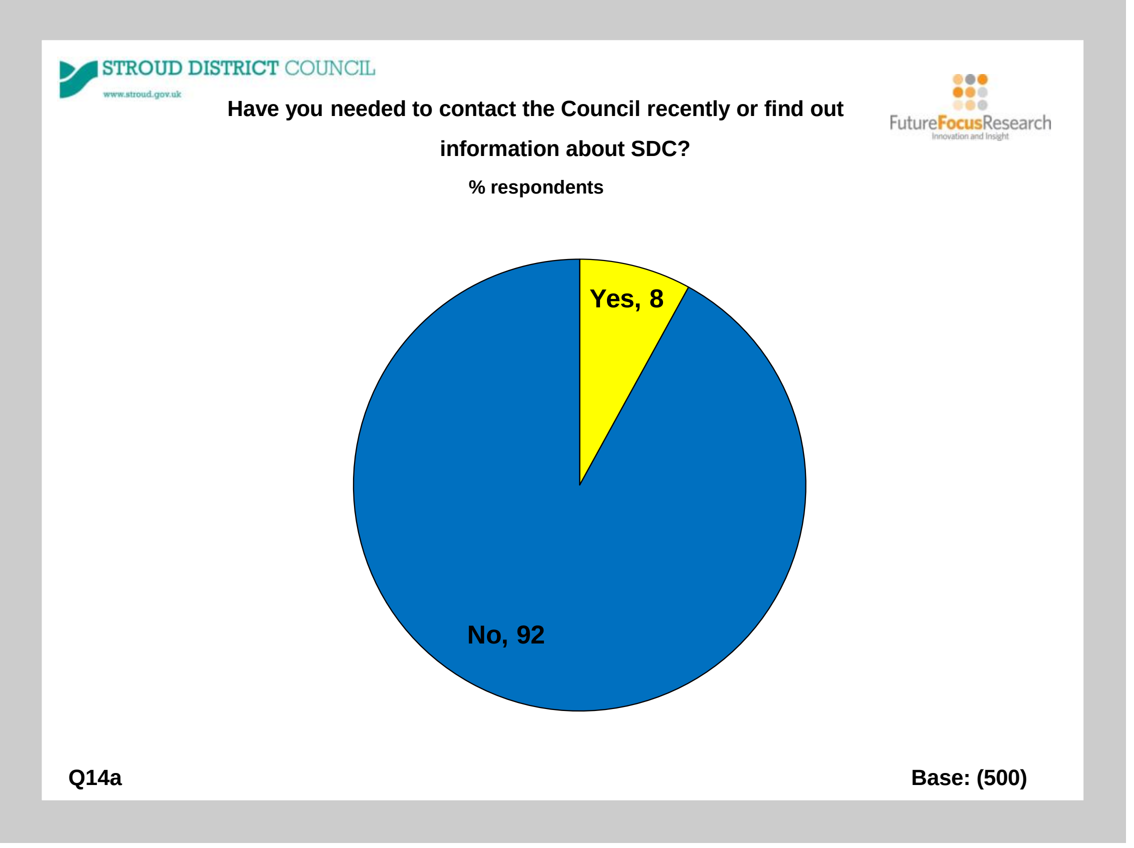


Those who said that they would pay a 5% increase (just 4 people), were asked whether they would be prepared to pay more than 5%. Of these, just one person said that they would.

4.4 Contact with Stroud District Council

When asked, just 8% said that they had contacted Stroud DC recently or found out information about the Council. See figure 4.13.

Figure 4.13



Older residents (those aged over 55) were most likely to have made contact.

For those who'd had contact with the Council, the main reasons for contact were:

- Waste & recycling/street cleaning 40%
- Housing 19%
- Planning 17%

The main method was by telephone (81%). 21% had emailed the Council and 5% had used the website.

Of those who had used the website (5%, 2 people), both said that they were able to do everything they needed to.

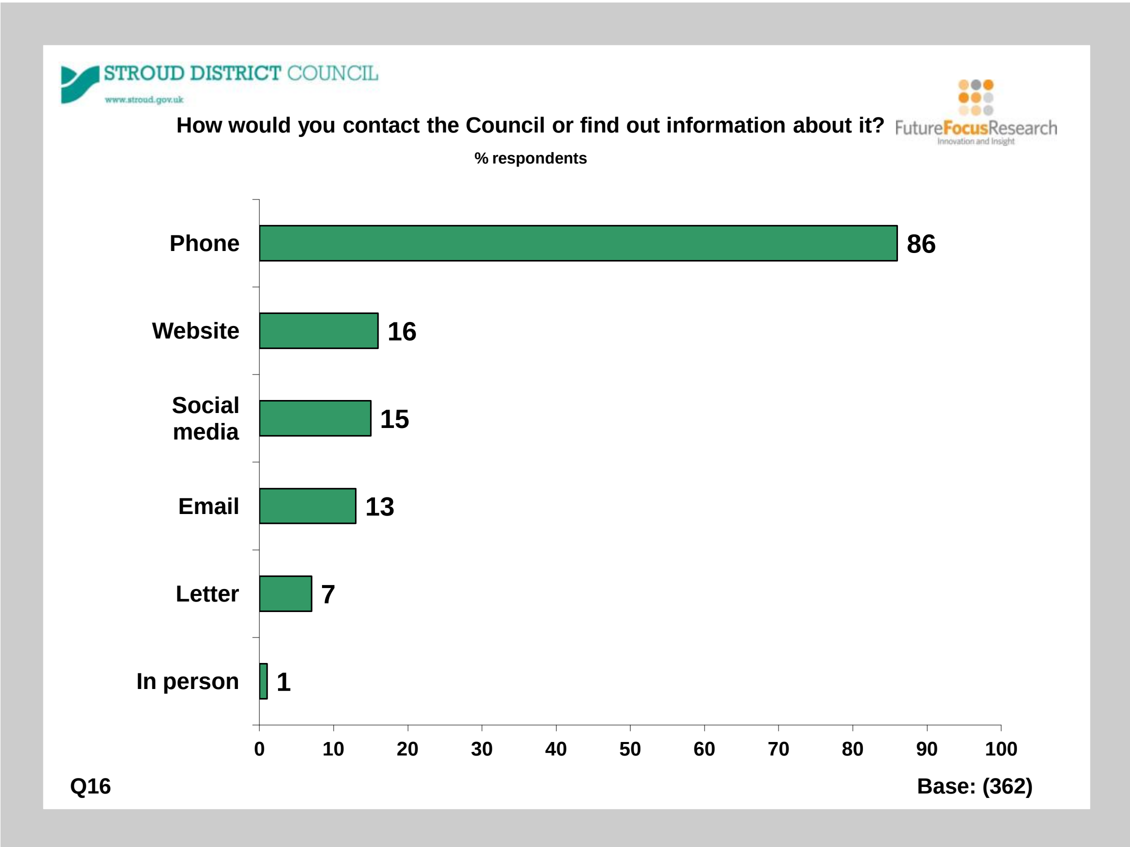
Those who did not choose to make contact via the website (98%) were asked the reasons why. The main reasons given were:

- Phoning was quicker 80%
- Needed to discuss payments 10%
- Not online 10%
- Forgotten about it 3%

Respondents were asked how they would go about contacting or finding out any information should they need to. The most popular response was by telephone (86%). See figure 4.14

Figure 4.14

Those aged 18 – 34 were most likely to use the website and email (41% and 20%)) and were least likely to phone (51%).



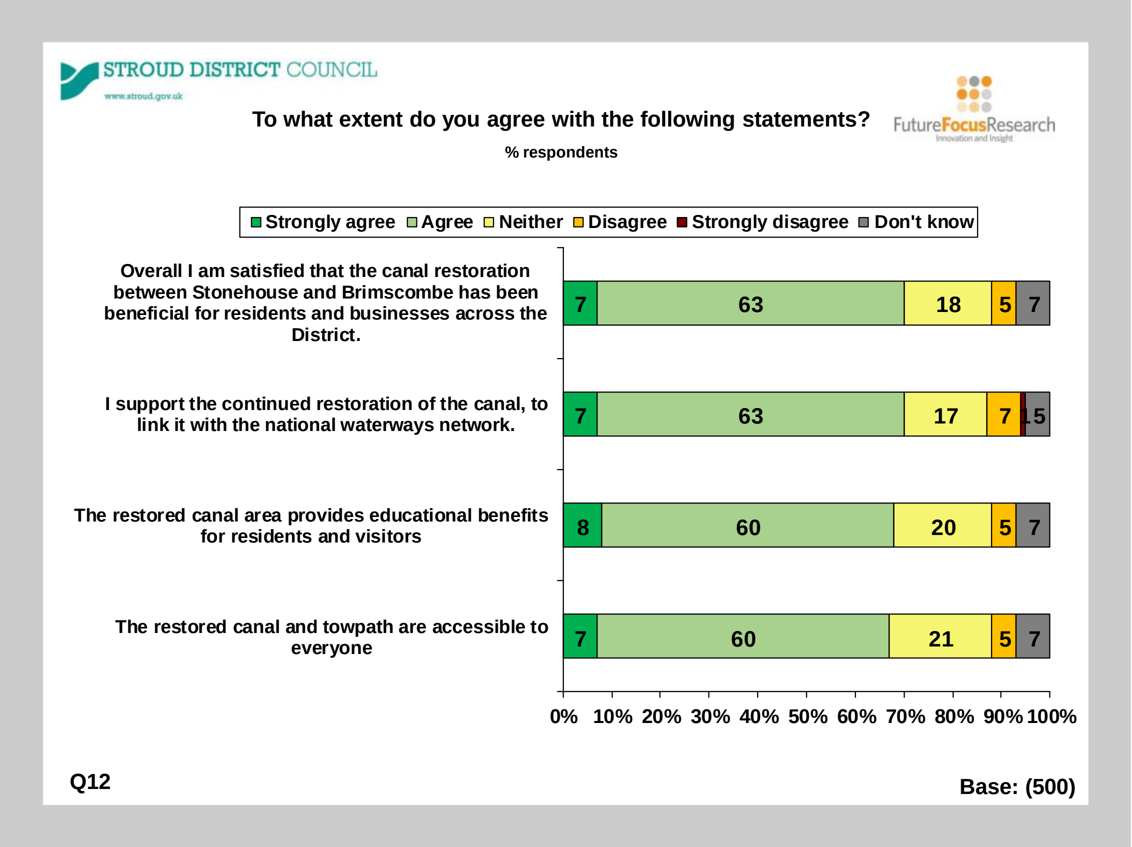
4.5 Canal Restoration

The majority of residents were in agreement with all statements relating to the canal restoration. Seven in 10 (70%) agreed (strongly agree or agree) that *overall they are satisfied that the canals restoration between Stonehouse and Brimscombe has been beneficial for residents and businesses across the District* and that they *support the continued restoration of the canal to link it with the national waterways network.*

Just fewer than 7 in 10 agreed that *the restored canal area provides educational benefits for residents and visitors* (68%) and that *the restored canal and towpath are accessible to everyone* (67%). See figure 4.15.

Those aged 18 – 34 were least likely to agree with all statements (37% agreement to all).

Figure 4.15

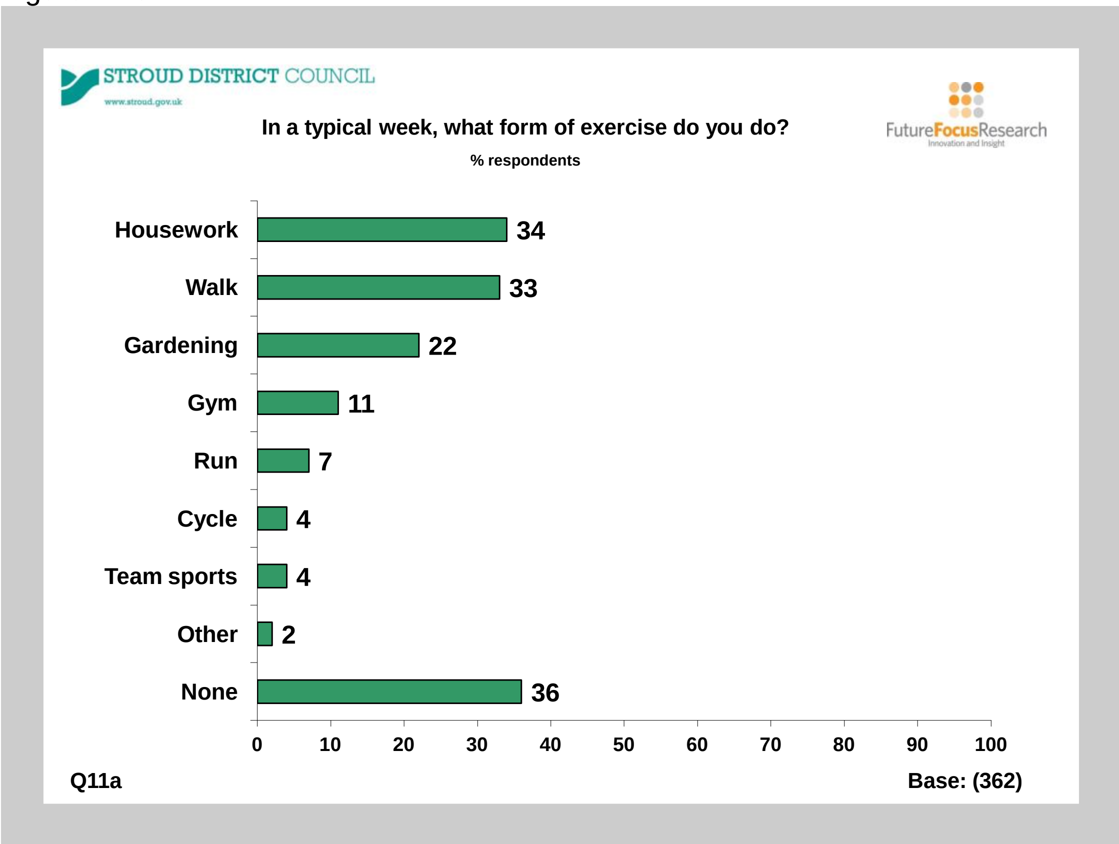


4.6 Health and Wellbeing

In a typical week, residents were asked what forms of exercise they did. The most common forms of exercise were *housework* (34%) and *walking* (33%). Just over a third (36%) did no form of exercise in a typical week. See figure 4.16.

Men were more likely than women to do no exercise (52% compared to 20%), as were those aged 18 – 34 (47%).

Figure 4.16



The majority (68%) did this exercise for at least 30 minutes every day. See figure 4.17.

The main reason for exercising was to get fitter (37%). See figure 4.18.

Figure 4.17

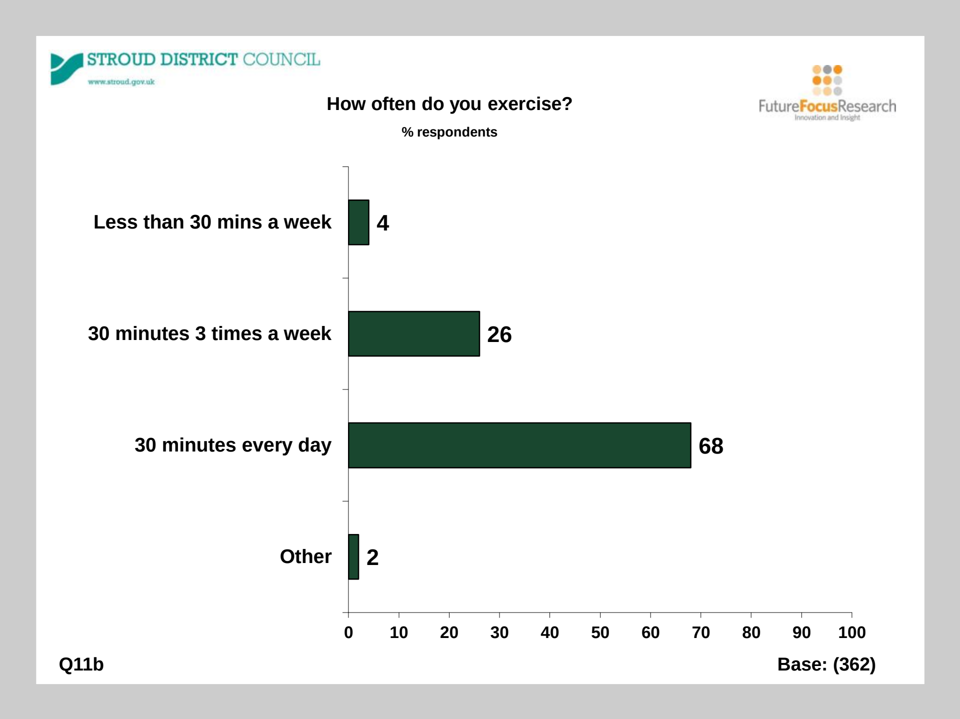
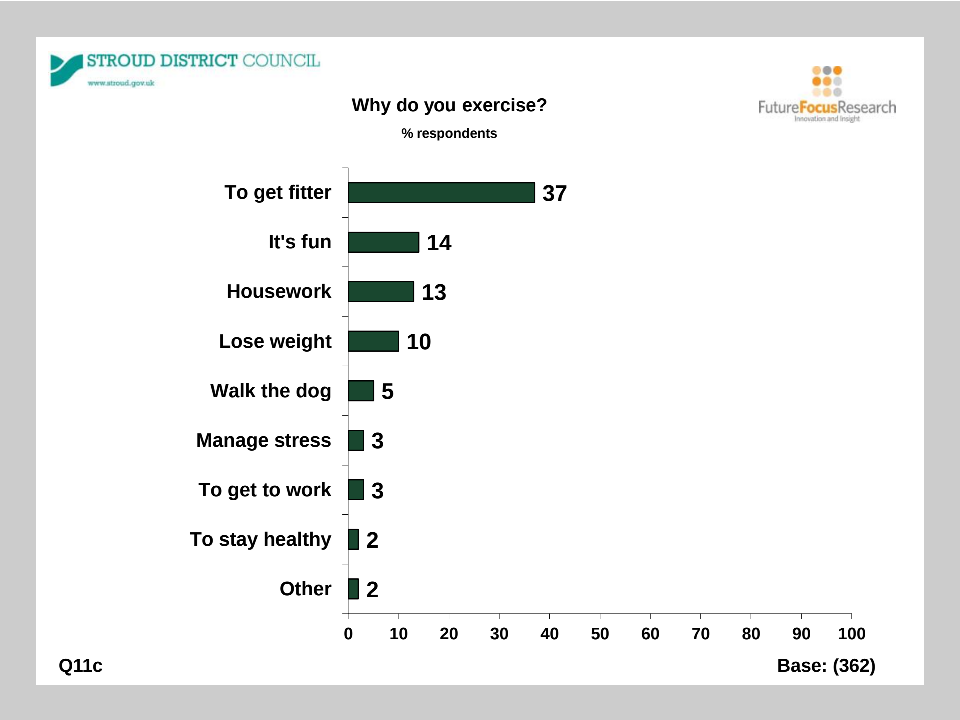


Figure 4.18



5. Business Survey

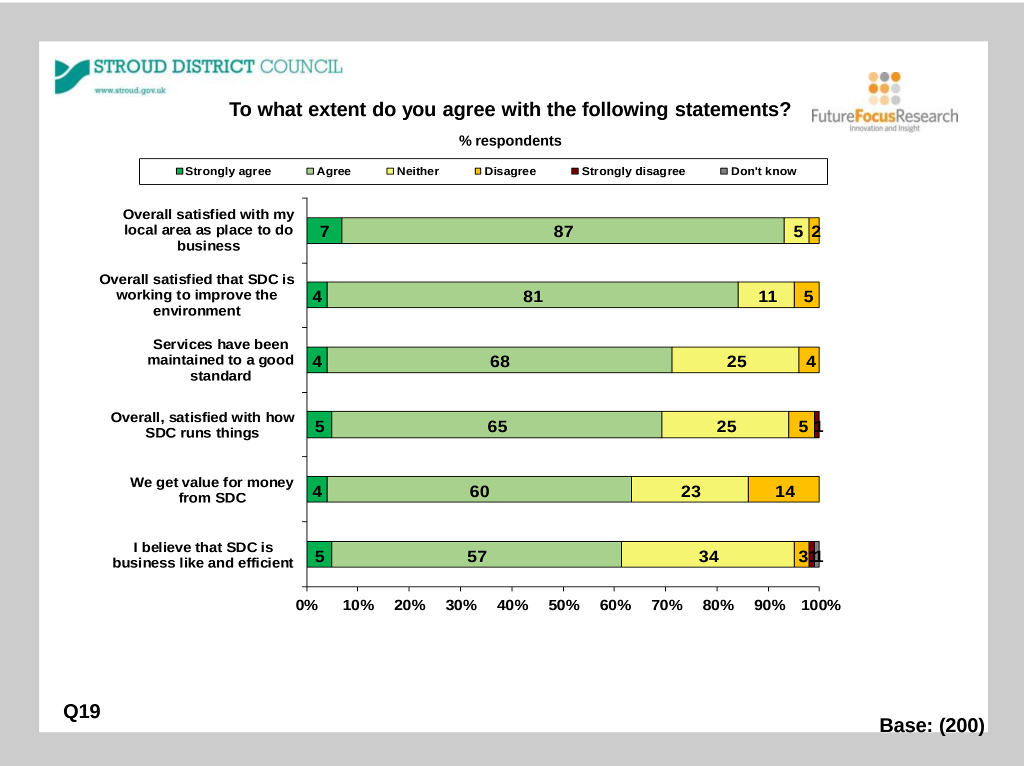
This section details the views and opinions from the business survey, covering:

- Satisfaction and Priorities
- Employment of staff
- Support for businesses
- Working with education
- Information from Stroud District Council
- Contact with Stroud District Council
- Promoting Staff Well-being
- Canal Restoration

5.1 Satisfaction and Priorities

Over 9 in 10 (94%) agreed (strongly agree/agree) that they were *satisfied with their local area as a place to do business* and over 8 in 10 (85%) agreed (strongly agree/agree) that they were *satisfied that Stroud DC is working to improve the environme*nt. Around seven in 10 agreed (strongly agree/agree) that they were *satisfied with how Stroud DC runs things (70%)* and that *services have been maintained to a good standard* (72%). Over 6 in 10 agreed that they *get value for money from Stroud DC* (64%) and that they are *business like and efficient* (62%). See figure 5.1

Figure 5.1



Comparing this year's results to previous years, the percentage agreement to all statements in 2017 is very consistent with 2016. The most notable increase being *services have been maintained to a good standard* (risen from 55% in 2015 to 66% in 2016 and further to 72% in 2017). See figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2

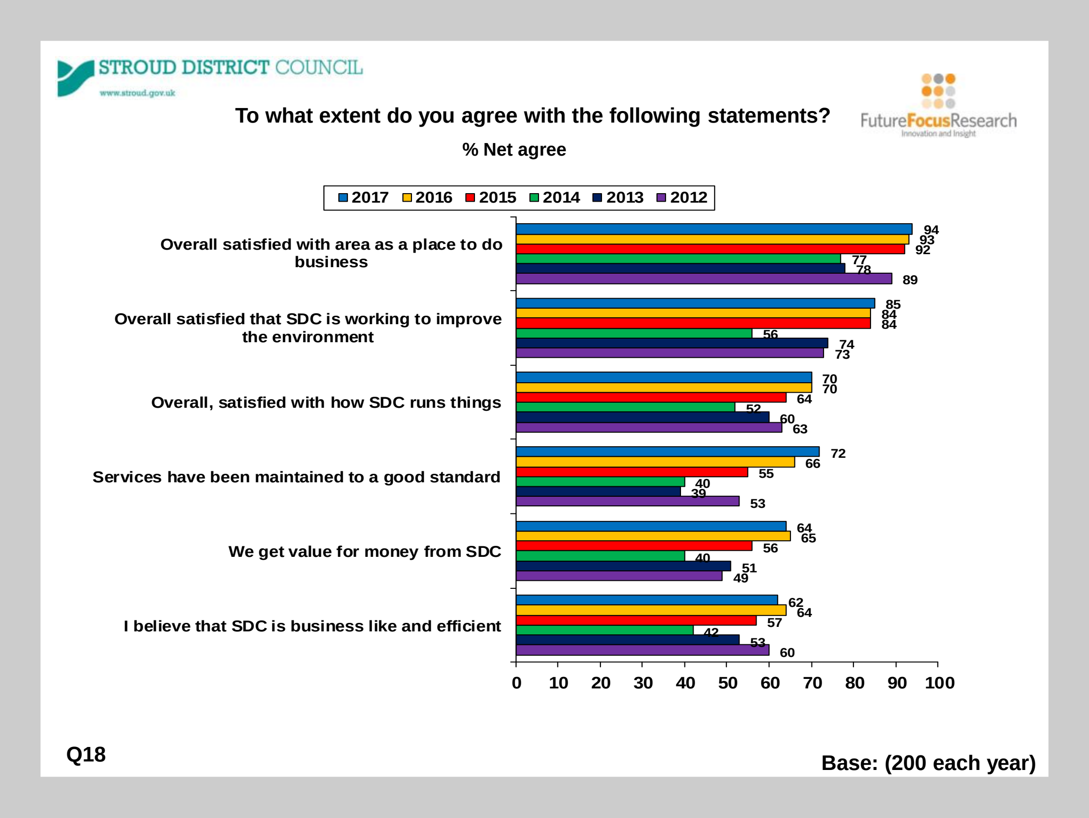
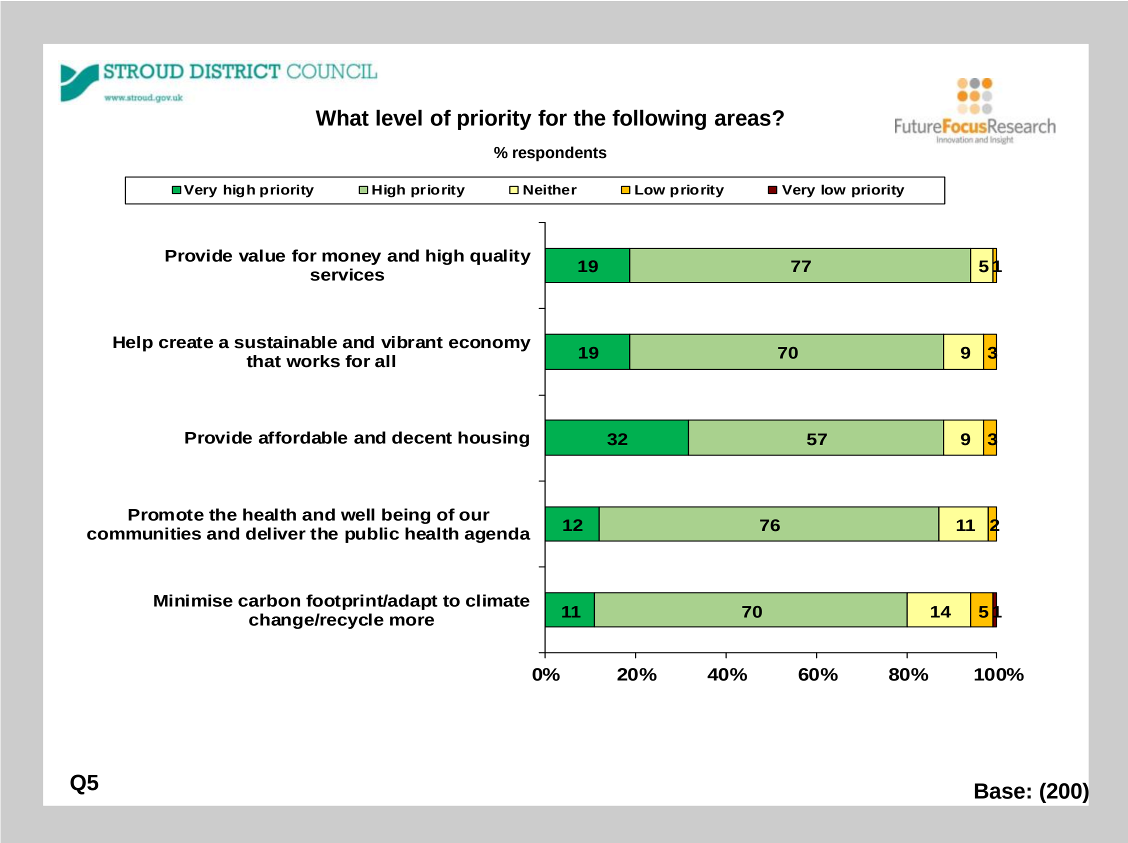


Figure 5.3 illustrates the extent to which respondents felt Stroud DC should prioritise certain areas.

The majority of respondents (over 80%) felt that all areas were a priority (either *very high* or *high*).

- *Provide value for money and high quality services* :96%
- *Help create a sustainable and vibrant economy that works for all:* 89%
- *Provide affordable and decent housing* :89%
- *Promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and deliver the public health agenda* :88%
- *Minimise carbon footprint/adapt to climate change/recycle more* :81%

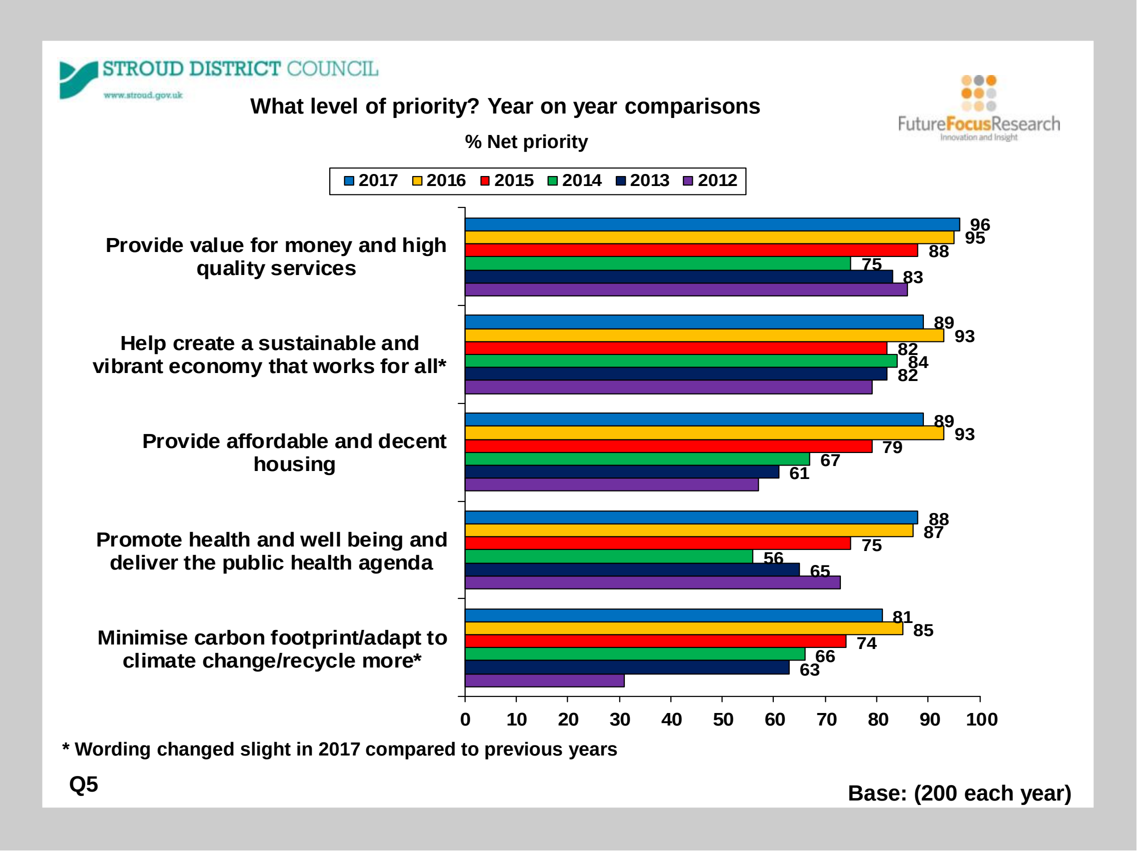
Figure 5.3



Businesses with 10 or more employees were more likely to rate *promote the health and wellbeing of our communities and deliver the public health agenda* as high or very high (93% compared to 84%) as well as *minimise carbon footprint/adapt to climate change/recycle more* (92% compared to 80%).

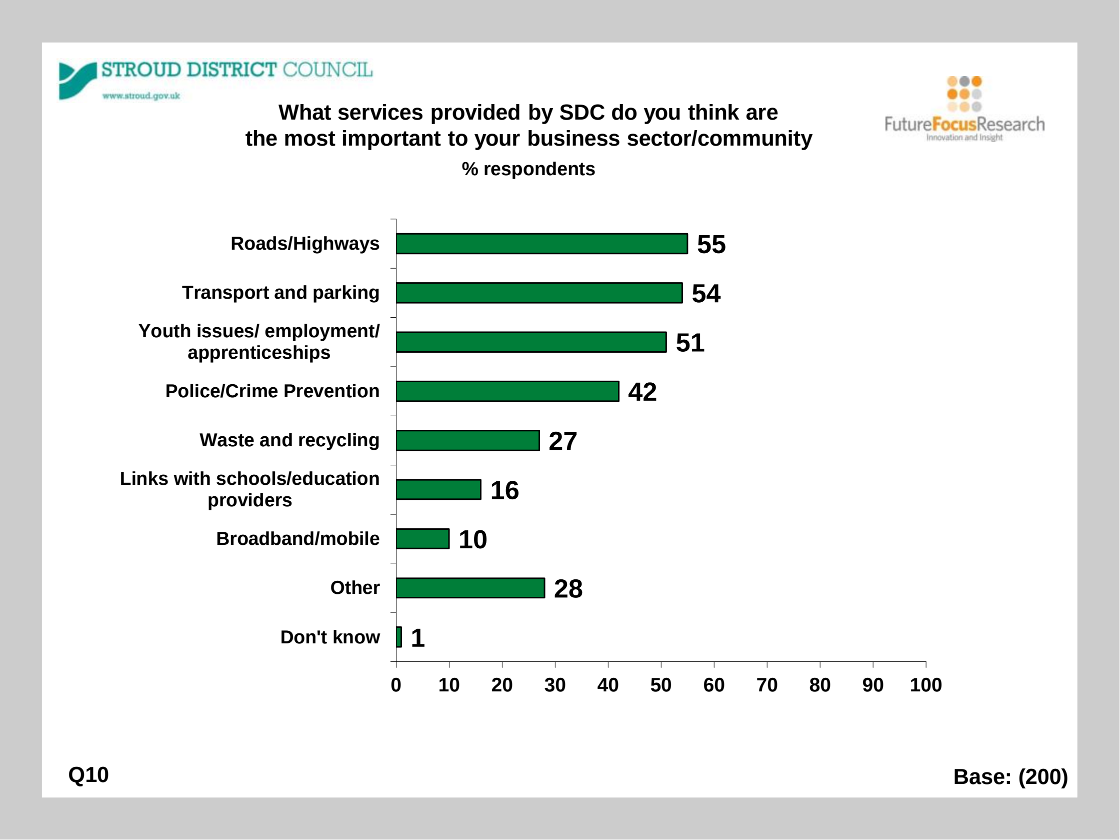
For all areas, the levels of priority for 2017 have remained consistent to 2016, which saw an increase in priority in all areas from previous years. See figure 5.4.

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 55%, followed by *transport and parking* (54%) and youth issues/employment/apprenticeships (51%). See figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5



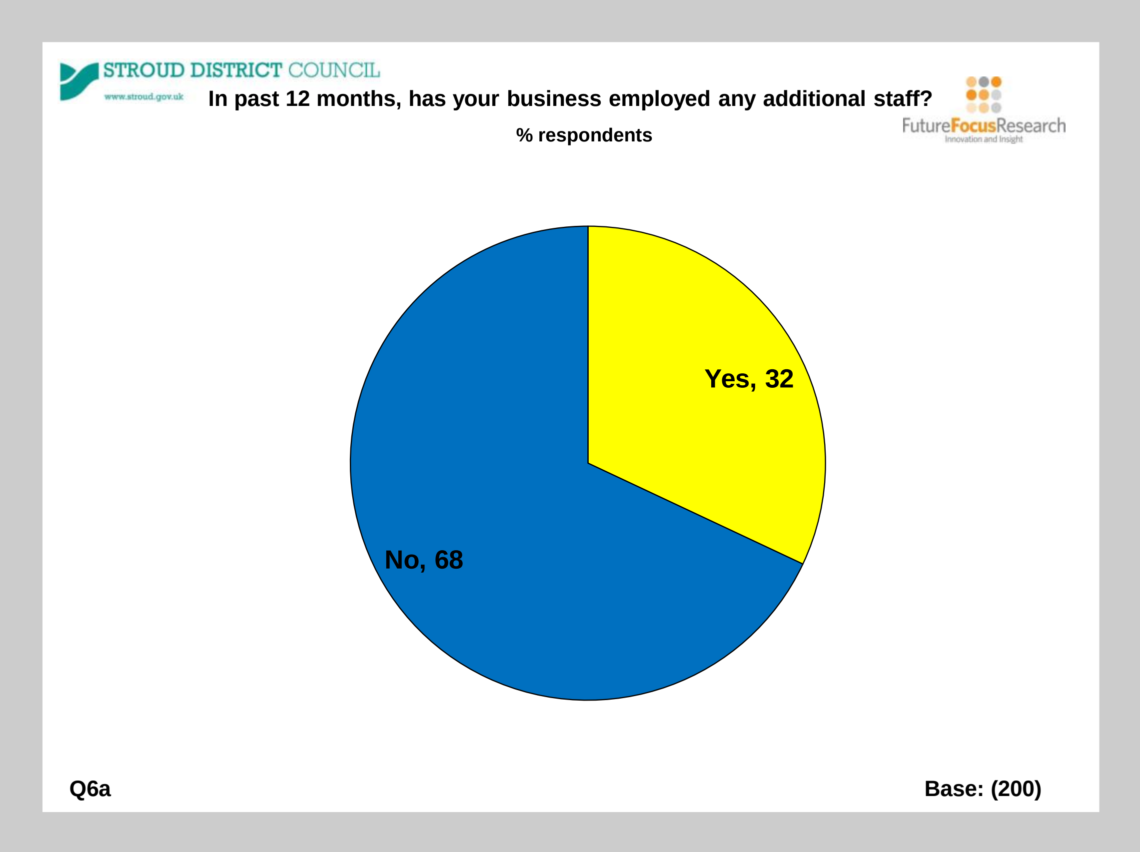
Whilst fewer businesses mentioned *roads/highways* and *transport and parking* compared to 2016 (73% and 68%), the percentage stating *youth issues/employment/apprenticeships* more than doubled from 24% in 2016 to 51% in 2017.

Larger businesses (those with 10 or more employees) were more likely to mention *youth issues/employment/apprenticeships* (65% compared to 44%) and *links with schools/education* (22% compared to 13%).

5.2 Employment of Staff

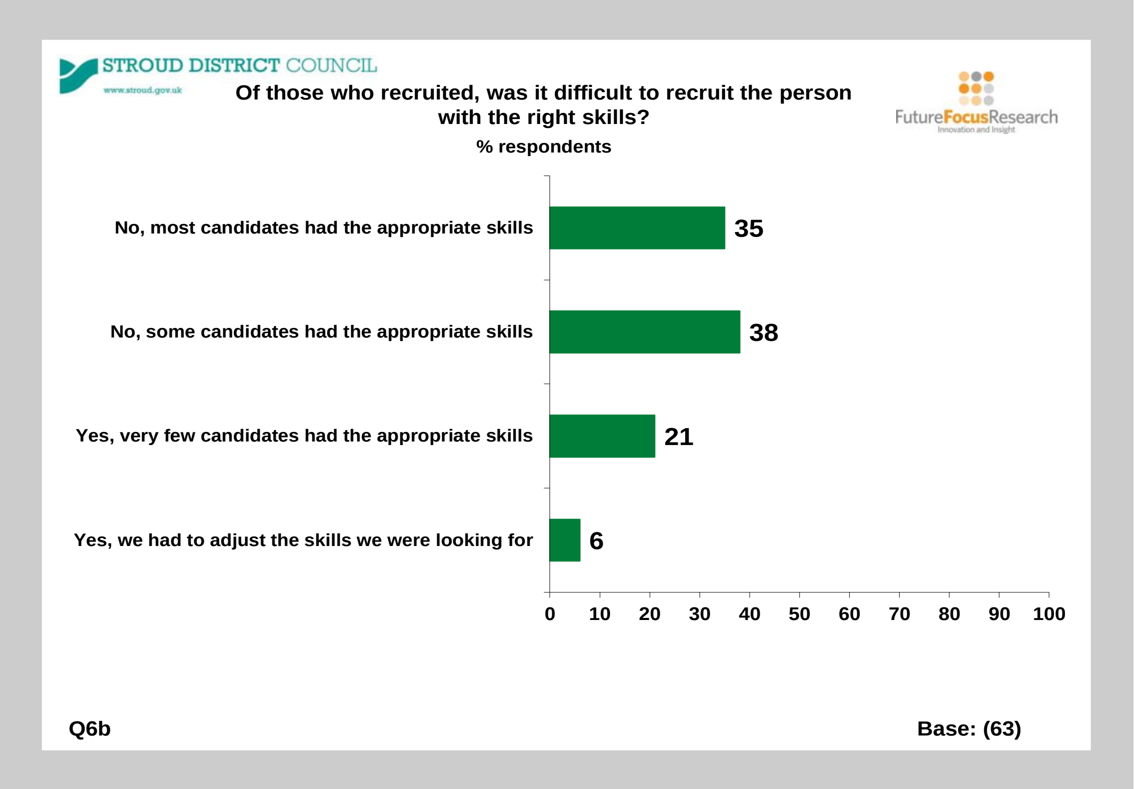
Just under a third of businesses (32%) had employed additional staff in the past 12 months (see figure 5.6). This is higher than in 2016 where only 20% said that they employed additional staff. Business with over 10 employees were more likely to have employed staff (58% compared to 20% of smaller businesses).

Figure 5.6



Of these, over a quarter (27%) had difficulty recruiting people with the right skills (see figure 5.7).

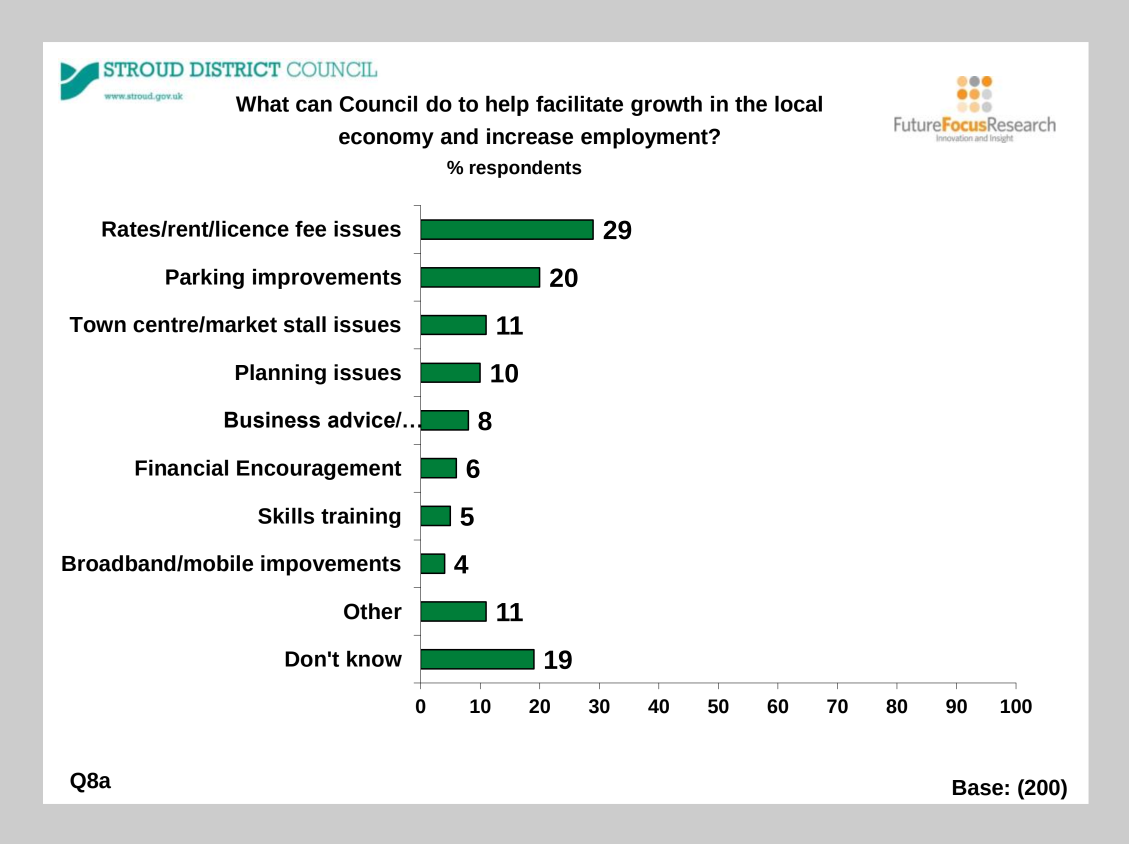
Figure 5.7



5.3 Support for Businesses

Respondents were asked what they felt *SDC could do to help facilitate growth in the local economy and increase employment*. The main theme to emerge was *rates/rent and licence fees* (29%) followed by *parking improvements* (20%). See figure 5.8.

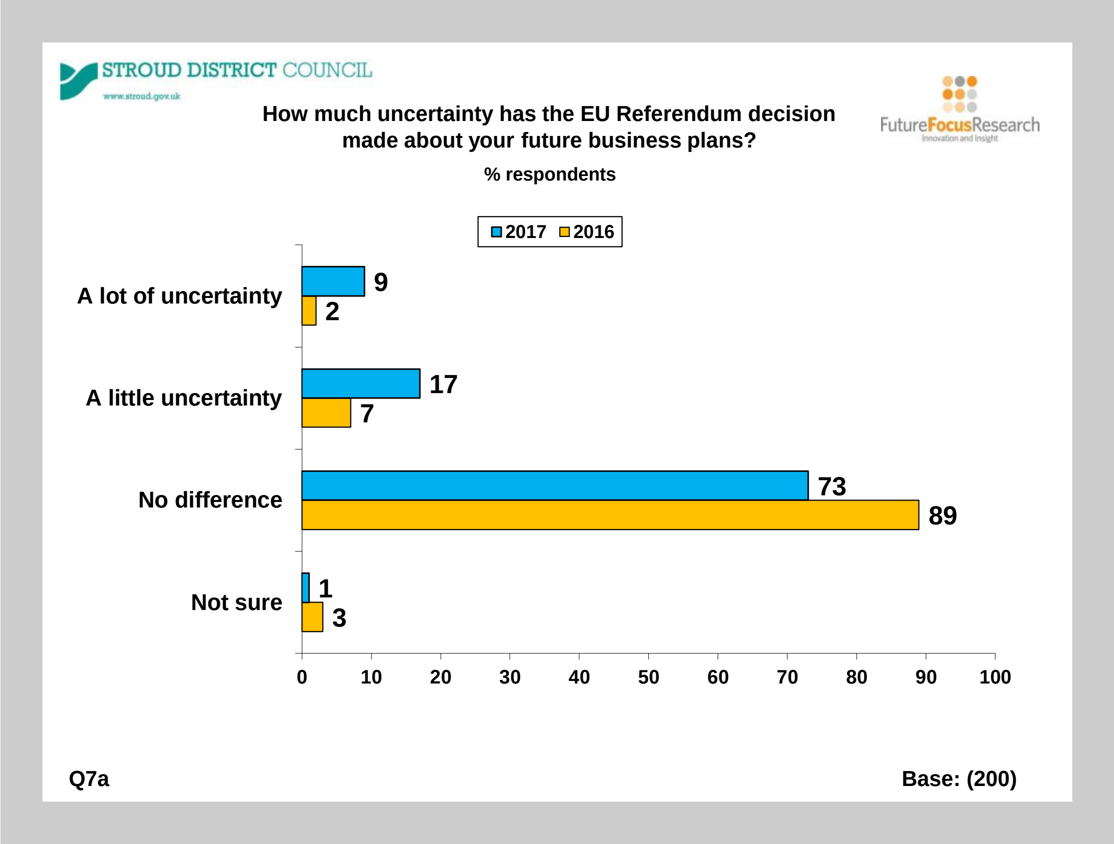
Figure 5.8



Parking improvements were more of a priority for smaller businesses with 24% stating this compared to 10% of larger businesses (with more than 10 employees).

When asked about the EU referendum, 26% said that it had made them uncertain about their future business plans (either a little or a lot). This is much higher than in 2016 where only 9% were uncertain. See figure 5.9.

Figure 5.9



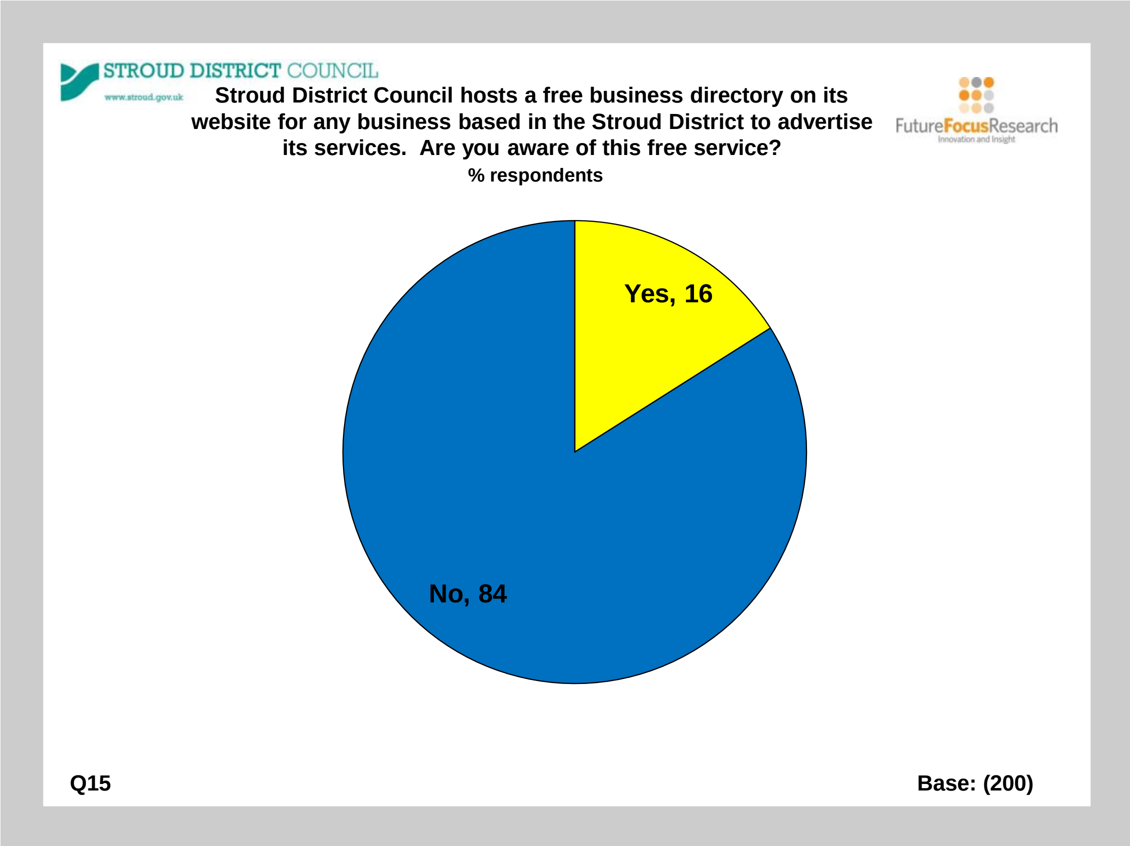
Businesses with more than 10 employees were more likely to express uncertainly (37% compared to 21% of smaller businesses).

Reasons given for the uncertainty were:

- Retail confidence (44%, 23 businesses)
- Exchange rate (29%, 15 businesses)
- Cost of raw materials (25%, 13 businesses)
- Lack of markets to sell to (17%, 9 businesses)
- Wage costs (15%, 8 businesses)
- Acquisition of skilled labour (6%, 3 businesses)
- Labour from the EU (6%, 3 businesses)
- Changes in Government Policy (4%, 2 businesses)
- Funding (4%, 2 businesses)

Just 16% knew that Stroud District Council hosts a free business directory on its website for businesses to advertise their services. See figure 5.10.

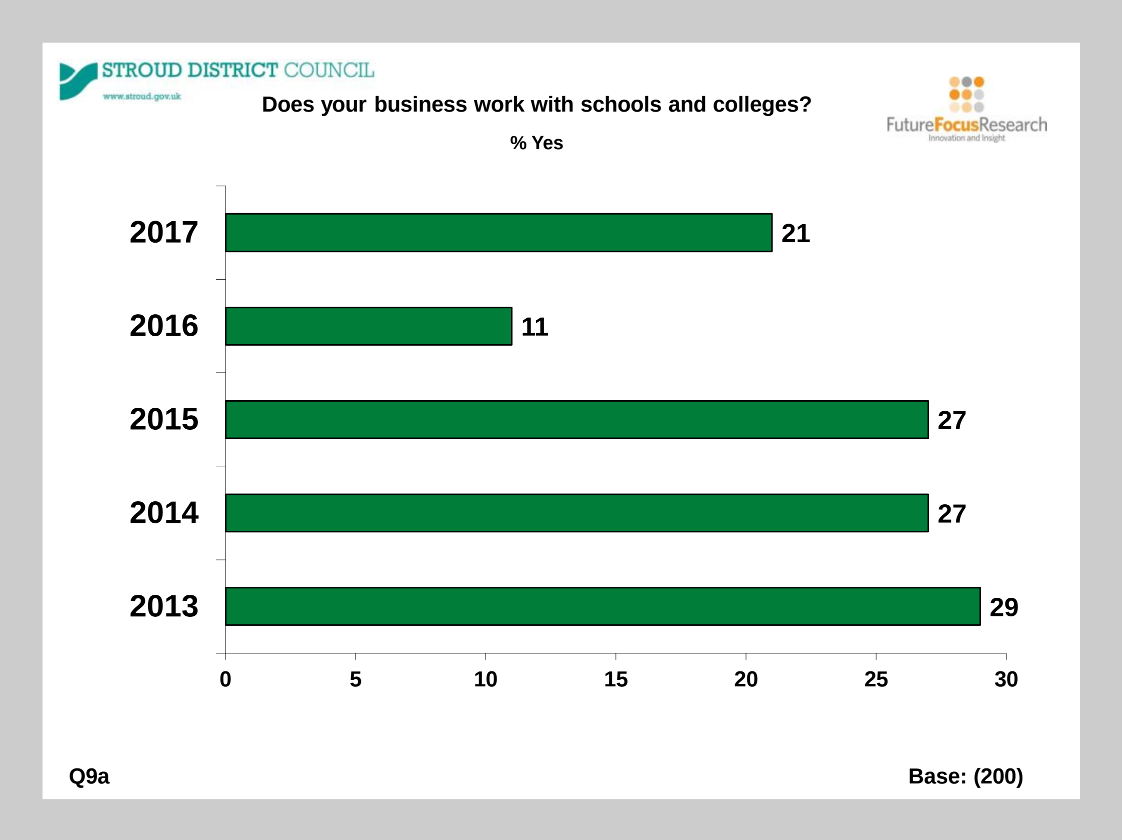
FIGURE 5.10



5.4 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 5 (21%) said that they did. This is higher than in 2016 where only 11% said that they did, however it is still lower than in 2015. See figure 5.11.

Figure 5.11



Larger businesses (those with over 10 employees) were more likely to have worked with education (28% compared to 17% of smaller businesses).

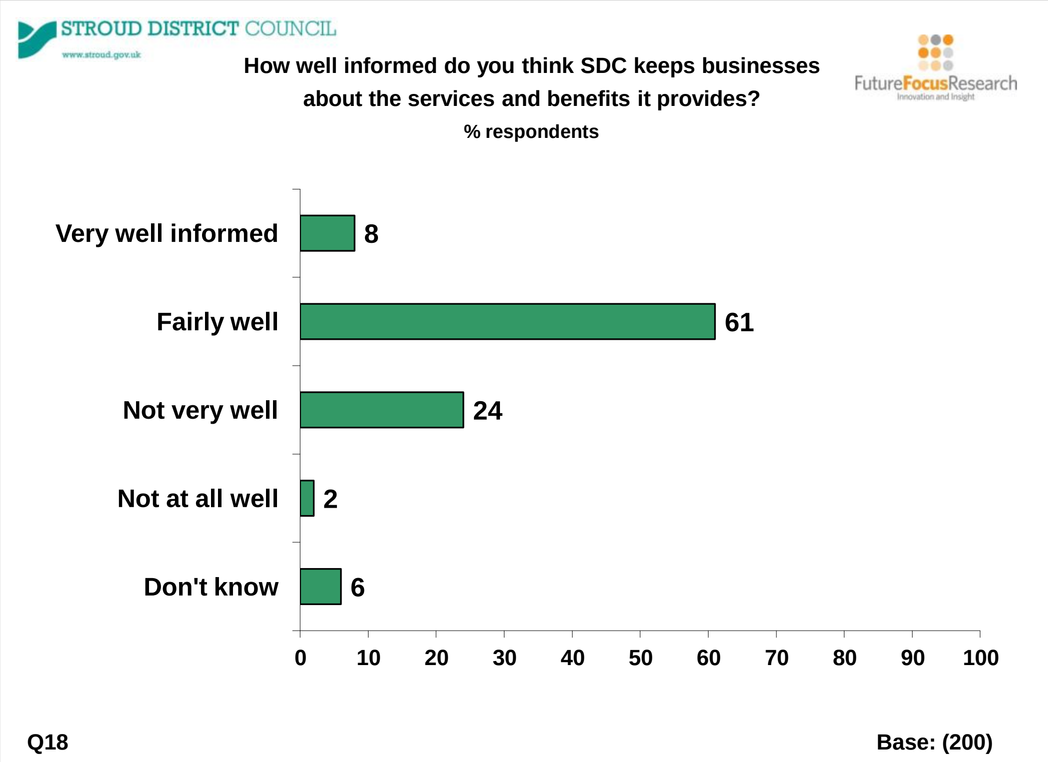
When asked about the work they had undertaken with schools, the following were mentioned (businesses were able to select more than one response):

- *Work experience* : 68% (28 businesses)
- *Apprenticeships* : 29% (12 businesses)
- *Job fairs, careers evening, in school activities, student placements, trainee programmes etc:* 12%(5 businesses)
- *Other* : 10% (4 businesses)

5.5 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 7 in 10 businesses (69%) said that they were either *very well* or *fairly well informed* which was higher than in 2016 (64%). See figure 5.12.

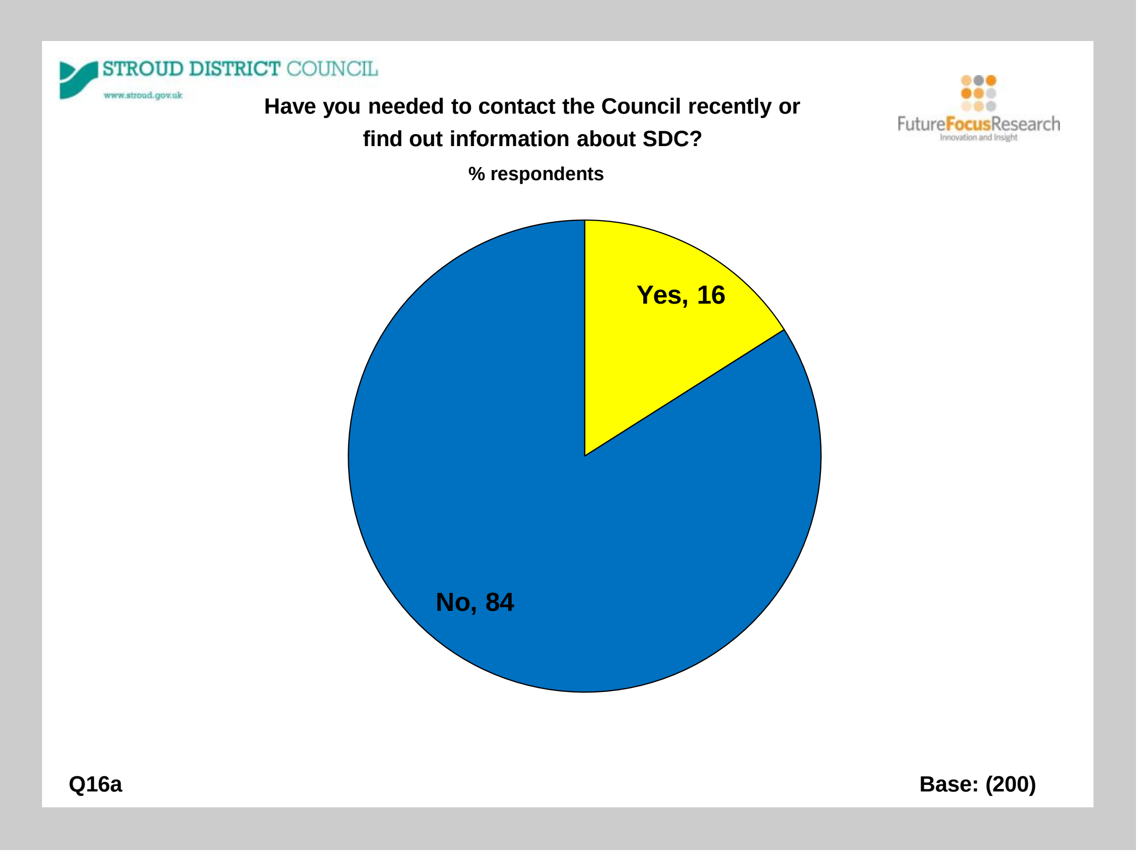
Figure 5.12



5.6 Contact with Stroud District Council

Around 1 in 6 (16%) had contacted the Council recently or needed to find out information about SDC. This is twice as many as in 2016 (8%). See figure 5.13

Figure 5.13



Smaller businesses (those with 10 or less employees) were more likely to have contacted the Council (19% compared to 10% of larger businesses).

The main method of contact was by phone (78% - 25 businesses).

Reasons for contact included:
- Waste & recycling, street cleaning
- Planning
- Business rates/Council tax

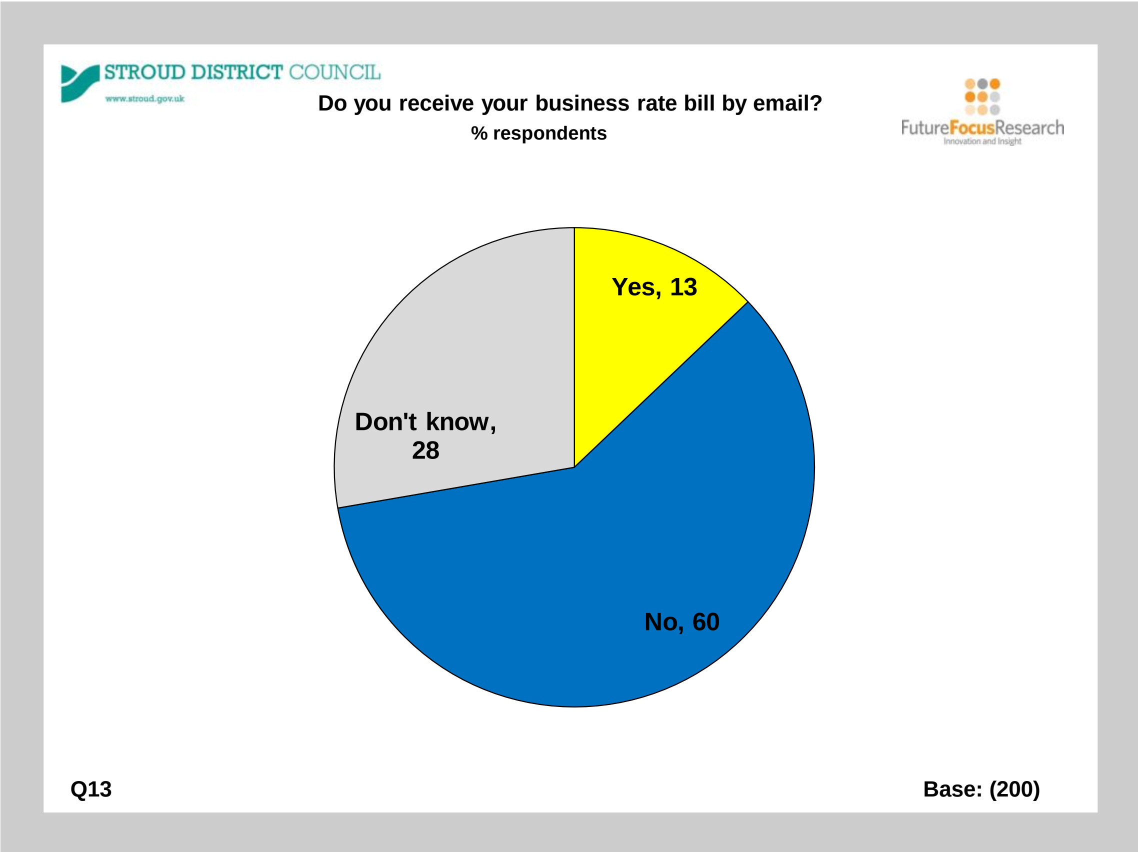
Those who used the website to make contact/ find out information (19%, 6 businesses) we asked whether they managed to do everything that they needed to. All six said that they did.

Those who didn't use the website (81%, 26 businesses) were asked the reasons why. The main reasons given were:

- *Phoning was quicker* (65%)
- *Needed to speak to a person* (19%).

Businesses were then asked whether they received their business rate bill by email. Just 13% said that they did. See figure 5.14.

Figure 5.14



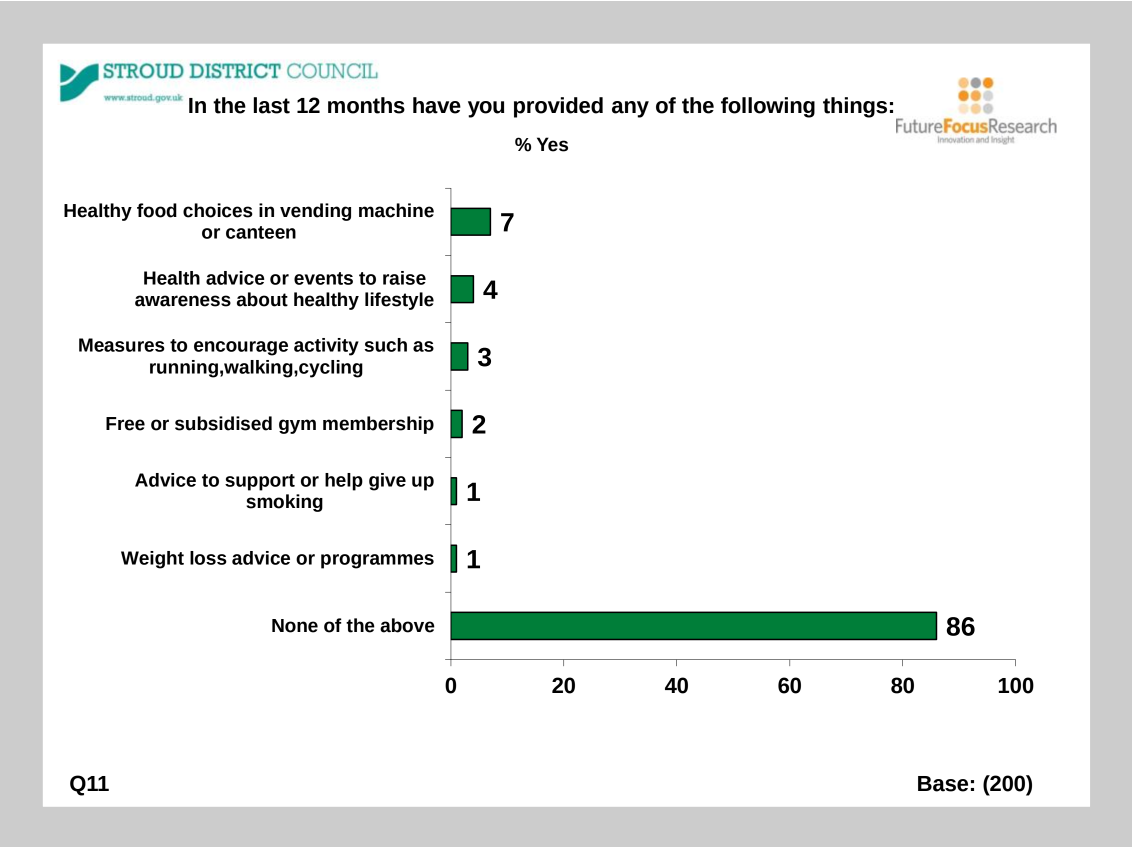
Those who didn't receive their bills be email (60%, 119 businesses), were asked the reasons why. Just a quarter of these (25%, 30 businesses) said that they preferred paper bills, whilst the majority of the others had no specific reason why they didn't receive bills by email.

5.7 Promoting Staff Well-being

Business were shown a list of health and well-being initiatives and were asked if they provided any of them at their place of work. The majority (86%) did not provide any of the initiatives, 14% did. The most common, provided by just 7% of businesses, was *healthy food choices in vending machines of canteen.* See figure 5.15.

Larger businesses (those with 10 or more employees) were more likely to provide at least one of the initiatives (28% compared to 9% or smaller businesses).

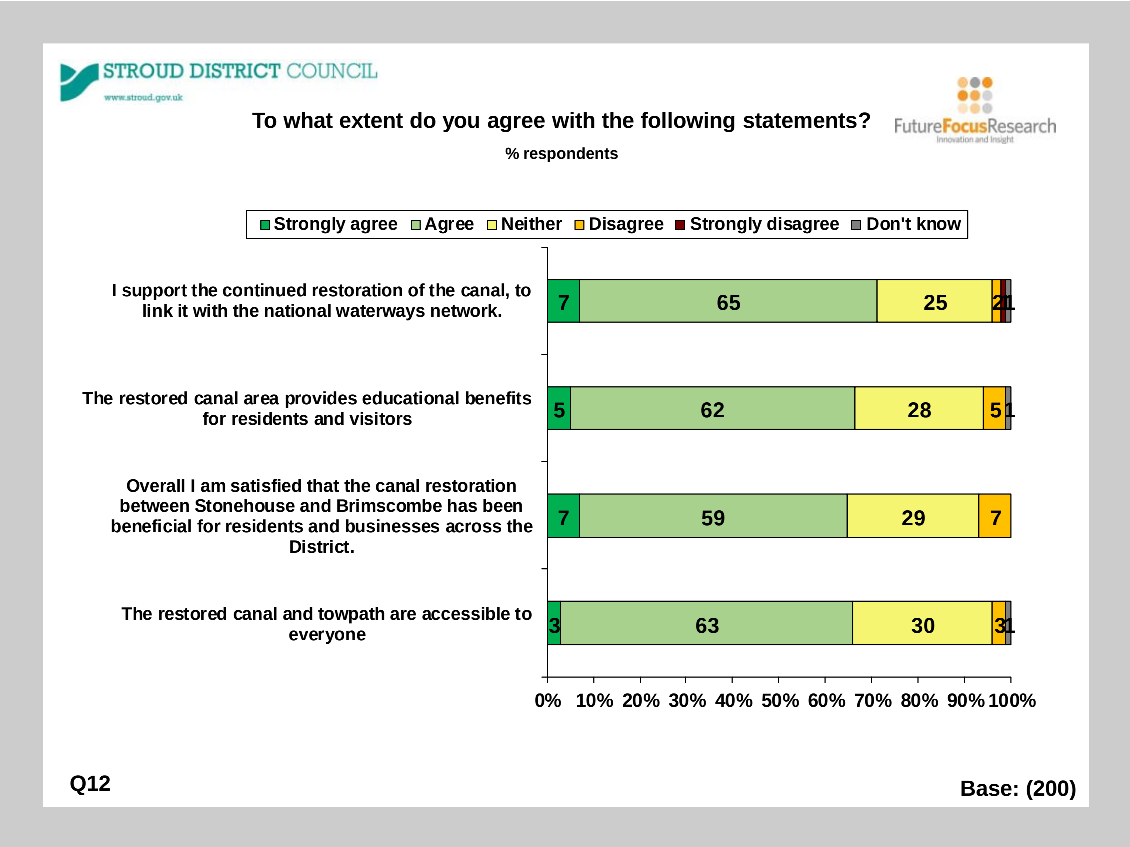
Figure 5.15



5.8 Canal Restoration

The majority of businesses were in agreement with all statements relating to the canal restoration. Over 7 in 10 (72%) agreed (strongly agree or agree) that they *support the continued restoration of the canal to link it with the national waterways network.* Just over two thirds (67%) agreed that *the restored canal area provides educational benefits for residents and visitors,* and two thirds (66%) agree *that overall they are satisfied that the canals restoration between Stonehouse and Brimscombe has been beneficial for residents and businesses across the District* and that *the restored canal and towpath are accessible to everyone.* See figure 5.16.

Figure 5.16



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