



Research Report



South Staffordshire Viewpoint - Summer 2008

**Prepared for: South Staffordshire
Council**

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Prepared for: South Staffordshire Council

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Within South Staffordshire District Council's Corporate Strategy the Council's vision statement is:

"As a well managed Council, we will strive to make South Staffordshire a safe and healthy place to live, with prosperous villages and thriving communities where everyone can develop their abilities to the full and pass on to future generations a better environment"

With this the Council has five stated aims:

- **Aim 1:** To be a Council which protects and enhances South Staffordshire's distinctive environment;
- **Aim 2:** A healthy and safe district in which to live, work and visit;
- **Aim 3:** To be a district of thriving and sustainable communities;
- **Aim 4:** To be a district recognised for strong community leadership and partnership working;
- **Aim 5:** To be a well managed Council.

The topics contained within this survey were included to inform the Council's efforts to meet its objectives.

1.2 Methodology

In June 2008 a questionnaire and letter was sent out to all 1,000 panel members. At the mid-point of the fieldwork period a reminder questionnaire was sent to all those who had not yet returned a questionnaire.

By the end of fieldwork, 800 questionnaires were completed and returned to BMG, representing a response rate of 80%.

A sample of 800 is subject to a maximum standard error of $\pm 3.5\%$ at the 95% confidence level on an observed statistic of 50%. Thus, we can be 95% confident that if the whole population had responded and a census had been conducted, the actual figure would lie between 46.5% and 53.5% respectively.

The data collected has been subsequently weighted by ward and by demographic factors such as age; gender and economic status in order to ensure that the data is broadly representative of South Staffordshire as a whole. The exact profile of the data can be reviewed in the accompanying data report and a summary within the final section of this written report.

1.3 Report contents

The report summarises the main findings drawn from this latest panel survey. Throughout the report area analysis has been used. Parishes have been grouped together into five localities as supplied by the Council as show in table 1.

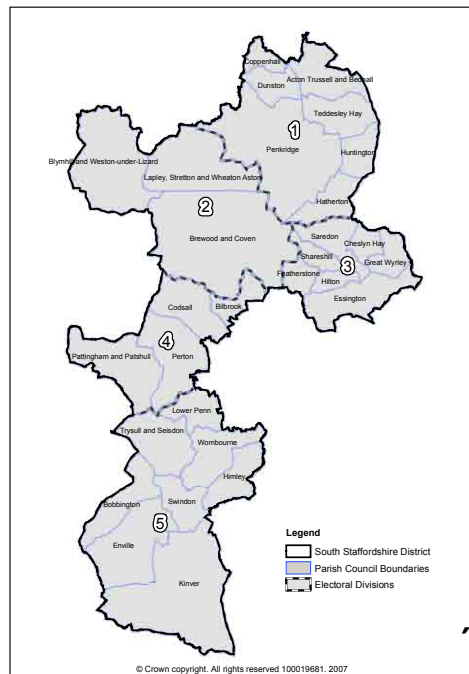


Table 1: Localities definitions

LOCALITY 1	LOCALITY 4
Acton Trussell, Bednall & Teddesley Hay	Codsall
Dunston with Coppenhall(1)	Bilbrook
Hatherton	Perton
Huntington	Pattingham & Patshull
Penkridge	
LOCALITY 2	LOCALITY 5
Brewood & Coven	Bobbington
Blymhill & Weston Under Lizzard	Enville
Lapley Stretton & Wheaton Aston	Kinver
	Lower Penn
LOCALITY 3	Himley
Cheslyn Hay	Swindon
Great Wyrley	Trysull & Seisdon
Essington	Wombourne
Featherstone	
Hilton	
Saredon	
Shareshill	

1.4 Data reporting

Where tables and graphics do not match exactly to the text in the report this occurs due to the way in which figures are rounded up (or down) when responses are combined. Results that differ in this way should not have a variance which is any larger than 1%.

A separate data report is available, which presents the data as a whole and broken down by the following cross-tabulations:

- Area
- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Economic Status
- Economic Activity

2 Protecting and enhancing South Staffordshire's distinctive environment

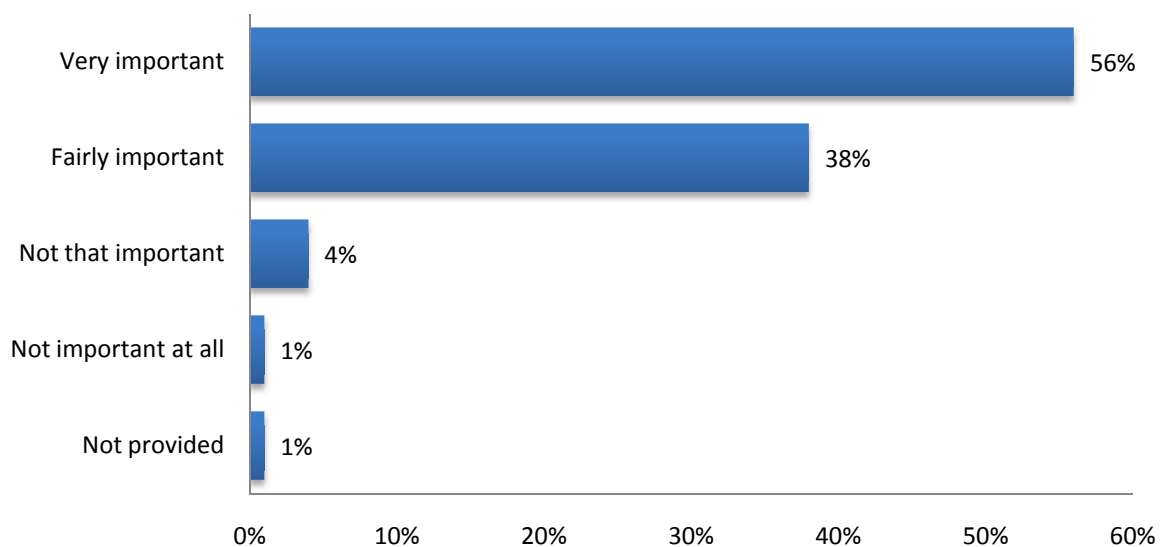
2.1 Introduction

As part of South Staffordshire Council's commitment to making South Staffordshire greener and cleaner, a number of questions were asked about environmental issues in the district.

2.2 Energy consumption and carbon emissions

The first set of questions asked panel members to consider the issue of energy saving. The importance of doing so has clearly been recognised by residents of South Staffordshire. Over nine in ten (94%) feel that reducing the amount of energy that households consume is important, including 56% who say it is very important. Conversely just 5% of panel members indicate that reducing domestic energy consumption is not important.

Figure 1: Importance of reducing the amount of energy that individual households consume (All respondents)



UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 800

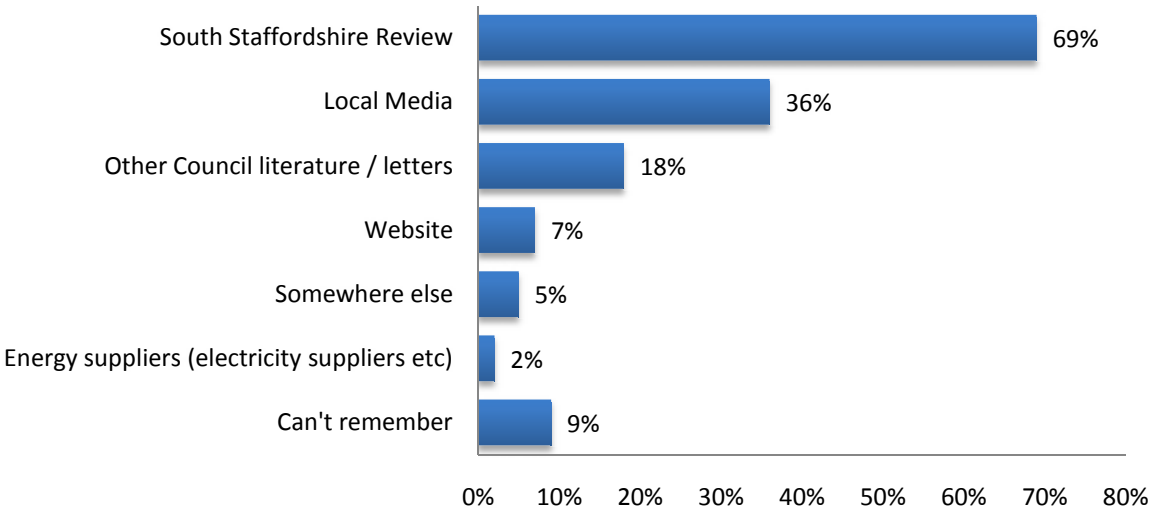
91% of males and 97% of females state that reducing household energy consumption is important, with females significantly more likely than males to state that this is very important (62% c.f. 48%).

In the last twelve months two in five (40%) of panel members state they have received information, or seen elsewhere, information from the Council regarding energy saving methods. A third (33%) of panel members state that they have not seen or received this kind of information, while a quarter (26%) were unable to recall. Those aged 65 and over are the age group most likely to state they have received such information (58%), compared to 44% of those aged 45-64 and 28% of those aged 25-44.

Among those who state that reducing energy is important 41% do recall seeing or receiving info. Among those who don't feel reducing energy consumption is important, just 26% state they have received Council information on this issue, a difference which is statistically significant. However, from this data it is difficult to infer the causation in this relationship i.e. whether residents are more likely to be concerned about this issue having received information on it or whether those who already have a concern are more receptive to this information and therefore are more likely to recall receiving it.

All panel members who recall receiving information about energy saving measures were subsequently asked where they had seen this information. The most common response was South Staffordshire Review (69%), followed by the local media (36%), and other Council literature and letters (18%).

Figure 2: Sources of information about energy saving measures (All those who recall seeing or receiving such information)



UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 374

South Staffordshire Review was the most commonly cited source among all age groups although those aged 65 and over (72%) and those aged 45-64 (72%) are more likely to state they had received energy saving information in this way than those aged 25-44 (54%).

When probing this issue further there is support for South Staffordshire Council to play a leading role in helping people to reduce their carbon emissions. 78% of panel members agree that the Council should do this including 34% who strongly agree. Conversely, just 5% disagree the Council should take this role.

Six in ten residents (62%) indicate that South Staffordshire Council needs to do more to help local residents with their carbon emissions, a notion that is further substantiated by the fact that the proportion who disagree that they are aware of the advice and services the Council can offer about carbon emissions (33%) is equal to the proportion who agree (also 33%).

Table 2: Views on the Council's role in reducing carbon emissions (All respondents)

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know	Not provided	Net agreement score
Local Councils should play a leading role in helping people to reduce their carbon emissions	78%	15%	5%	*%	2%	73%
I am aware of the advice and services the Council can offer about carbon emissions	33%	23%	33%	8%	3%	0%
South Staffordshire Council needs to do more to help local residents with their carbon emissions	62%	26%	7%	1%	3%	55%

2.3 The action being taken on climate change

Given the support for reducing carbon emissions noted above is necessary to assess whether panel member's concern is actually translating into action. All panel members were presented with nine actions which they could undertake to reduce their carbon emissions and were asked to indicate whether they had taken any of them or would consider doing so in the future. The responses given regarding each measure are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Actions taken to reduce the problem of climate change (All respondents)

	Have done this in the past year	Have done this but more than a year ago	I have not done this but would consider doing this in the future	I have not done this and would not consider doing this in the future	Don't know	Not provided
Improved the insulation in your home to save energy	17%	48%	25%	6%	2%	3%
Installed an energy efficient boiler to save energy	9%	33%	39%	9%	4%	5%
Turned your central heating down to save energy	59%	23%	7%	7%	*%	4%
Consciously bought energy efficient appliances to save energy	37%	31%	24%	4%	2%	3%
Installed energy efficient light bulbs to save energy	50%	31%	12%	5%	1%	2%
Stopped leaving appliances on standby to save energy	58%	25%	11%	4%	*%	2%
Insulated or lagged your water tank or pipes to save energy	13%	53%	19%	7%	3%	5%
Changed energy supplier in order to buy electricity from a more environmentally friendly supplier	16%	19%	40%	20%	3%	2%
Consciously cycled, walked or taken public transport to avoid using the car to help the environment	41%	13%	21%	21%	1%	3%

The measures panel members are most likely to have taken whether in the last twelve months or longer ago are:

- Stopped leaving appliances on standby to save energy - 83%;
- Turned down central heating to save energy - 82%;
- Installed energy efficient light bulbs - 81%.

These were also the most commonly taken actions when this question was asked in a previous panel survey in 2007.

Many of the measures listed in table 3 require physical changes to properties. While owner occupiers have the choice to do this, those who hold other types of tenure may not have a choice on this matter. Indeed further examination of the responses (table 4) show that social renters are less likely than owner occupiers to have taken such measures such as lagging pipes or improving insulation. The sample sizes among those holding other types of tenure were too small to analyse.

Table 4: Actions taken against climate change by tenure

	Owner occupiers	Social renters
Improved the insulation in your home to save energy	68%	41%
Installed an energy efficient boiler to save energy	43%	34%
Turned your central heating down to save energy	83%	73%
Consciously bought energy efficient appliances to save energy	69%	57%
Installed energy efficient light bulbs to save energy	80%	91%
Stopped leaving appliances on standby to save energy	83%	85%
Insulated or lagged your water tank or pipes to save energy	69%	46%
Changed energy supplier in order to buy electricity from a more environmentally friendly supplier	36%	32%
Consciously cycled, walked or taken public transport to avoid using the car to help the environment	54%	48%
UNWEIGHTED BASE	699	84

2.4 Open spaces and cleanliness

All panel members were asked to rate the overall quality of the open spaces in South Staffordshire on a scale of 1-10 where 1 is very poor and 10 is very good. The proportion of panel members giving each rating is shown below, Two thirds (66%) of panel members rate the overall quality of South Staffordshire open spaces as at least seven out of ten.

Table 5: Rating of overall quality of open spaces in South Staffordshire (All respondents)

1 - Very poor	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 - Very good
3%	1%	2%	4%	13%	11%	24%	26%	9%	7%

The mean score of the ratings given is 6.89. The same question was also asked in 2007 and responses in that survey produced a mean rating of 7.10.

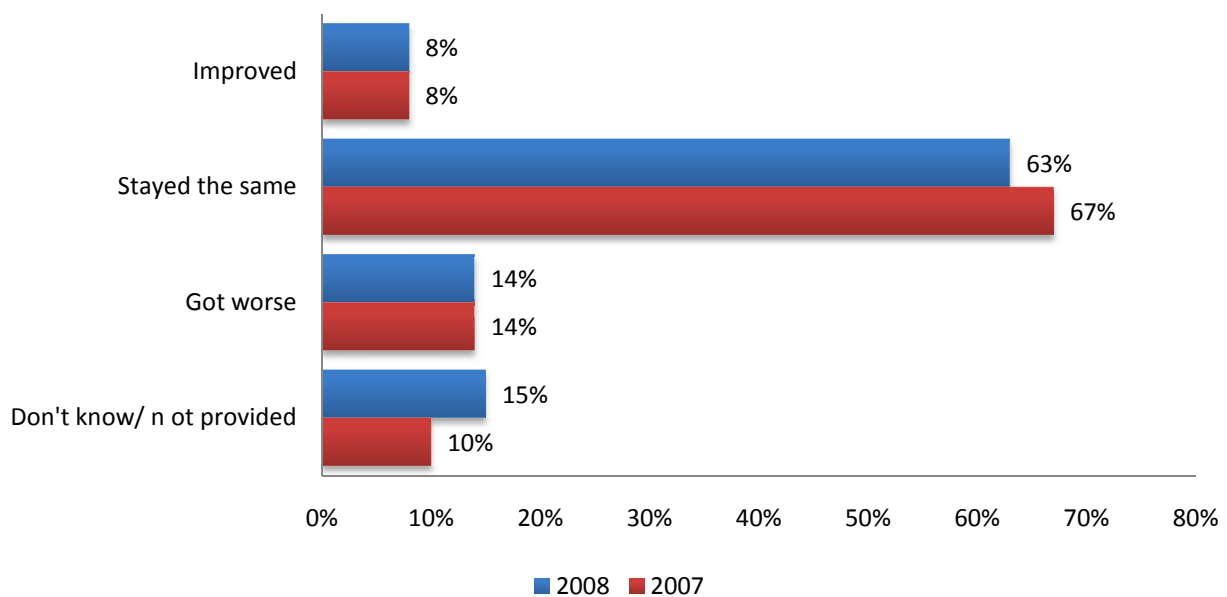
Looking at 2008 responses by the five new localities shows that the mean rating of the overall quality of open space is highest in Locality 5 (7.33 out of 10) and lowest in Locality 3 (6.6 out of ten).

Table 6: Mean rating of open spaces by locality (All respondents)

	Total	Locality 1	Locality 2	Locality 3	Locality 4	Locality 5
Mean	6.89	6.63	7.08	6.6	6.87	7.33
Unweighted sample base	800	92	87	170	225	226

To contextualise the above findings all panel members were asked whether they felt the quality of open spaces has got better, worse or stayed the same over the last two years in South Staffordshire. In response 8% indicate that they had improved, 63% state they have stayed the same and 14% believe they have got worse. This question was also asked to panel members in 2007. As illustrated in the figure below, no significant changes are evident when the two sets of responses are compared, with the proportion stating open spaces have improved or have got worse unchanged (8% and 14% respectively).

Figure 3: In the last two years how do you think the quality of open space in South Staffordshire has changed (All respondents)



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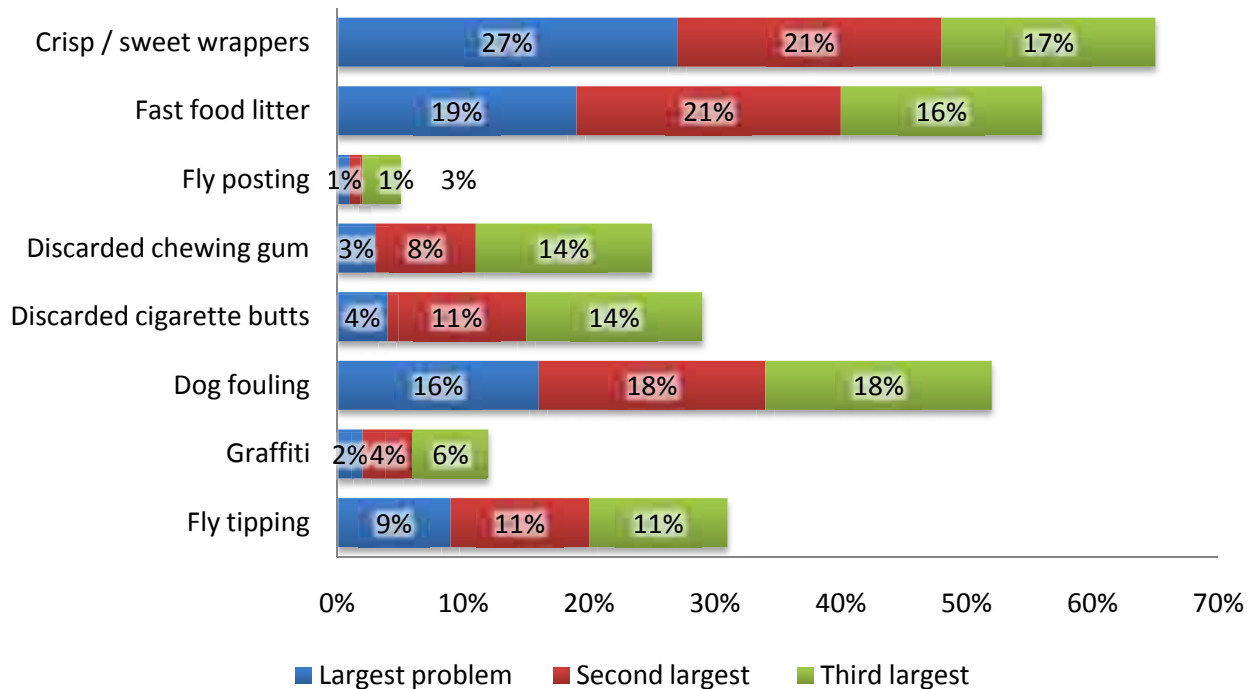
Reviewing responses by locality shows responses on this issue vary spatially with those panel members residing in Locality 3 most likely to state the quality of open space in South Staffordshire has got worse in the last two years (17%).

Table 7: Views on quality of open spaces by locality (All respondents)

	Total	Locality 1	Locality 2	Locality 3	Locality 4	Locality 5
Improved	8%	11%	7%	7%	8%	10%
Stayed the same	63%	69%	59%	63%	65%	59%
Got worse	14%	6%	16%	17%	13%	15%
Don't know	14%	14%	17%	11%	14%	14%
Not provided	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Unweighted Bases	800	92	87	170	225	226

To inform efforts to improve neighbourhood cleanliness, all panel members were asked which three issues are the largest problems in making their local area untidy. They were given eight different sources of untidiness and from these the most commonly identified as the largest problem is crisp and sweet wrappers (27%). As shown by the figure below this was also the issue most commonly chosen among residents' top 3 factors.

Figure 4: Factors that make the local area untidy (All respondents)



UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 800

Further analysis by locality shows that crisp and sweet wrappers are most commonly identified as the largest problem in all five locality areas. However, residents of Locality 2 are significantly more likely to state they are a problem compared to residents of the other four (39% of residents here identify these wrappers as the largest factor in making their area untidy).

3 A Healthy and Safe District in which to live, work and visit

The Council is committed to helping make a positive contribution to the safety, health and wellbeing of its residents. The following section focuses on improper parking in South Staffordshire and examines the health activities available that are of interest to residents of the District.

3.1 Parking issues

Panel members were given a list of six different parking issues and asked to state how much of a problem each issue is in their local area. On the whole responses to this question are positive with the majority of panel members stating that each issue is not a very big problem or not a problem at all. As the table below highlights, the issue most frequently mentioned by panel members is people improperly parking in disabled spaces (28%).

Table 8: How much of a problem are each of the following parking issues in your area? (All responses)

Issue	A big / fairly big problem	Not a very big problem / problem at all	Balance % points
Improper parking on double yellow lines	12%	68%	+56
Improper parking on single yellow lines	14%	68%	+54
Blocking entrances and exits	17%	62%	+45
Too few disabled spaces	23%	60%	+37
Too many disabled spaces	17%	70%	+53
People improperly parking in disabled spaces	28%	50%	+22
Unweighted sample bases vary			

Reviewing responses by locality shows some significant differences as illustrated in the table below. Residents in Locality 3 and Locality 5 are most likely to describe improper parking on single yellow lines and the blocking of entrances as a problem where they live.

Table 9: Proportion describing each parking issue as a problem by locality (All responses)

	Locality 1	Locality 2	Locality 3	Locality 4	Locality 5
Improper parking on double yellow lines	9%	11%	12%	11%	14%
Improper parking on single yellow lines	12%	12%	<u>19%</u>	8%	<u>15%</u>
Blocking entrances and exits	16%	10%	<u>22%</u>	14%	<u>19%</u>
Too few disabled spaces	23%	18%	25%	21%	25%
Too many disabled spaces	15%	13%	15%	18%	19%
People improperly parking in disabled spaces	27%	20%	29%	30%	29%

Bold and underlined figures are significantly different to one or more of the opposing samples

In order to probe the issue of improper parking further, panel members were asked to rate their level of agreement with various statements regarding the implementation of parking provisions and restrictions (these include yellow lines and parking meters). As the table below illustrates, the proportion of panel members who disagree with each suggested change is greater than the proportion who agree.

Agreement is highest with the statement 'my area would benefit from more single yellow lines' (23%) and disagreement is highest with the statement 'my area would benefit more from on-street 'pay-and-display' spaces' (71%) in the same respect.

Table 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your local area (All responses)

	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Don't know	Balance % points
My area would benefit from more double yellow lines	16%	25%	53%	3%	-37%
My area would benefit from more single yellow lines (allowing parking at certain times only)	23%	25%	45%	3%	-22%
My area would benefit from more designated disabled only parking spaces	18%	31%	38%	9%	-20%
My area would benefit more from 'on-street' pay-and-display parking spaces	7%	15%	71%	3%	-64%

Looking at these issues by locality, those who reside in Locality 5 more frequently favour more double yellow lines and ‘on-street’ pay-and-display parking spaces in their local area than residents elsewhere.

Table 11: Support for parking improvements per locality (All respondents)

	Locality 1	Locality 2	Locality 3	Locality 4	Locality 5
My area would benefit from more double yellow lines	11%	16%	14%	17%	<u>21%</u>
My area would benefit from more single yellow lines (allowing parking at certain times only)	22%	23%	21%	26%	21%
My area would benefit from more designated disabled only parking spaces	20%	12%	20%	15%	21%
My area would benefit more from ‘on-street’ pay-and-display parking spaces	4%	5%	5%	2%	<u>15%</u>

Bold and underlined figures are significantly different to one or more of the opposing samples

The final question in this section asked panel members if they have any further comments about parking issues in their neighbourhood. The majority chose not to provide a response to this question (67%), however those who did mentioned the following:

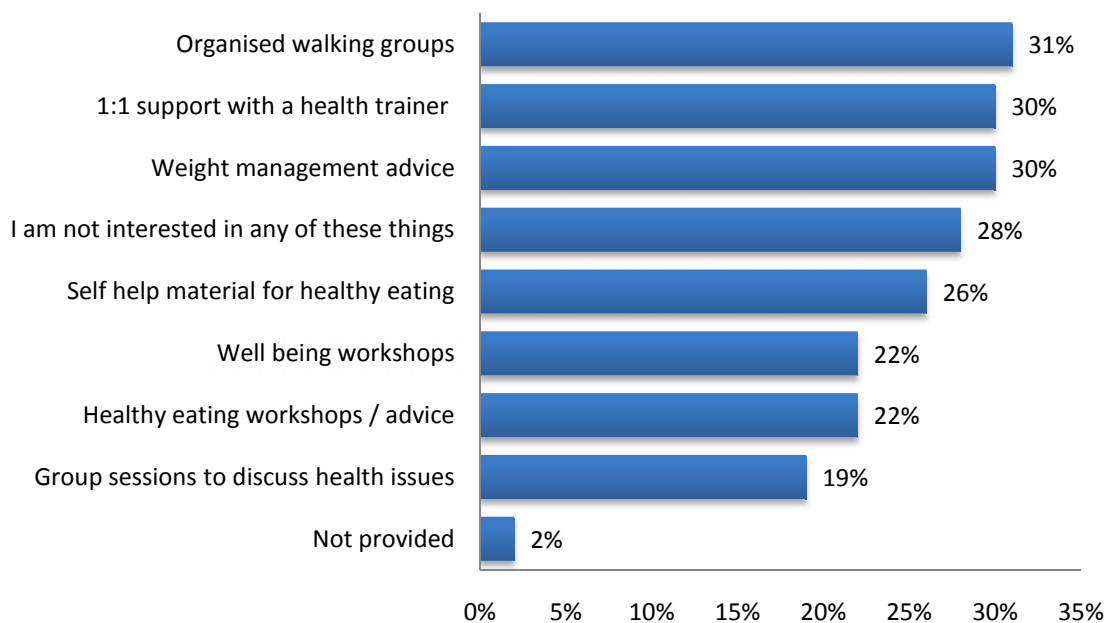
- *Parking on footpaths / pavements is a problem (needs to be stopped) (8%);*
- *Parents collecting children after school / parking near school creates congestion / parking problems (5%);*
- *Inadequate parking provision / more parking / car parks are needed (4%);*
- *Parking on grass verges should not be allowed (causes congestion) (1%);*
- *Parking / congestion at train stations is a problem (2%);*
- *Too many people park in the road (2%);*
- *Double yellow line parking restrictions are not enforced (need to be enforced) (3%);*
- *Better disabled parking provision is needed (1%);*
- *Lack of parking enforcement / need stricter controls/measures to stop people parking in non designated parking areas (4%).*

3.2 Fitness and health

All panel members were reminded that ensuring that local residents are fit and healthy is a key aim for South Staffordshire Council and its partners. Following on from this, they were presented with a list of seven health activities / services and asked to indicate which they would be interested in taking part in if they were made available.

The chart below illustrates that the three most popular activities / services are organised walking groups (31%), one to one support with a health trainer (30%) and advice on weight management (also 30%).

Figure 5: Which of the following health activities / services would you be interested in? (All responses)



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Further analysis highlights the fact that preferences vary by age.

- Among those aged 25-44 the activities the highest proportion of residents are interested in are 1:1 support with a health trainer (35%) and organised walking groups (33%).
- Among those aged 45-64 the greatest interest is in weight management advice and support (36%) and organised walking groups (35%).
- Among those aged 65 and over the greatest interest is in weight management advice and support (29%) and group sessions to discuss health issues (24%).

4 A District of Thriving and Sustainable Communities

South Staffordshire District Council recognises the importance of local facilities and the services it provides. This section of the report examines panel members' perceptions on employment opportunities and satisfaction with transportation in the District.

4.1 Public transport

All panel members were asked to think about their local area and rate their satisfaction with various aspects of public transport that are available to them.

The table below illustrates that panel members are most pleased with the transport routes available (39% describe this as good), and are least pleased with the information available about timings and timetables (40% state that this aspect of public transport is poor).

Table 12: In your local neighbourhood how would you describe the following aspects of public transport available? (All respondents)

	Good	Neither	Poor	Balance % Points
The public transport routes available	39%	18%	32%	+7%
The frequency of the services	35%	19%	32%	+3%
The cost	22%	28%	25%	-3%
The condition of the vehicles	31%	29%	21%	+10%
The information available about timings / timetables	24%	21%	40%	-16%
UNWEIGHTED BASE: 800				

In seeking to make improvements to public transport provision it should be noted that residents of Locality 5 are most likely to describe the routes available as poor (36%). When considering the frequency of public transport services and the information available about them, residents of Locality 2 are most likely to describe these as poor (51% and 57% respectively).

Table 13: Transport aspects described as poor by locality (All respondents)

	Locality 1	Locality 2	Locality 3	Locality 4	Locality 5
The public transport routes available	31	45	32	24	<u>36</u>
The frequency of the services	34	<u>51</u>	31	22	36
The cost	33	22	30	20	21
The condition of the vehicles	19	30	25	20	15
The information available about timings / timetables	36	<u>57</u>	39	34	42

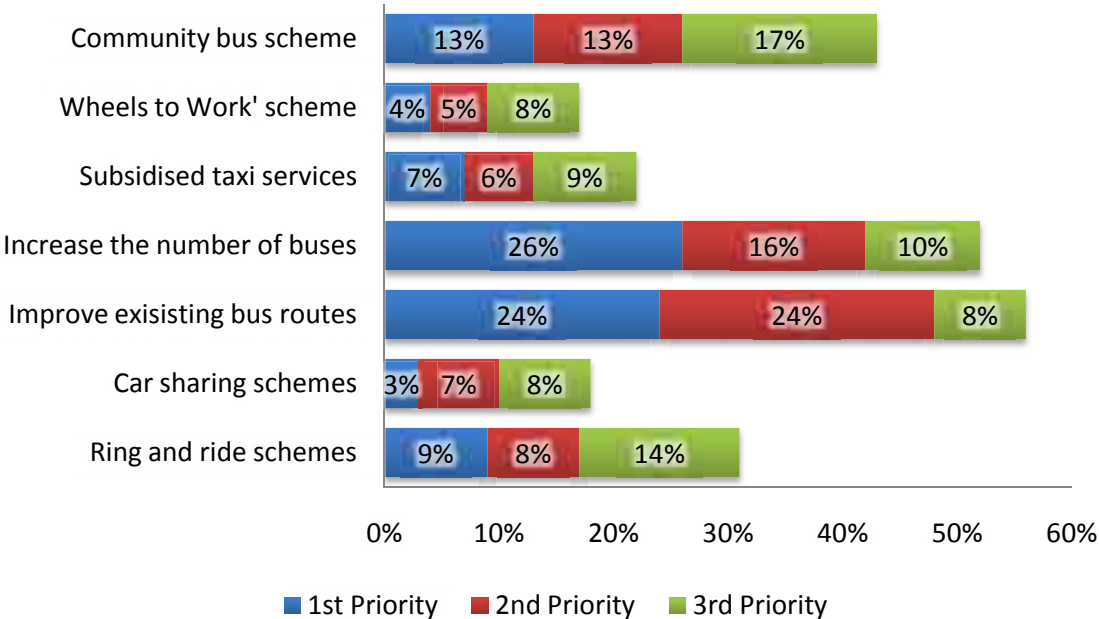
Bold and underlined figures are significantly different to one or more of the opposing samples

Following on from this, all panel members who are over the age of 60 or registered disabled were asked to state whether or not they are aware of the Council's concessionary travel scheme. Approaching half (49%) indicated that they are under 60 and are not registered disabled therefore this question did not apply to them. Removing these people from the sample at this question along with those who did not provide an answer suggests 91% of those over 60 or registered disabled are aware of this scheme.

Panel members were asked to indicate how they would like to see the Council supporting rural communities by ranking a list of seven schemes and services in terms of importance (1 being most important and 7 being least important).

As the chart below demonstrates the highest proportion (26%) state that increasing the number of buses is their first priority, closely followed by improving existing bus routes (24%) and a community bus scheme (13%). It is also interesting to note that both increasing the number of buses and improving existing bus routes are also the most frequently mentioned 2nd priority (16% and 24% respectively).

Figure 6: How would you like to see the Council supporting travel in rural communities? (All responses)



UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 800

4.2 Employment opportunities

The last question to be put to panel members in this section asked them to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with five statements regarding employment opportunities within South Staffordshire.

Overall, levels of agreement are high, with the largest proportion of panel members agreeing with the statement 'ensuring young people (aged 14-19) have sufficient skills and training for future employment should be a priority for the Council' (82%).

Table 14: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (All respondents)

	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Balance % Points
Ensuring young people (aged 14-19) have the sufficient skills and training for future employment should be a priority for the Council	82%	10%	6%	+76%
Ensuring that training opportunities are available for 16-18 year olds who are not in education or employment should be a priority for the Council	80%	11%	6%	+74%
The Council should do more to promote skills and training opportunities for all age groups in my area	80%	13%	3%	+77%
The Council should be doing more to help support small businesses in my area	67%	24%	2%	+65%
The Council should do more to encourage new businesses to employ staff who live in South Staffordshire	74%	19%	3%	+71%
Unweighted sample bases vary				

5 Partnership working - Health Priorities

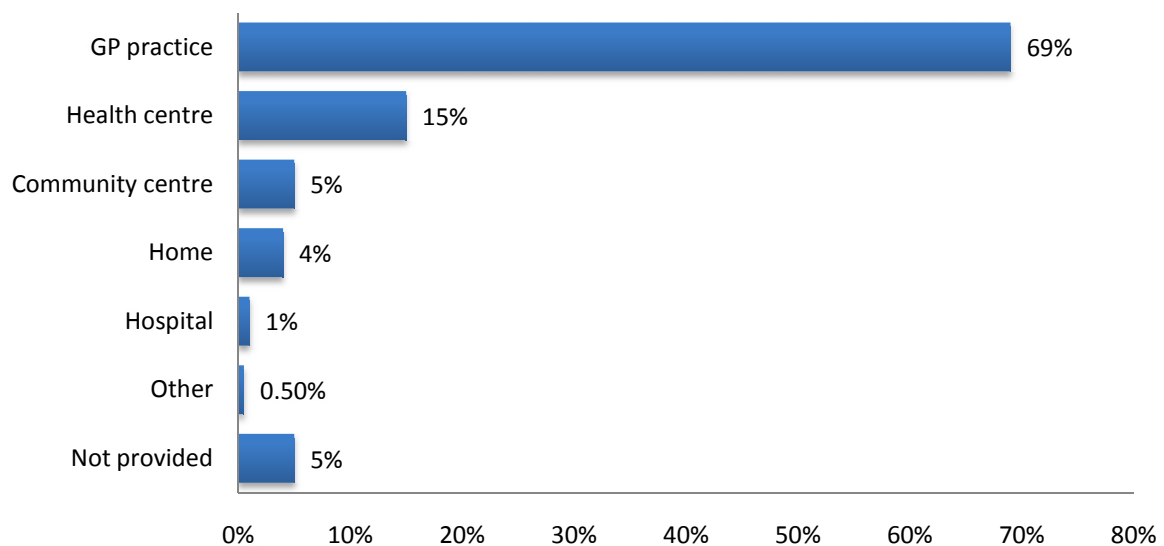
5.1 Introduction

The council is committed to working with other organisations in the district to help deliver better services for its residents. In this context four questions were included in the survey to assess what residents feel the NHS priorities should be in the area.

5.2 Accessing health services

When considering the locations that would be the most convenient for them to access health services in a non-emergency situation a strong preference remains for using a GP practice. Seven in ten state this is the most convenient location to access non-emergency health services, while 15% would prefer to use a health centre.

Figure 7: Most convenient locations to use to access health services in a non emergency situation (All respondents)

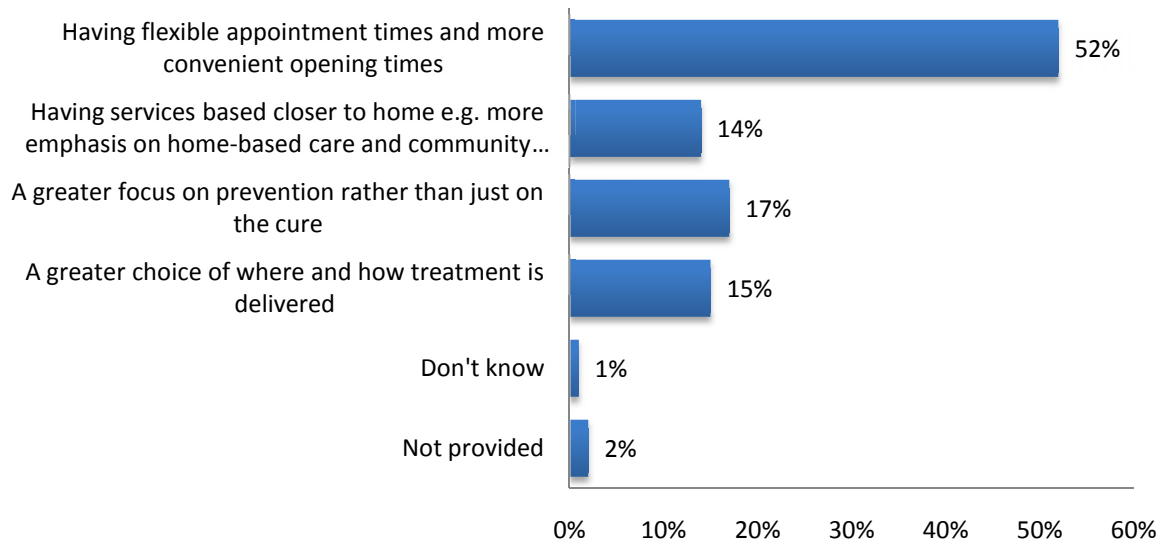


UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 800

GP Practices are favoured by all age groups, However, there are some notable differences by locality. The proportion of residents favouring GP practices for accessing non-emergency healthcare is significantly lower in Locality 1 (47%) compared to Localities 2-5. Related to this, 26% of residents in Locality 1 express a preference for accessing care at a health centre which is higher than in any other locality.

All panel members were also asked to indicate what the single most important issue is for them when accessing local NHS services. In response over half (52%) state that having flexible appointment times and more convenient opening times is a key issue. Three times as many panel members state this is an issue than the next most common response (17% state focusing on prevention rather than cure is most important).

Figure 8: Most important issues when accessing local NHS services (All respondents)

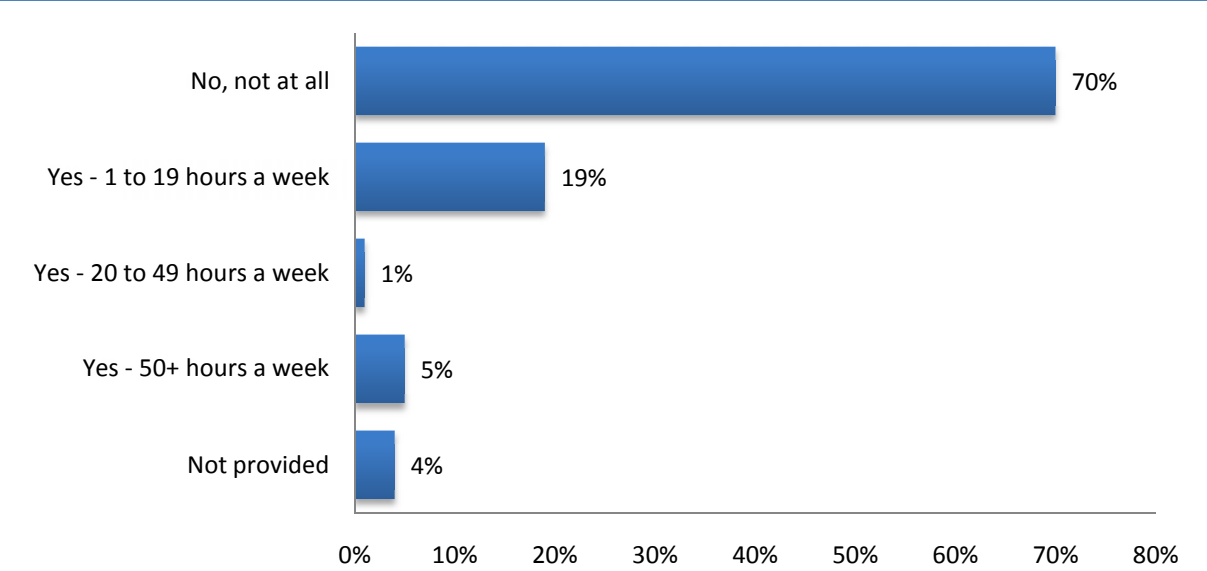


UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 800

It is notable that having flexible appointment times and more convenient times is chosen by significantly more residents aged 25-44 (61%) and aged 45-64 (50%) i.e. those likely to be in employment, compared to those aged 65 and over (36%).

Finally as a means of quantifying the informal support that is provided in the community, all panel members were asked if they look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long term physical or mental ill health or disability or problems relating to age. In total 25% of respondents provide care of this type to some extent.

Figure 9: Provision of help and support because of illness, disability or old age (All respondents)



UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 800

6 Being a well managed Council

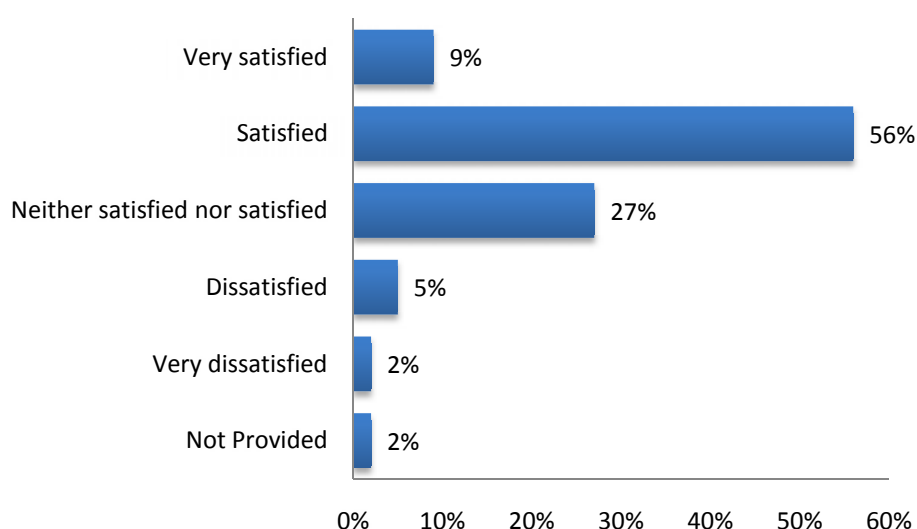
6.1 Introduction

The final set of questions presented to respondents were based around the Council's aim of being well managed and delivering high quality services. Panel members were asked to consider their overall satisfaction with the council, plus specific aspects of its service such as its website and its benefits service.

6.2 Satisfaction with the way the Council runs things

Almost two thirds (65%) of panel members state that they are currently satisfied with the way South Staffordshire Council runs things. This includes 9% who are very satisfied. Encouragingly, just 7% express any level of dissatisfaction with the way the authority runs things

Figure 10: Overall satisfaction with the way the authority runs things (All respondents)



UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 800

Residents that are more likely to be satisfied with the authority include:

- Females (70%) compared to males (58%)
- Those age aged 65 (72%) compared those aged 45-64 (66%) and those aged 25-44 (59%).

6.3 The Council Website

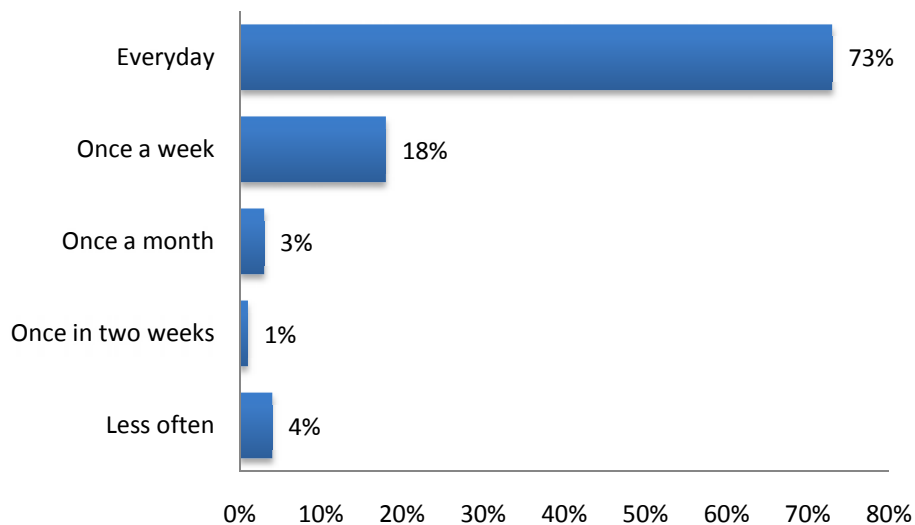
Among all panel members who completed the survey seven in ten (72%) have some form of internet access (65% at home and 7%) of work. Internet access varies by age as shown in the table below, with 59% of those aged 65 and over having no internet access at all. The base size of 16-24 year olds who completed the survey was too small for analysis

Table 15: Internet access by age

	Total	25-44	45-64	65+
Yes at home	65%	74%	70%	38%
Yes at work	7%	11%	8%	0%
No, not at all	23%	9%	16%	59%
Not provided	8%	10%	7%	3%
Unweighted Bases	800	145	379	269

All those who currently have access to the internet were asked how often they use the internet for non-work purposes. In response over seven in ten (73%) use it everyday and a further 18% use it once a week.

Figure 11: How often do you use the Internet for non-work purposes (All those with internet access).

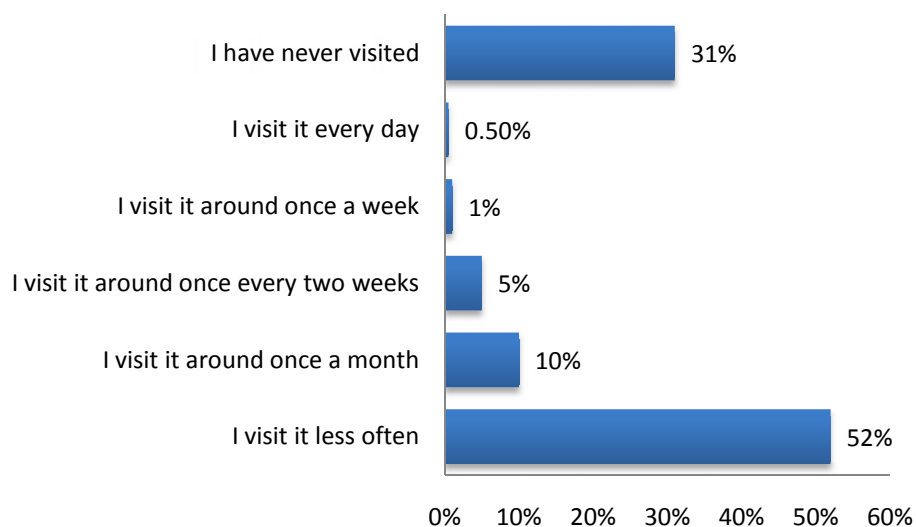


UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 520

The proportion of panel members who use the internet for non-work purposes falls with age. Among those aged 25-44 80% state that they do so, falling to 66% among those aged 45-64 and 62% among those aged 65 and over.

When asked specifically about their use of the South Staffordshire Council website three in ten (31%) state that they have never done so. The other responses at this question suggest that use of the South Staffordshire Council website is infrequent, as 52% of web users state that they visit the site less often than once a month.

Figure 12: Which of these options best describes how often you visit the South Staffordshire Council website? (All those with internet access)

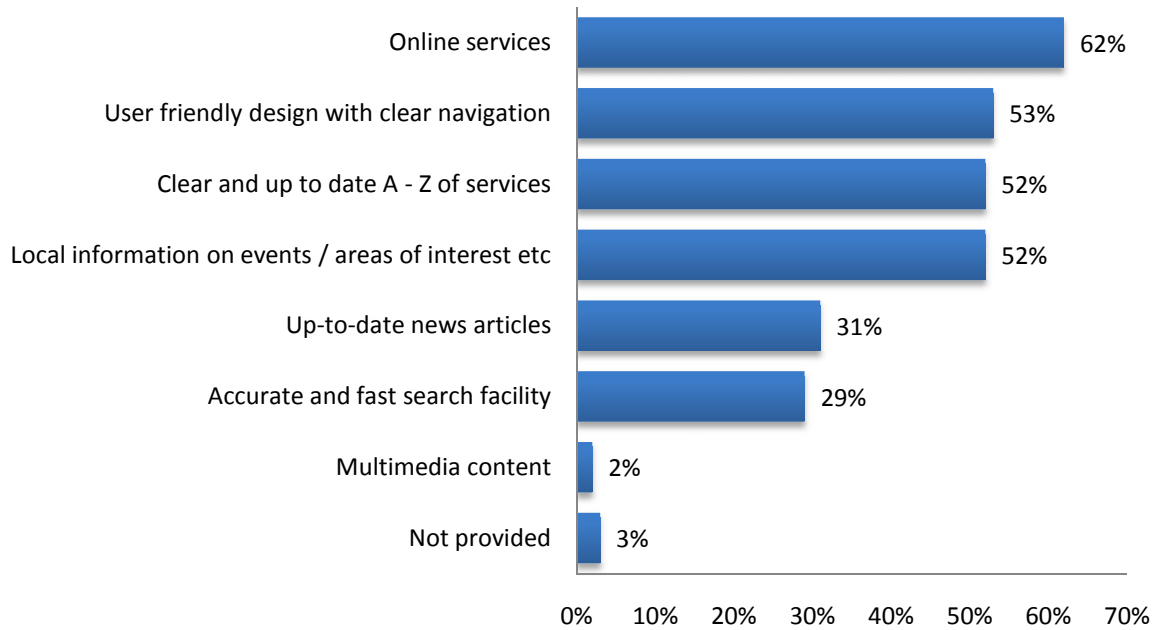


UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 520

In order to improve the South Staffordshire Council website and to ensure that it meets the needs of users, all panel members who use the internet were asked to consider which three things they think it is most important for the Council's website to include. Panel members were given seven options to choose from and from these the most commonly chosen option was online services such as the ability to pay council tax online, look up planning information, report a problem etc (62%). These online services should be accessible via a user friendly design with clear navigation as 53% of web users indicated this was one of the most important things for the Council website to include.

As shown in the graph below the availability online of a clear and up to date A-Z of services and information on local events areas of interest is supported by over half of web users in the district (52% support each).

Figure 13: Most important things for the Council website to include (All those with internet access)



UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 520

With concern regarding rubbish, litter and anti-social behaviour frequently expressed by residents, a question was also included to assess whether the Council website could be used as part of the authority's approach to tackling key neighbourhood issues. All web users were asked if they would be more likely to report five types of incident if the Council provided an online reporting facility. For each issue the majority of panel members suggested that this would indeed make them much more likely to report an instance to the Council. This was highest in relation to anti-social behaviour (62%) and fly-tipping (60%). The full responses in relation to each issue are shown in the table below.

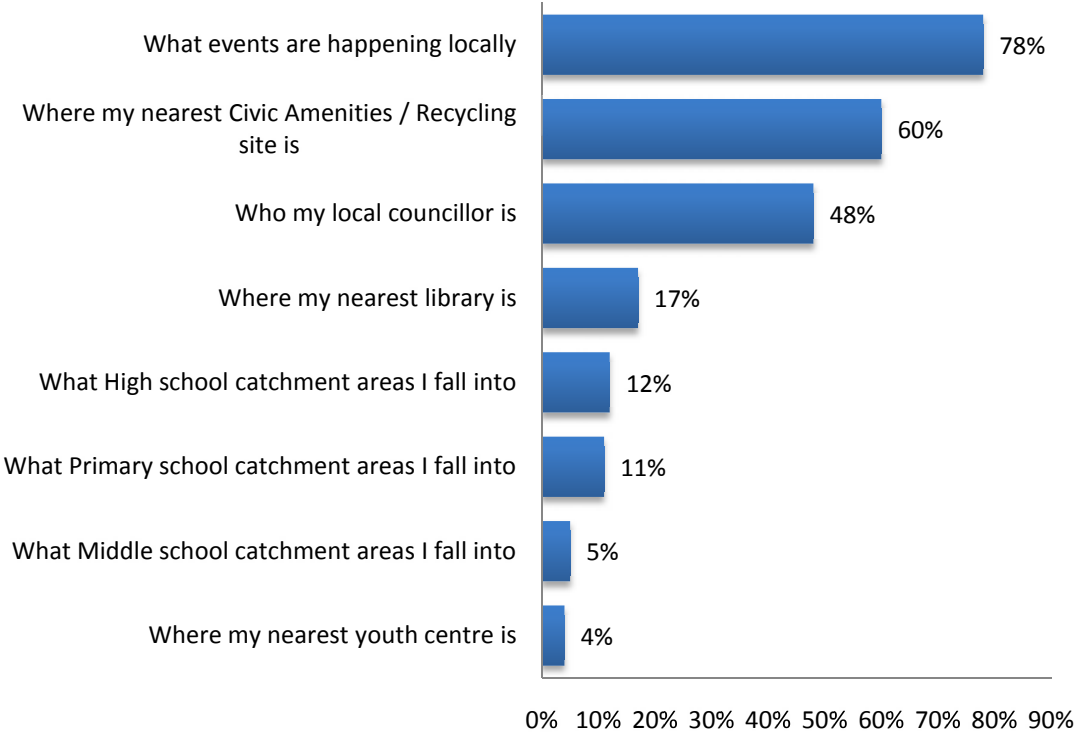
Table 16: Would you be more likely to report any of the following incidents if the Council provided an online reporting? (All those with internet access)

	Yes - much more likely	Yes - a little more likely	No, not at all	Don't know	Not provided
Fly-tipping	60%	27%	6%	3%	3%
Graffiti	54%	27%	9%	5%	5%
Abandoned vehicles	56%	26%	8%	5%	6%
Anti-social behaviour	62%	24%	8%	3%	4%
Dog fouling	53%	27%	12%	4%	5%

However, given the above findings regarding how internet access varies by age it should be ensured that any on-line reporting system that may be implemented is not at the expense of other reporting mechanisms such as telephone numbers which are likely to be favoured more by older residents.

The final question asked regarding the Council website related to the search capabilities that might be made available on it in the future. From a list of eight possible searches panel members were asked which three they would be most likely to do. As shown below the searches that panel members most commonly state they would undertake are to find out what events are happening locally (78%); where the nearest civic amenities/recycling sites are (60%) and the identity of a local councillor (48%).

Figure 14: Which three things would you be most likely to search for if you visited the Council website? (All those with internet access)



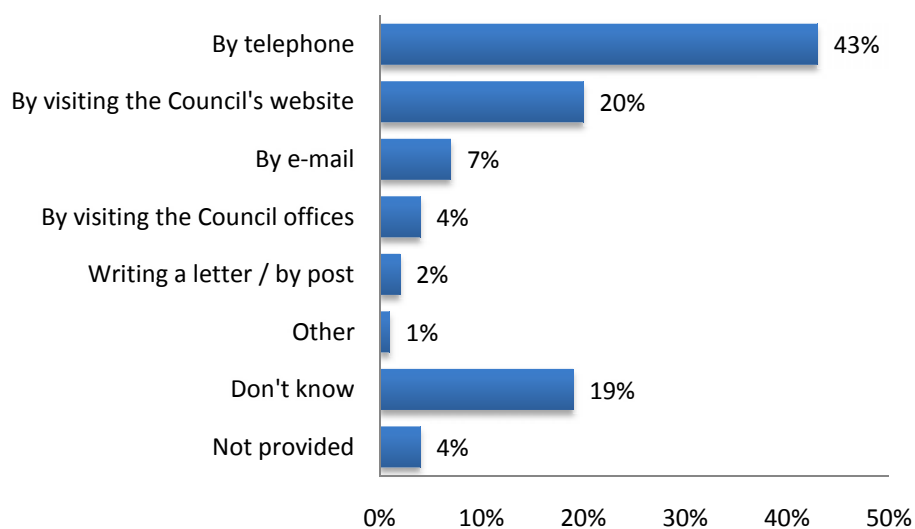
UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE : 520

6.4 Benefit fraud

Awareness among panel members that South Staffordshire Council investigates benefits fraud is even. 49% state that they are aware of this while 47% state that they are not. The remaining 3% did not give a response. In addition just 10% recall hearing about any benefit fraud prosecutions made by the Council in the last 12 months, while 88% do not.

In order to anonymously report a suspicion of benefit fraud the highest proportion of panel members would prefer to do this by telephone (43%). The next most popular option was via the Council's website (20%). Almost one in five (19%) said that they did not know.

Figure 15: Method preferred to report benefit fraud (All respondents)

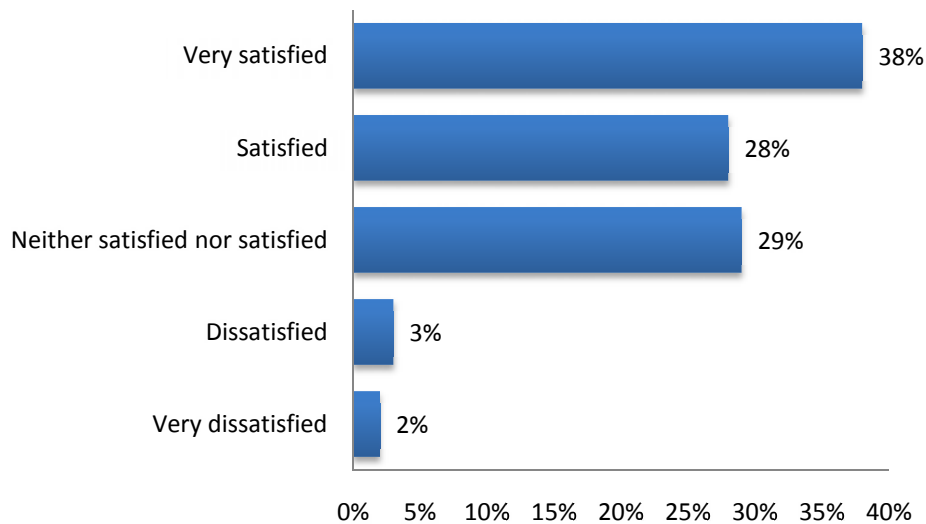


UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 800

6.5 The benefits service

One in eight (12%) of the sample have used the Council's revenue and/or Benefits service. Among all those who have used this service two thirds 66% were satisfied with the service they received including 38% who were very satisfied. Conversely, just 5% of users expressed any level of dissatisfaction regarding the service they received. However, please note these findings are based on a sample size of just 88.

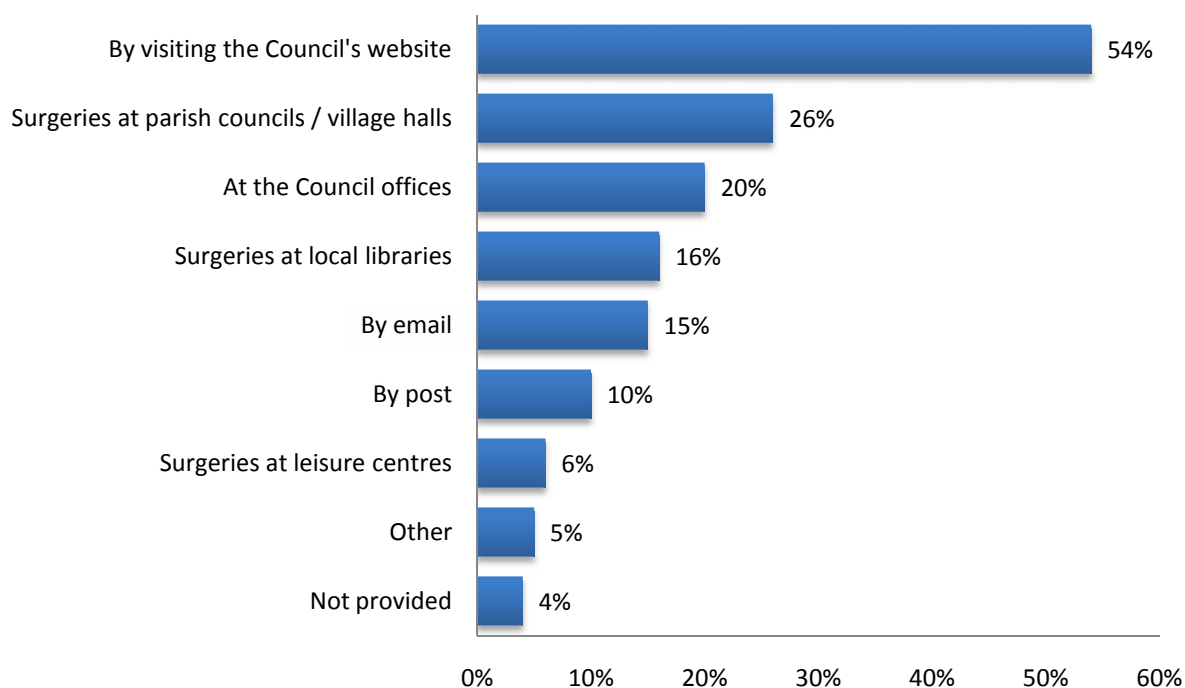
Figure 16: Satisfaction with the service received with local authority benefits office (All service users)



UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 88

Those who had previously used the revenue and benefits service were also asked to consider how they would prefer to receive information about this service in the future. As shown in figure 16, 54% of benefit service users would favour information being available on the Council's website, 26% favour surgeries at parish councils/village halls and 20% would like information to be available at Council offices. Due to the low base size of benefits service users no further analysis is possible.

Figure 17: In the future how would you prefer to receive information regarding the Council's benefit service? (All service users)



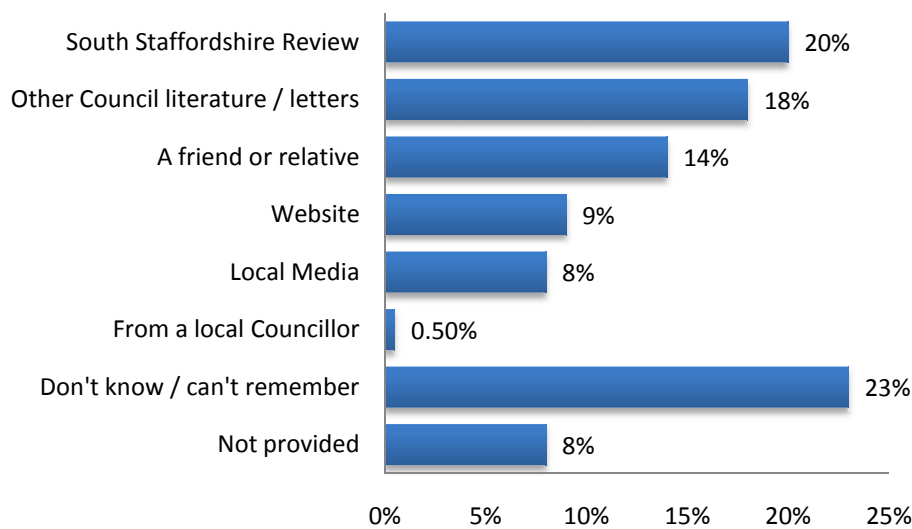
UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 88

6.6 Council Tax

The last five questions in the questionnaire addressed issues around the payment of Council Tax. Firstly, all were asked whether they were aware of how to check if they are entitled to discounts / exemptions in respect of their Council Tax and / or business rates. In response 32% state that they are aware and 67% indicate that they are not.

Among all those panel members who are aware of this service, 23% could not recall where they had heard about it. One in five (20%) indicate they heard about it in South Staffordshire Review, while a further 18% cited other Council literature/letters.

Figure 18: How did you hear about how to find out if you are entitled to discounts/ exemptions in respect of Council Tax/business rates? (All those aware of this service)



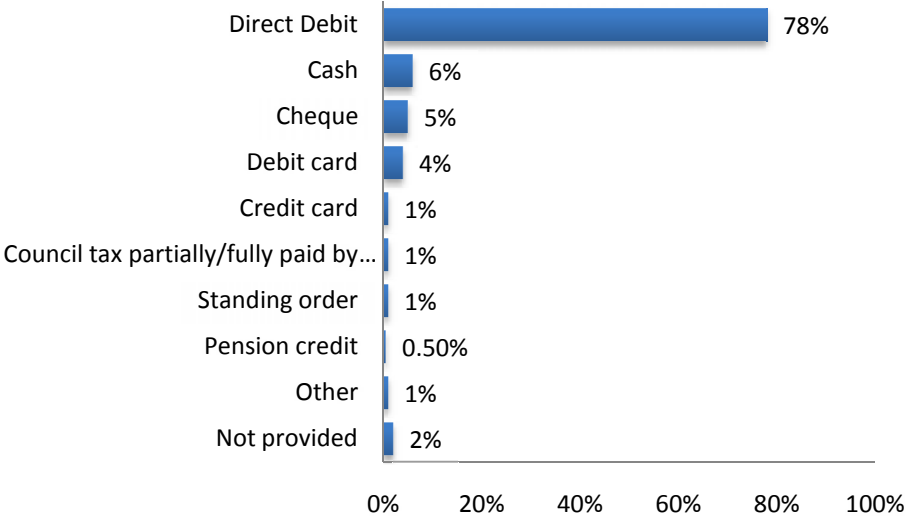
UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 295

In order to raise awareness and promote this service all panel members were asked to indicate what they believed the most effective method of promoting the service would be. The most commonly given responses were:

- The local media (52%);
- Website (16%);
- Poster campaigns (12%).

There are a number of ways in which residents can pay their Council Tax, including direct debit, credit and debit card, cash and cheque. All panel members were asked to indicate which of these they currently use. As shown below direct debit is the dominant payment method used (chosen by 78% of panel members).

Figure 19: Method used to pay Council Tax (All respondents)



UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASE: 800

The dominance of direct debit reflects the fact that it is the easiest method for making regular payments. Other methods require more effort and organisation from the respondent so the Council was interested in why direct debit is chosen by the minority who do not use it.

In response the most commonly given reason for not using direct debit is simply that they prefer to use other methods (68%). 7% state that they are aware of direct debit but the dates offered are not convenient, and just 1% state that they were not aware that you could pay by direct debit. The remaining 24% did not provide a response at this question. These responses are from a sample base of 173.

7 Sample Profile

Demographics & Profile	Number of interviews completed	Unweighted Percentage	Weighted Percentage
Total	800	-	-
Locality 1	92	12%	14%
Locality 2	87	11%	10%
Locality 3	170	21%	29%
Locality 4	225	28%	24%
Locality 5	226	28%	24%
Male	428	54%	45%
Female	372	46%	55%
16-24 years old	3	0.5%	1%
25-44 years old	145	18%	43%
45-64 years old	379	47%	35%
65+	269	34%	22%
Have A Disability / Long Standing Illness	163	20%	16%
White	788	98%	98%
Non White	4	2%	2%
In Employment	416	52%	52%
Owner Occupiers	699	87%	87%
Social renters	84	11%	8%
Other	14	2%	4%

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