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RESIDENT SURVEY 2024 – SUMMARY RESULTS

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INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the headline results of Maidstone Borough Council’s 2024 Resident Survey. The Resident Survey is conducted biannually to gauge public opinion on the local area, council services, other public services, communications as well as monitoring wellbeing measures. The Resident Survey 2024 includes the Budget Survey questions. The Budget Survey is conducted annually.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was open between 6 September and 20 October 2024.

The survey was available to be completed online on the Council’s Consultation and Engagement platform, Let’s Talk Maidstone and by post. Over 13,000 residents are signed up to the Council’s consultation mailing list and were contacted by email. A paper copy of the Resident Survey was sent by post to a sample of 6,100 households on the Council Tax Register. In addition 14 engagement events were held at locations across the borough. Several incentives were offered through a prize draw to boost returns. In addition, it was promoted on the Council’s website, social media and in the local press.

The survey was open to all Maidstone Borough residents aged 18 years and over.

A total of 4,262 people completed the survey. 2,884 provided details of their age and gender allowing these responses to be weighted in line with the population of Maidstone.

Data has been weighted according to the known population profile to counteract non-response bias. The weighting profile is based on the 2023 mid-year ONS population estimates. However, the under-representation of 18- to 34-year-olds means that high weights have been applied to responses in this group, therefore the results for this group should be treated with caution.

The economically active group includes respondents in employment (full, part-time or self-employed) or who are looking for work.

ENGAGEMENT AND REACH

The table below shows the level of engagement across the project on the Council’s Let’s Talk Consultation platform.

Aware <i>(Visited project Page)</i>	Informed <i>(Clicked on additional information)</i>	Engaged <i>(Participated in activity e.g. pin, survey response)</i>
3,680	701	4,262

In addition:

- A total of 5,539 postal surveys were mailed out and 499 received in return.
- 14 roadshows were held around the borough including in Marden, Lenham, Headcorn, Barming and Maidstone Town Centre.
- Emails and reminders were sent to the consultation mailing list (13,583).
- A total of 4,262 people responded to the questionnaire. 2,884 provided age and gender allowing these responses to be weighted in line with the population of Maidstone.

NOTES ON THE REPORT

As an online survey is a self-selection methodology. Participants are free to choose whether to participate or not. It was anticipated that returned responses would not necessarily be fully representative of the wider adult population. There were a total of 2,884 weighted responses to the survey, which, based on Maidstone's 18+ population, means overall results are accurate to ± 1.81 at the 95% confidence level. A confidence level is a statistical measure that tells us how certain we are about the accuracy of a survey results. This means that if we repeated the same survey 100 times, 95 out of those 100 times, the results would fall within the specified margin of error ($\pm 1.81\%$). For example, a 50% agreement rate to a question could lie within the range of 48.19% to 51.81%.

Demographic Differences in the data have been analysed and compared to see whether or not there are any significant differences between subgroups. These differences are highlighted, where appropriate, in the report. When looking at subgroups within a sample, the sampling error increases.

Open questions were analysed with code frames and by assigning each issue, or opportunity raised by respondents in their response, a code. The use of coding allows the same issue or opportunity raised by multiple respondents to be logged and categorised together within the coding frame, thereby, making it possible to quantify how many times the same or very similar issue or opportunity was made by respondents.

Trend comparisons are made with reference to previous year's reports. The Resident Survey is conducted biannually. The last Resident Survey 2024 was conducted in 2022. The Budget Survey is conducted annually. The Budget Survey is often incorporated into the Resident Survey on a biannual basis. Where reference is made to a 2023 report, it is the Budget Survey only.

Not every respondent answered every question, therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed not to the survey overall.

A percentage point is the difference between percentages. A value of 10% falling by 1 percent point becomes 9% (10% has 10 percentage points). A fall of 1% would result in a value of 9.9%.

Rounding means that some charts may not add up to 100%.

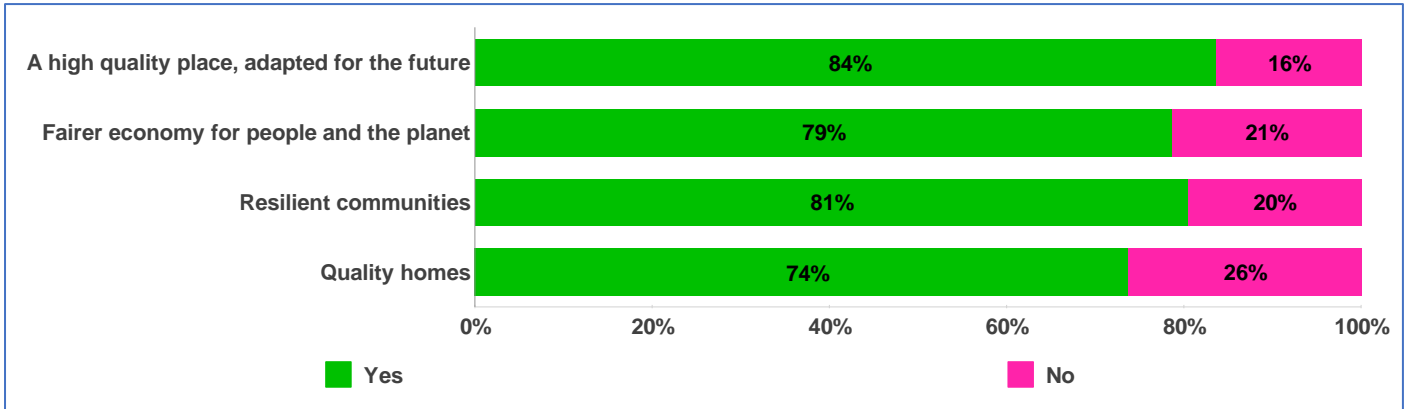
FINDINGS

- 'A high quality place, adapted for the future' was the highest scoring priority and 'Quality homes' was the lowest scoring priority.
- Waste Collection was found to be the 'most important' mandatory service that the Council provided (58.4%).
- The mandatory service where respondents felt spending should be increased most was Community Safety (63.2%)
- The mandatory service which respondents felt should be reduced was Democratic & Electoral Services (40.8%).
- Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live has increased by 15.6%, from 50.9% in 2023 to 66.5% in 2024.
- Across the wellbeing matrix measures, there has been an improvement in the scores for anxiousness and isolation since the 2022 survey. However, the scores for life satisfaction and community/neighbour support have declined.
- 58.6% of respondents rated their health and wellbeing positively ('very good' and 'good' responses combined), since the 2022 survey the proportion answering this way has declined by 6.2 percent points.
- Mote Park had the highest satisfaction rating across the Council Services in the survey at 80.6%.
- Availability of on -street parking in the Town Centre had the lowest satisfaction rating across the Council services in the survey at 14.0%
- The Council service that has seen the greatest improvement in satisfaction was Maidstone Museums with an increase in satisfaction of 9.6 percent points.
- The Council service that had the greatest decline in satisfaction was general waste collection with a decrease in satisfaction of 16.9 percent points.
- 21.4% agreed that they could influence decision in their local area, since 2022 survey the proportion answering this way has declined by 3.7 percent points.
- When asked about participation in local decision making, 31.0% said that they wanted to know more about how decisions were taken in their area, but 'didn't want to be involved beyond that'.
- 50.2% said they felt 'very well informed' or 'fairly well informed'. Since the 2022 Resident Survey the proportion answering this way has declined by 8.7 percent points.
- The most common theme when respondents were asked what they loved about where they lived was Parks & Open Spaces.
- When asked what their biggest worry right now is - the most common theme was overdevelopment and infrastructure.

PRIORITIES

Respondents were presented with the four priorities and were asked if they were the correct areas of focus for MBC.

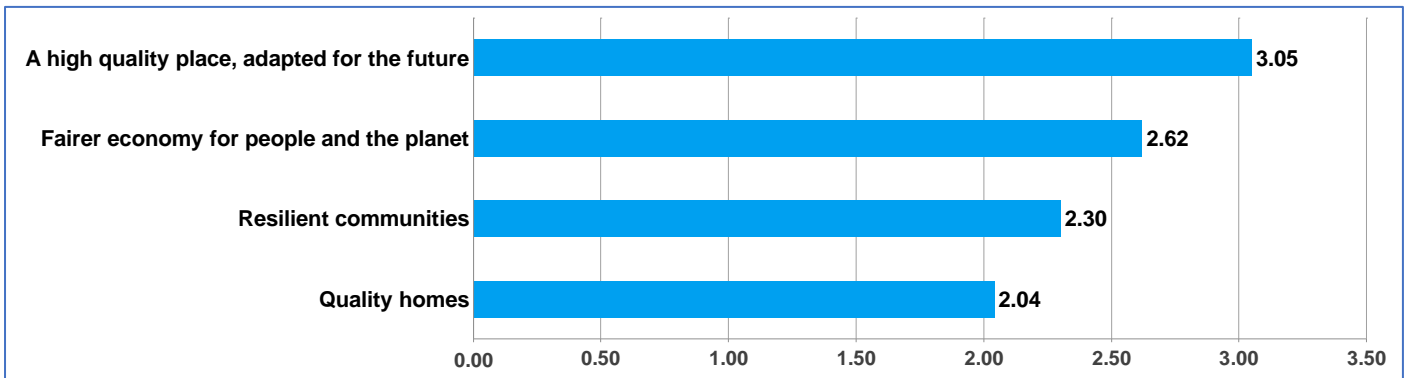
- ‘A high quality place, adapted for the future’ had the greatest proportion that said this was the correct area of focus at 83.7%.
- ‘Quality homes’ had the lowest proportion that said this was the correct area for MBC to focus on at 73.8%.



- 89.3% of respondents aged 75-years and over had the greatest proportion across the age groups that said ‘a high quality place, adapted for the future’ was the correct area of focus. Respondents aged 35-to-44 years had the lowest proportion answering this way at 76.8%. These results are significantly different from each other.
- 81.2% of respondents with a disability said ‘a high quality place, adapted for the future’ was the correct area to focus on compared to 86.5% of those without a disability.

Respondents were also asked to rank the priorities in order of importance to them.

- ‘A high quality place, adapted for the future’ was the highest-ranking priority with a score of 3.05.
- ‘Quality Homes’ was the lowest ranked priority with a score of 2.04.



- The ranking order was the same as the overall result across the demographic groups (Economic Activity, Gender, Age, Ethnicity and Disability).

MANDATORY SERVICES

MOST IMPORTANT MANDATORY SERVICES

Survey respondents were asked to select from the list of mandatory services which three services were most important to them.

There were 2,869 responses to this question.

The top three 'most important' statutory services that MBC is required to provide were:

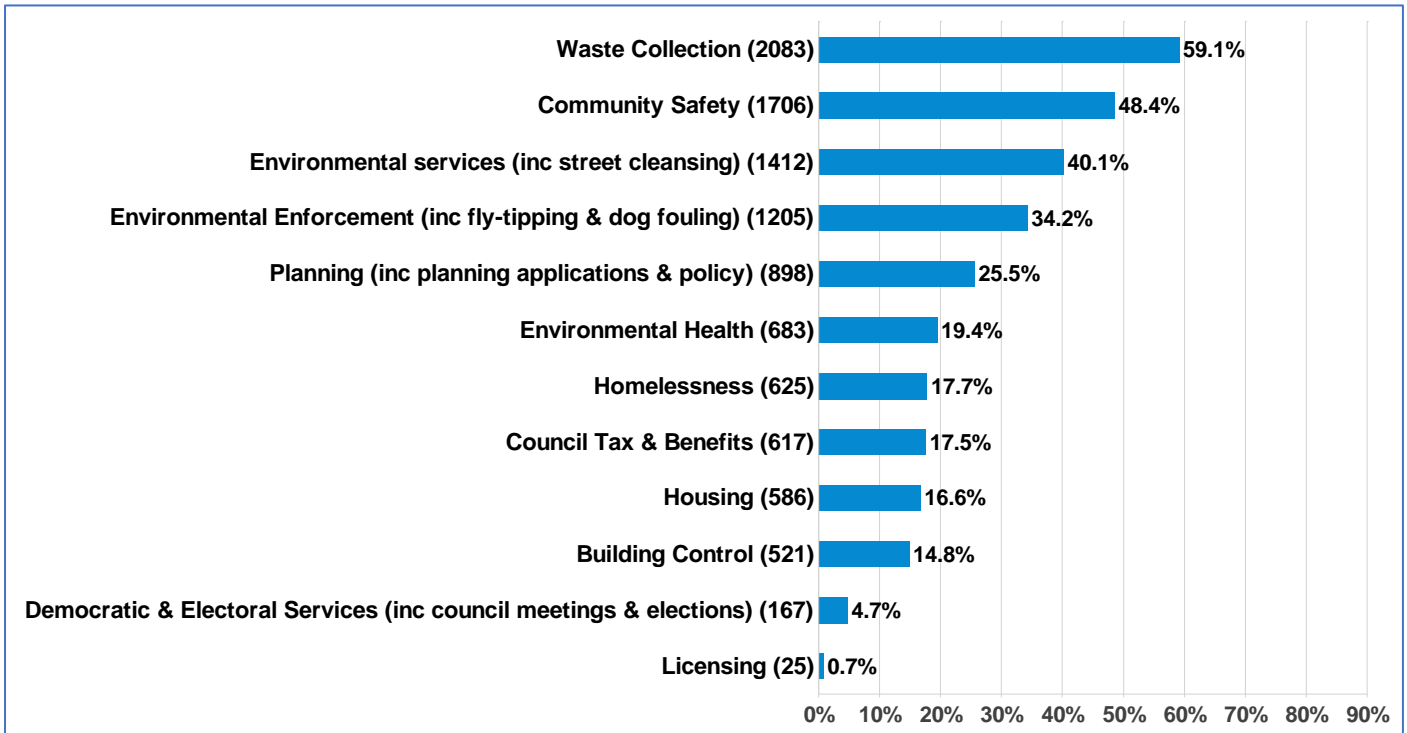
- Waste Collection 58.4%
- Community Safety 52.8%
- Environmental services (inc. street cleaning) 43.1%

In the 2023 Budget survey, 91.3% of respondents selected Environmental Services including waste collection and street cleansing as one of their top three services.



The bottom three 'most important' statutory services that MBC is required to provide were:


- Licensing 0.9%
- Democratic Services (inc. Elections) 4.2%
- Building Control 11.6%

Similarly, in the 2023 Budget survey, Licensing had the lowest proportion of respondents that selected it as one of their top three mandatory services.



DEMOGRAPHICS

	<p>58.7% of female respondents selected Community Safety as one of their top three most important mandatory services compared to 47.0% of male respondents. Community Safety was the top mandatory service for female respondents whilst the top three services for male respondents matched the overall response.</p>
	<p>The most important service for respondents in the age groups 18-to-24 years and 35-to-44 years was Community Safety at 59.1% and 62.8% respectively. This was followed by Waste Collection and Environmental Services.</p>

	The response from the remaining age groups was in line with the overall result.
	Community Safety was the top response for respondents from minority groups at 74.1%. This was followed by Environmental Services at 48.5% and then Waste Collection at 40.7%.

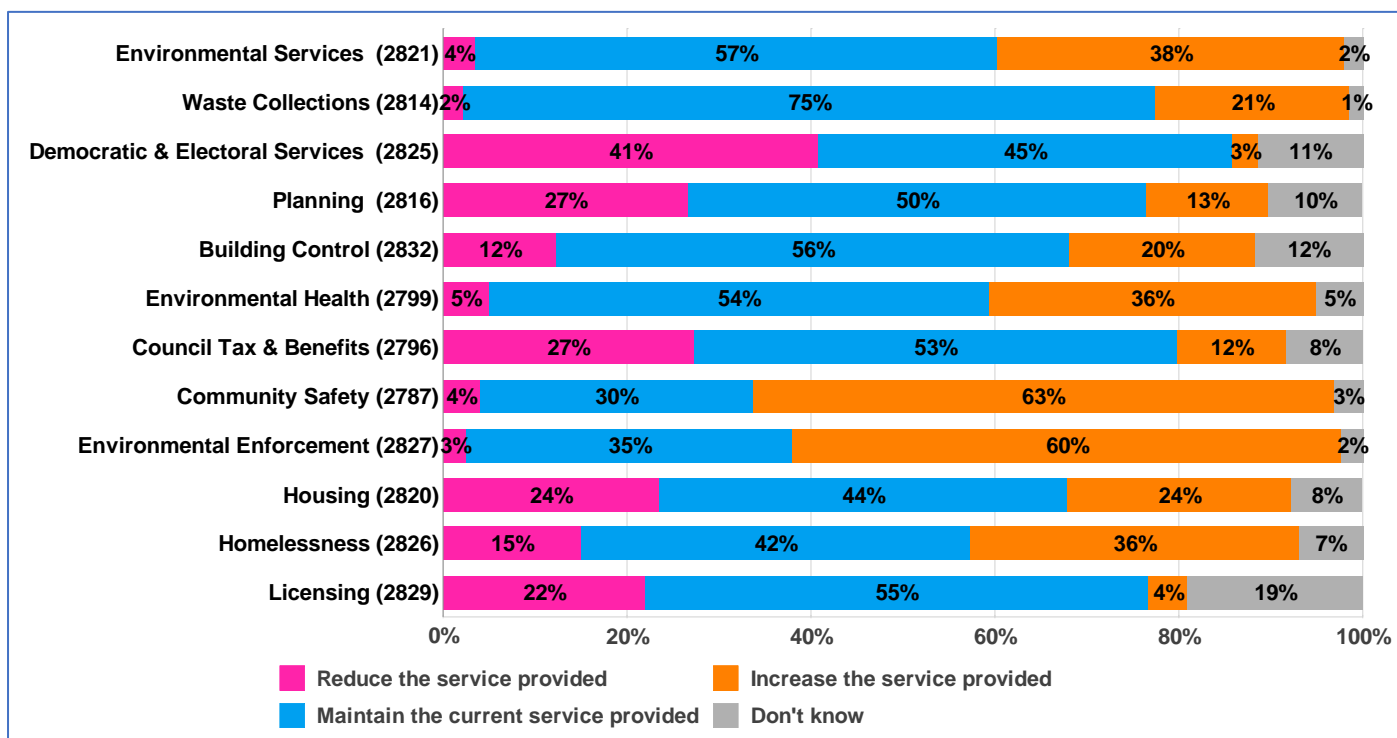
SPENDING APPROACHES TO MANDATORY SERVICES

Survey respondents were asked to select the approach they felt the Council should take in terms of the delivery of each of its Mandatory Services in the next year.

They were provided with four options to choose from:

- Reduce the service provided
- Maintain the service provided
- Increase the service provided
- Don't know

To provide context, the current spend on each service (Council Tax band D) was included for reference.






REDUCE

The top three mandatory services respondents said should be REDUCED were:

- Democratic & Electoral Services at 40.8%
- Council Tax & Benefits at 27.3%
- Planning (inc. applications & Local Plan) at 26.7%.

In the 2023 Budget Survey, the top three mandatory services which respondents said should be reduced were Democratic & Electoral Services (47.0%), Licensing (38.5%) and Council Tax & Benefits (34.8%).

	A significantly greater proportion of economically active respondents said Democratic Service should be reduced with 42.9% answering this way compared to 36.8% of economically inactive respondents.
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	<p>The 75 years and over age group had the lowest proportion that said Democratic Services should be reduced at 34.2%. The 45 to 54 years age group had the greatest proportion that said Democratic Services should be reduced at 47.1%.</p>
	<p>Minority groups had a significantly lower proportion that said that spending on Democratic Services should be reduced at 32.7% compared to 41.1% of respondents from white groups answering the same.</p>




MAINTAIN

The top three services respondents said should be MAINTAINED were:

- Waste Collections at 75.2%
- Environmental Services at 56.8%
- Building Control at 55.7%

In the 2023 Budget Survey, the top three mandatory services that respondents said should be maintained were Environmental Services (96.7%), Environmental Health (84.1%) and Community Safety (82.0%).





NOTE: In previous Budget Surveys Waste Collection has been included as part of Environmental Services.

	<p>The data shows that the proportion that responded to maintain Waste Collections increases as age increases.</p>
	<p>Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion that that said spending on Waste Collections should be maintained at 77.5% compared to 66.9% of disabled respondents answering the same.</p>
	<p>Minority group respondents had a significantly lower proportion that said that spending on Waste Collections should be maintained at 64.1% compared to 75.9% of respondents from white groups answering the same.</p>

INCREASE

The top three services respondents said should be INCREASED were:

- Community Safety at 63.2%
- Environmental Enforcement at 59.7%
- Environmental Services at 37.7%

	<p>Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said that Community Safety spending should be increased with 68.2% answering this way compared to economically inactive respondents where 52.9% answered this way.</p>
	<p>Respondents in the age groups 64 years and over had significantly lower proportion that said that Community safety spending should be increased at 49.1% and 42.2% respectively, compared to the other age groups. Respondents aged 35 to 44 years had the greatest proportion that said spending should be increased in this area at 72.8%.</p>
	<p>Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion that said that spending on Community Safety be increased at 64.6% compared to 57.8% of disabled respondents answering the same.</p>
	<p>Minority groups had a significantly greater proportion that said that spending on Community Safety should be increased at 71.8% compared to 62.6% of respondents from white groups answering the same.</p>

DISCRETIONARY SERVICES

MOST IMPORTANT DISCRETIONARY SERVICES

Survey respondents were provided with a list of services Maidstone Borough Council provide and were asked to select up to three which they felt were the most important.

- 3,288 responses were received.

The top three most important discretionary services MBC provides were:

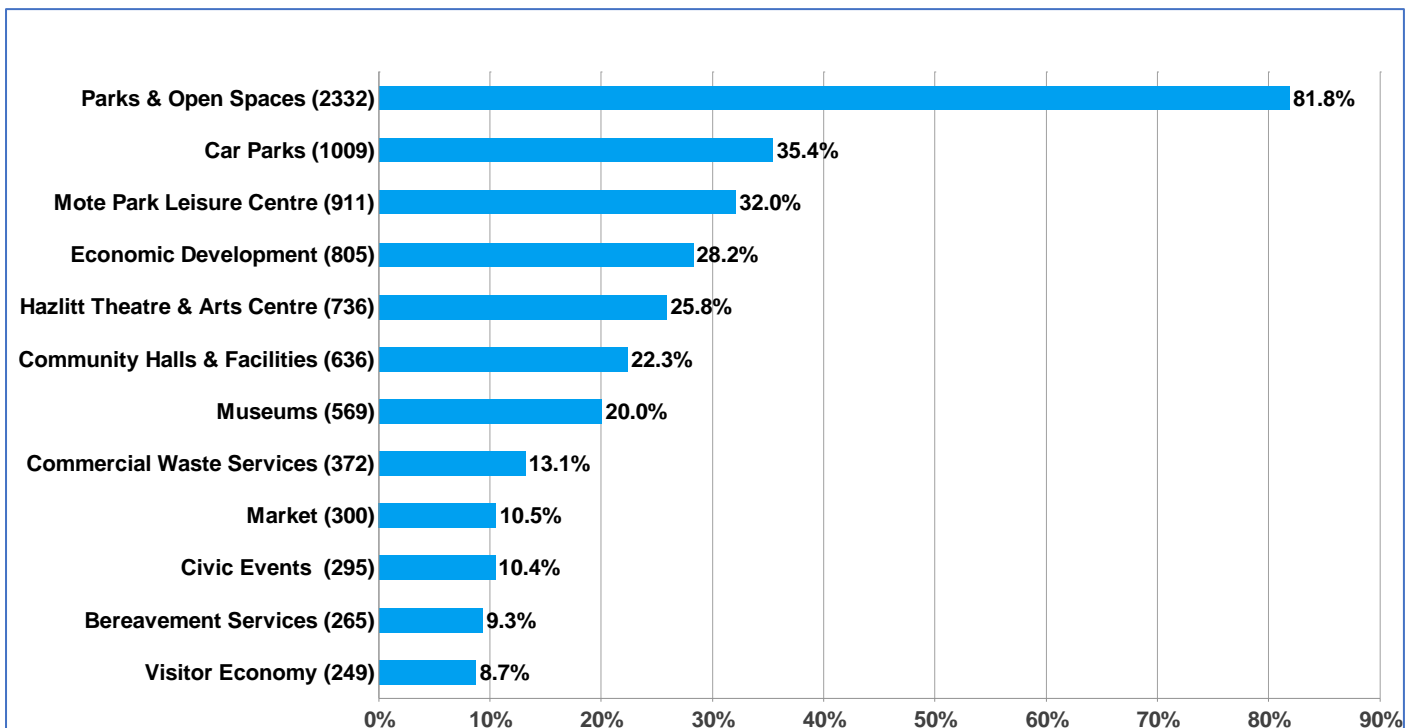
- Parks & Open Spaces 81.8%
- Car Parks 35.4%
- Mote Park Leisure Centre 32.0%

The top three responses are unchanged from when this question was last asked in the 2023 Budget Survey.

The bottom three most important discretionary services MBC provides were:

- Visitor Economy 8.7%
- Bereavement Services 9.3%
- Civic Events 10.4%

In the 2023 Budget Survey, Civic Events had the lowest proportion that said it was important at 4.0%, followed by the Market at 6.2%. In 2023, Bereavement Services was on the mandatory services list.






DEMOGRAPHICS

Park & Open Spaces was the top discretionary service across all demographic groups (Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Disability & Economic Activity)



Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that selected Mote Park Leisure as one of their top three discretionary services with 36.9% selecting this service compared to 21.8% of the economically inactive group. This made it the second most important service for the economically active group (whereas the economically inactive group's top three matches the overall result).

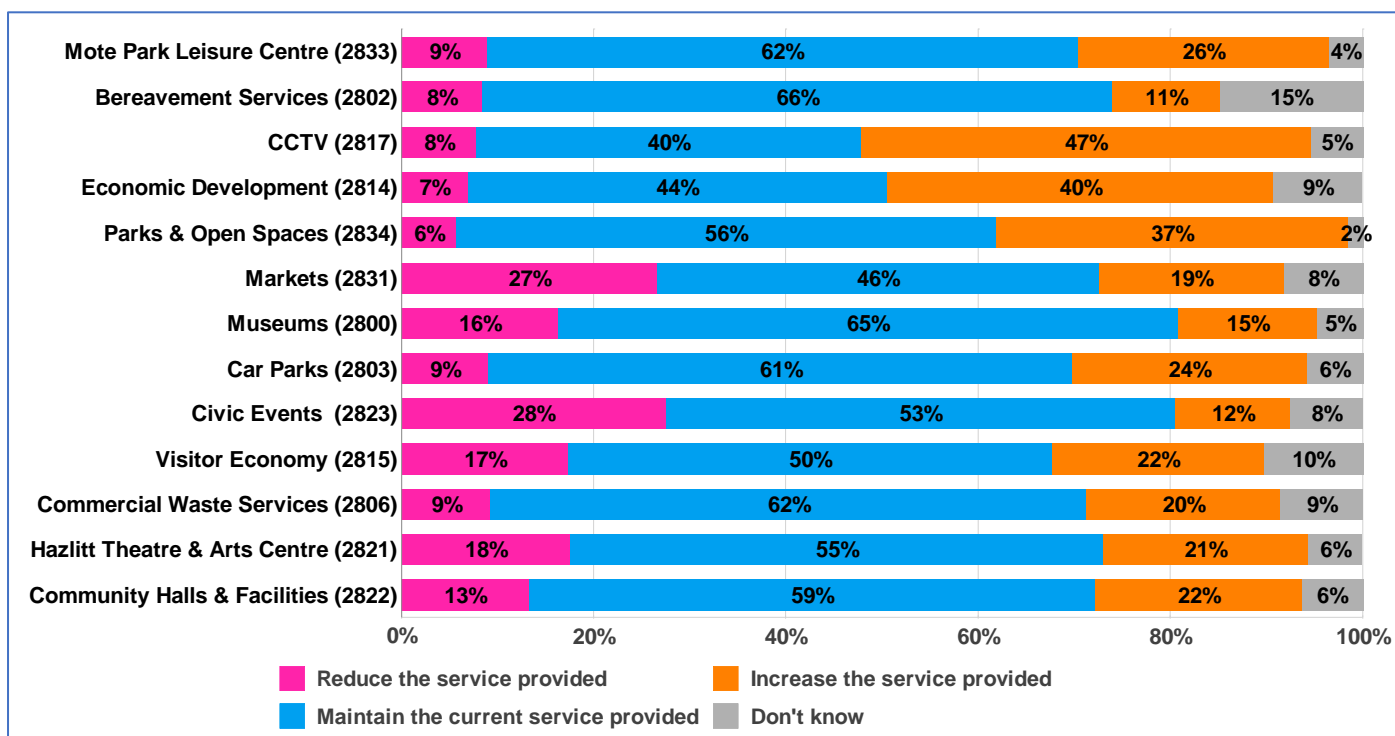
	The proportion of respondents selecting Mote Park Leisure Centre as one of their top three discretionary services declines as age increases from 43.5% for the 18 to 34 years age group to 16.8% for the 75 years and over age group.
	Respondents with a disability had a significantly greater proportion that selected car parks as one of their top three with 41.6% selecting this service compared to 33.0% of respondents without a disability. Respondents with a disability had Parks & Open Spaces as first, Car Parks as second and Community Halls and facilities as third.
	Minority groups had a significantly lower proportion that selected Parks & Open Spaces as one of their top three discretionary services at 62.8% compared to 82.9% of white groups. While this was still the top service for minority group respondents, this group had Economic Development as second most important and Mote Park Leisure Centre as third most important.

SPENDING APPROACHES TO DISCRETIONARY SERVICES

Survey respondents were asked to select what approach they felt the Council should take in delivering each of its Discretionary Services next year. They were given three options to pick from:

- Reduce the service provided
- Maintain the service provided
- Increase the service provided
- Don't know

To provide context, the current spend on each service (Council Tax band D) was included for reference.





REDUCE

The top three discretionary services respondents said should be REDUCED were:

- Civic Events at 27.5%
- Market at 26.6%
- Hazlitt Theatre & Arts Centre 17.6%

In the 2023 Budget Survey, the top three discretionary services which respondents said should be reduced were Civic Events (50.8%), Markets (43.3%) and Tourism (34.6%).



	Male respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said that spending on Civic Events should be reduced with 31.4% answering this way compared to 23.7% of female respondents.
	Respondents aged 35 to 44 years had the lowest proportion that said Civic Events should be reduced at 21.4% - significantly lower than the proportions answering this way for all other age groups.

MAINTAIN

The top three discretionary services respondents said should be MAINTAINED were:

- Bereavement Services at 65.6%
- Museums at 64.5%
- Commercial Waste Services at 62.0%



In the 2023 Budget Survey, the top three discretionary services which respondents said should be maintained were, Parks & Open Spaces (96.4%), Leisure centre (79.7%) and Car Parks (74.3%).

	Respondents aged 18 to 34 years had a significantly lower proportion that said that Bereavement Services spending should be maintained at 57.1%, compared to all other age groups.
	Respondents without a disability had a significantly greater proportion that that said that spending on Bereavement Services should be maintained at 68.0% compared to 57.5% of disabled respondents answering the same.

INCREASE

The top three discretionary services respondents said should be INCREASED were:

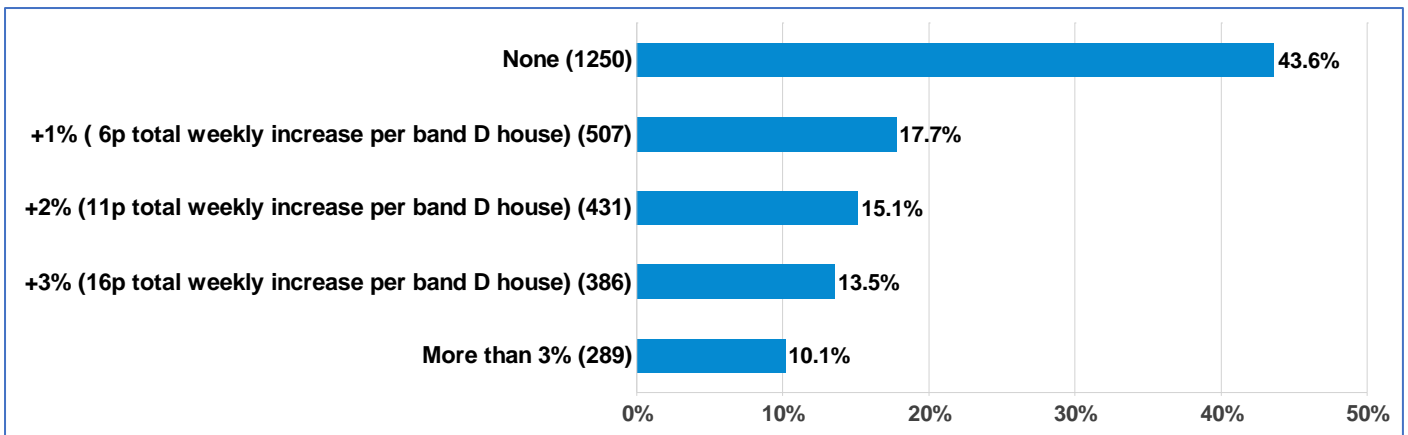
- CCTV at 46.8%
- Economic Development at 40.3%
- Parks & Open Spaces at 36.6%

	Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that said that CCTV spending should be increased with 48.3% answering this way compared to economically inactive respondents where 44.0% answered this way.
	55.3% of respondents aged 18 to 34 years said that CCTV spending should be increased, significantly greater than the proportions answering this way from all other age groups.




COUNCIL TAX INCREASES

There were 2,865 responses to the question about how much should Council Tax increase by to protect services.

The most common response was 'none' with 1,250 answering this way.



DEMOGRAPHICS

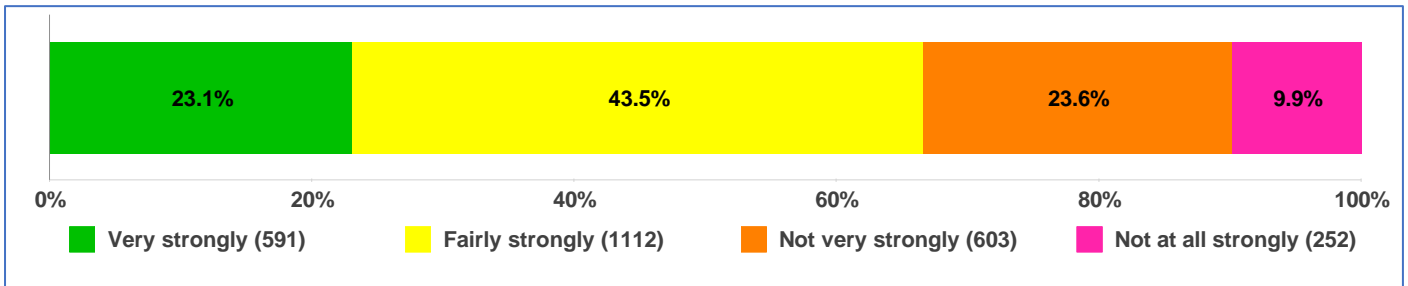
	<p>Male respondents had the greatest proportion that responded 'more than 3%' at 14.1%.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents aged 18 to 34 years had the greatest proportion that answered 'none' at 54.3%. • Respondents aged 55 to 64 years had the greatest proportion that answered '+2%' at 17.9%. • Respondents aged 65 to 74 years had the greatest proportion that answered '+3%' at 17.1%. <p>The proportion selecting the response 'none' decreases as age increases.</p>
	<p>Minority groups had the greatest proportion that selected '+1%' at 29.7%.</p>

LOCAL AREA

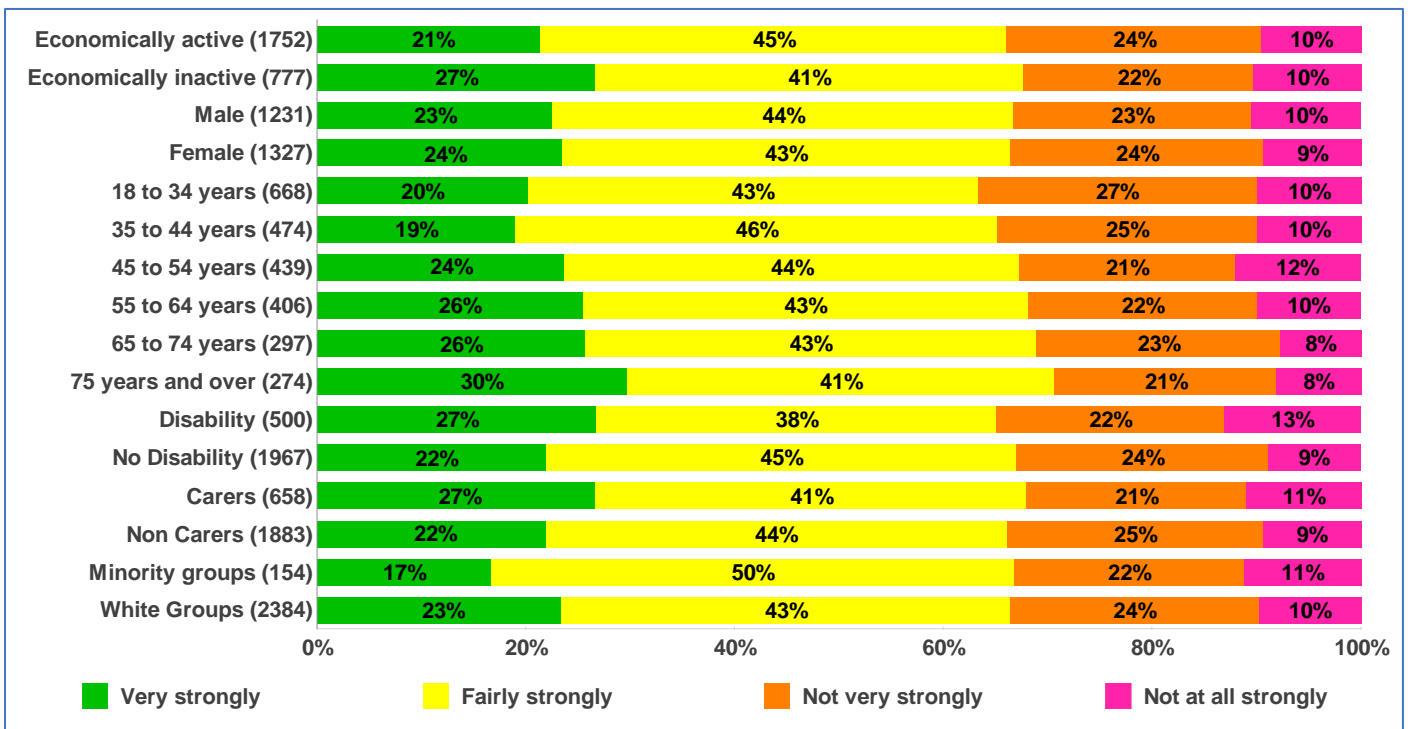
SENSE OF BELONGING TO LOCAL AREA

There were 2,612 responses to the question on strength of belonging to your local area, including 55 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.

- The most common response was 'fairly strongly' with 1,112 answering this way.
- Overall, 66.6% of respondents said they felt 'fairly or very strongly' that they belong to their local area.
- This represents a decrease of 2.2 percent points, compared to the 2022 Resident Survey, when 68.8% of respondents said they felt they 'very strongly' or 'fairly strongly' that they belonged to their neighbourhood.



DEMOGRAPHICS



The following group had the greatest proportion that said they did not feel that they strongly belonged in their local area:

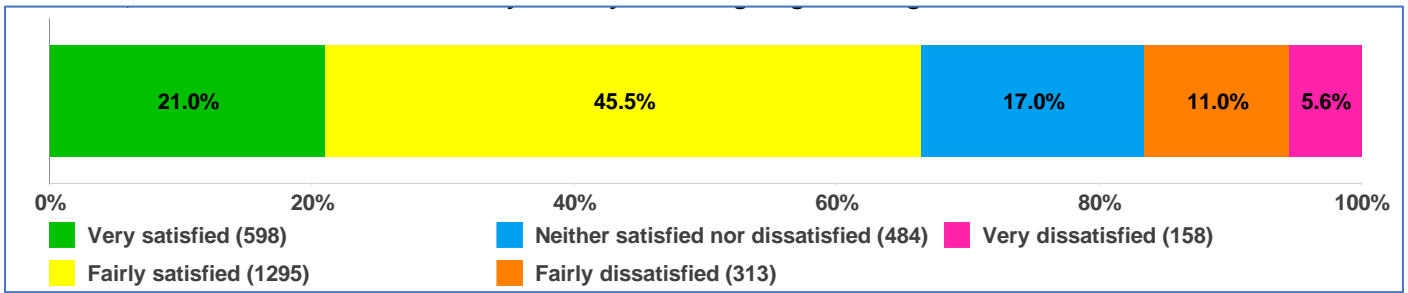
- Respondents aged 18 to 34 years – 36.7%

SATISFACTION WITH LOCAL AREA

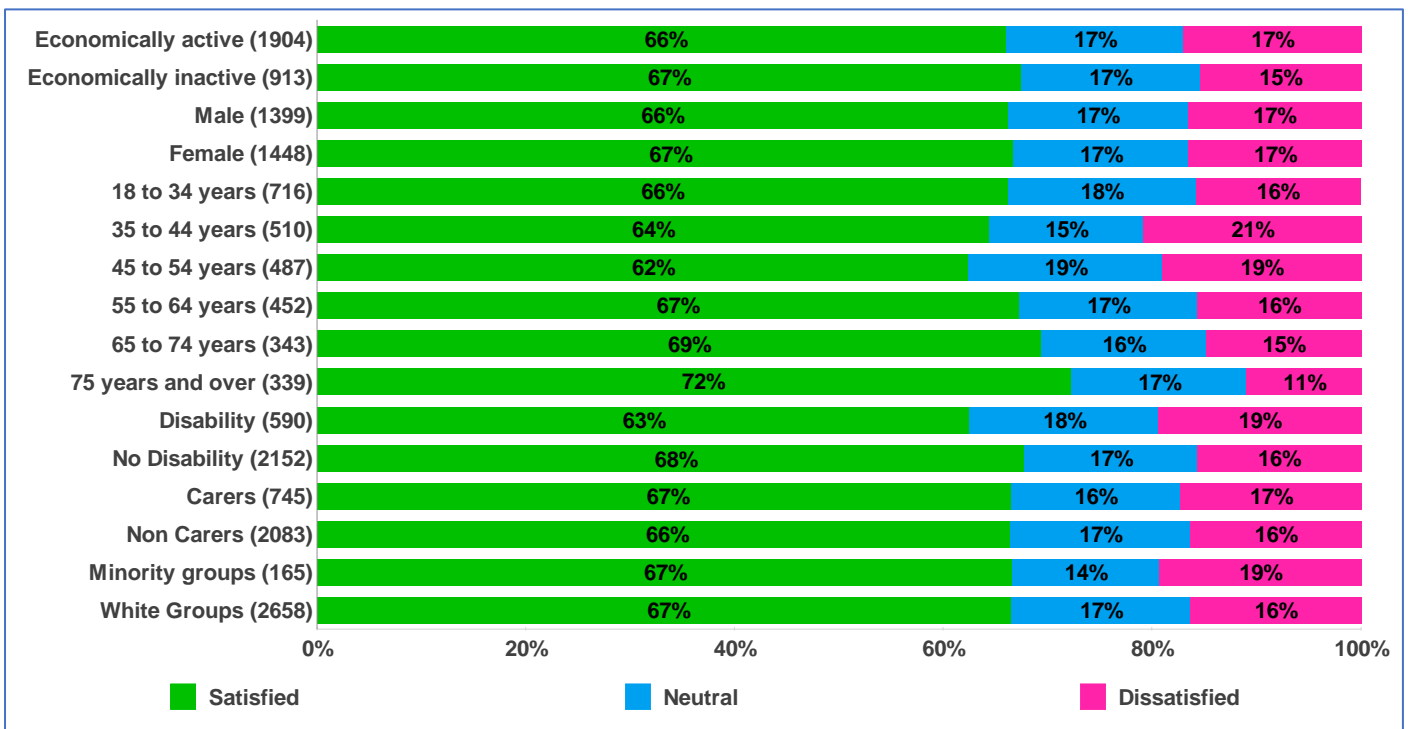
There were 2,847 responses to the question on satisfaction with local area as a place to live.

- The most common response was 'fairly satisfied' with 1295 answering this way.
- Overall, 66.5% of respondents said they were satisfied with their local area as a place to live.
- In the 2023 Budget survey 50.9% of respondents were satisfied with the local area as a place to live.

- Since 2023 the proportion answering positively has increased by 15.6 percent points.



DEMOGRAPHICS



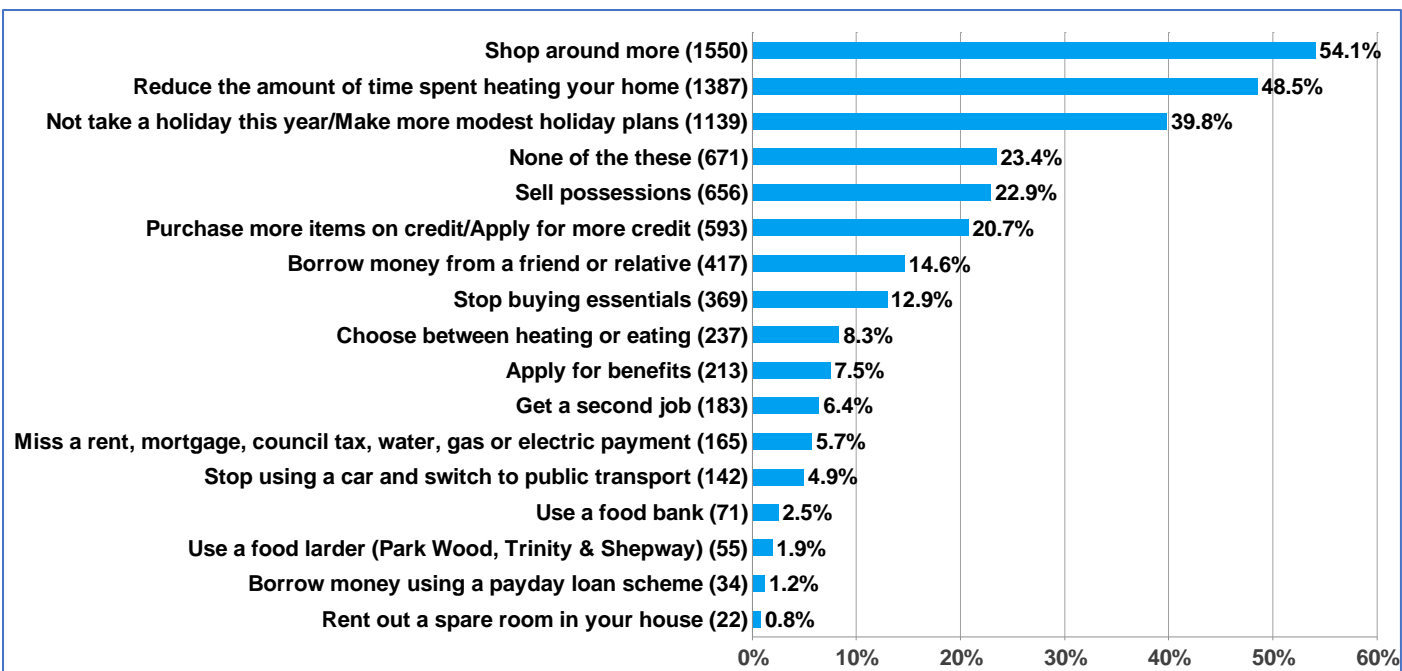
The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about their local area as place to live:

- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 20.8%
- Respondents with a disability – 19.4%
- Carer respondents – 19.3%

COST OF LIVING ACTIONS

There were 2,863 responses to the question on actions taken as a result of the cost-of-living crisis.

- The most common response was 'shop around more' with 1,550 (54.1%) answering this way. This was also the most common response in the 2022 survey at 50.8%.
- 23.4% of respondents said that they had not taken any of the actions listed as a result of the cost-of-living crisis. In the 2022 survey 27.7% of respondents answered this way.

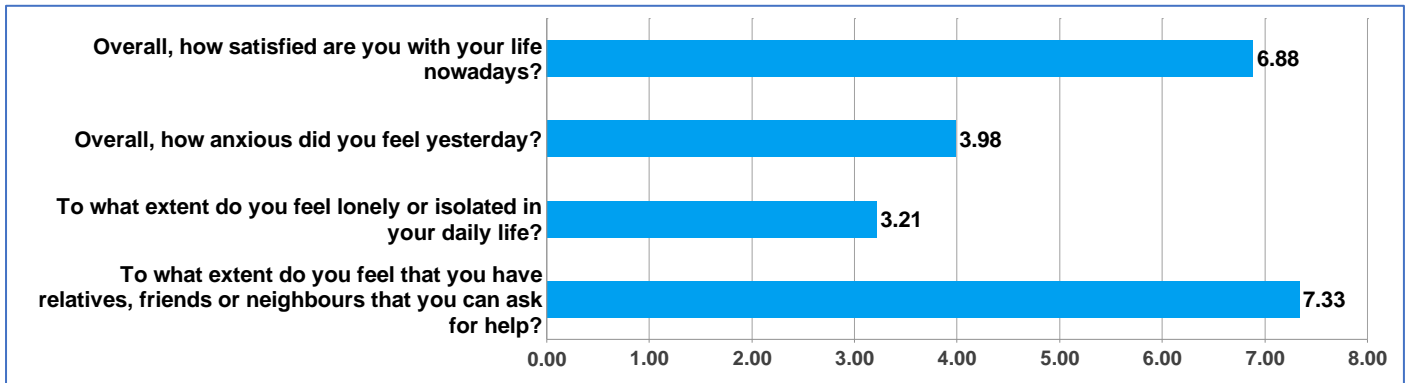


HEALTH & WELLBEING

WELLBEING MATRIX

The following question is taken from the ONS wellbeing matrix. For this question respondents were provide with a scale from 0 to 10. 0 was 'not at all' and 10 was 'completely'. This has then been converted into a score for each aspect, to allow comparisons between years and demographic groups.

Please note that for anxiousness and isolation a lower score is better.



LIFE SATISFACTION

- There were 2,861 responses to the question asking people to rate how satisfied they were with their life.
- The most common response was 8 with 763 answering this way. This was also the most common response in the 2022 survey.
- 45.8% of respondents rated their satisfaction with life at 8 or higher and 7.8% of respondents rated their satisfaction with life as a 3 or less.
- In 2022, 47.0% of respondents rated their satisfaction with life as an 8 or higher. Since 2023 the proportion answering positively has decreased by 1.2 percent points.
- In 2022, the score for life satisfaction was 7.84. For 2024, it is 6.88 – this is a decline.

The following groups had the lowest scores when asked how they satisfied they were with their life:

- Respondents aged 45 to 54 years – 6.5
- Respondents with a disability – 5.8

ANXIOUSNESS

- There were 2,847 responses to the question as people to rate how anxious they felt yesterday.
- The most common response was 0 with 470 answering this way. This was also the most common response in the 2022 survey.
- 47.0% of respondents rated their anxiousness for the previous day as a 3 or lower and 14.7% of respondents rated their anxiousness as an 8 or higher.
- In 2022, 51.5% of respondents rated their anxiousness as a 3 or lower. Since 2023 the proportion answering this way has decreased by 4.5 percent points.
- In 2022, the score for anxiousness was 4.73. For 2024, it is 4.00, this is an improvement.

The following groups had the highest scores when asked how they anxious they had felt the previous day:

- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 4.7
- Respondents aged 18 to 34 years – 4.7
- Respondents with a disability – 4.8
- Minority group respondents – 4.5

ISOLATION

- There were 2,850 responses to the question asking people to rate how lonely or isolated they felt in their daily life. For this question respondents were given a scale from 0 to 10. 0 was 'not at all' and 10 was 'completely'.
- The most common response was 0 with 850 answering this way. This was also the most common response in the 2022 survey.
- 59.1% of respondents rated how lonely or isolated they felt as a 3 or lower and 12.0% of respondents rated their loneliness and isolation as an 8 or higher.
- In 2022, 56.9% of respondents rated their level of loneliness as a 3 or lower. Since 2023 the proportion answering positively has decreased by 2.2 percent points.
- In 2022, the score for isolation was 4.33. For 2024, it is 3.21 – this is an improvement.

The following groups had the highest scores when asked how they isolated they felt in their daily life:

- Economically inactive respondents – 3.5
- Respondents aged 18 to 34 years – 3.7
- Respondents with a disability – 4.5
- Carer respondents – 3.5

COMMUNITY/NEIGHBOUR SUPPORT

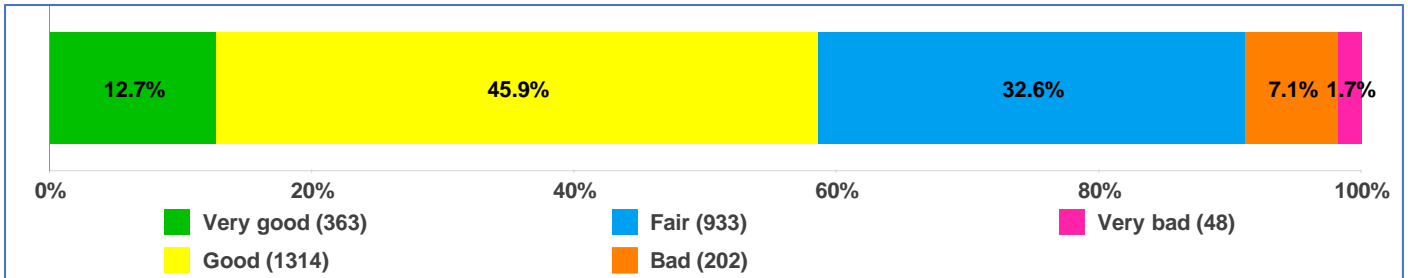
- There were 2,846 responses to the question asking people to rate to what extent they felt they had relatives, friends or neighbours that they can ask for help (community support). For this question respondents were given a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 was 'not at all' and 10 was 'completely'.
- The most common response was 10 with 957 answering this way. This was also the most common response in the 2022 survey.
- 12.7% of respondents rated their community support as a 3 or lower and 58.5% of respondents rated their community support as an 8 or higher.
- In 2022, 11.7% of respondents rated their level of loneliness as a 3 or lower. Since 2023 the proportion answering negatively has increased by 1.0 percent point.
- In 2022, the score for community/neighbour support was 8.35. For 2024, it is 7.33 - this is a decline.

The following groups had the lowest scores when asked about community/neighbour support:

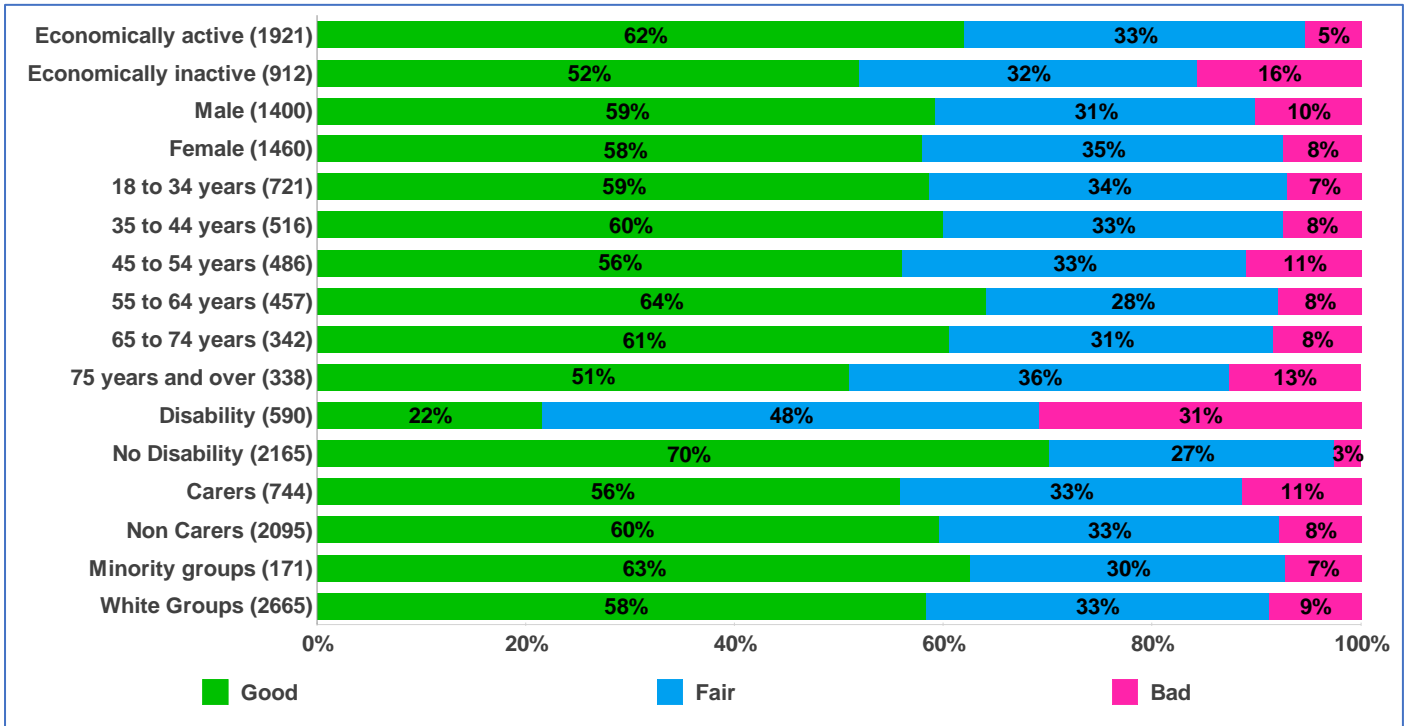
- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 7.0
- Respondents aged 45 to 54 years 7.0
- Respondents with a disability – 6.4
- Minority group respondents – 6.1

OVERALL, HEALTH & WELLBEING

- There were 2,860 responses to the question rating general health and wellbeing.
- The most common response was 'good' with 1,314 answering this way. This was also the most common response in the 2022 survey.
- Overall, 58.6% of respondents rated their health and wellbeing positively ('very good' and 'good' responses combined) and 8.7% of respondents rated their health and wellbeing negatively ('bad' and 'very bad' responses combined)
- In 2022, 64.8% of respondents rated their health and wellbeing positively. Since then the proportion answering positively has decreased by 6.2 percent points.



DEMOGRAPHICS



The following groups had the greatest proportion that answered negatively when asked about their health and wellbeing:

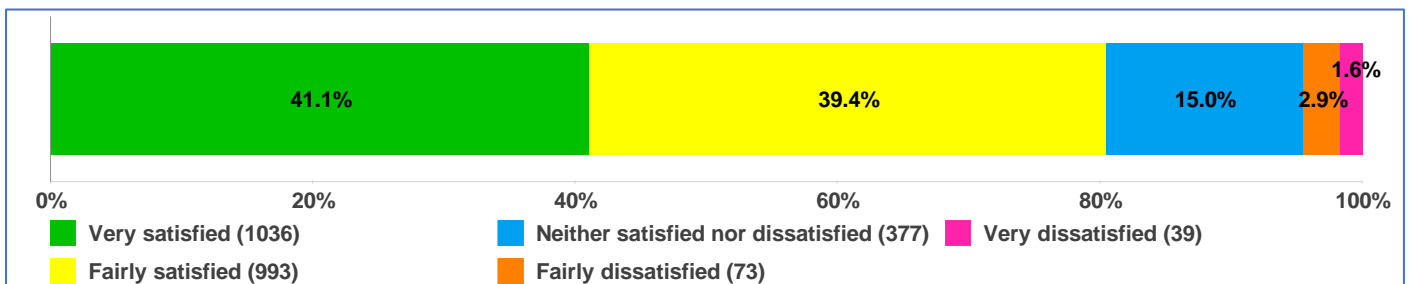
- Economically inactive respondents - 15.7%
- Respondents aged 45 to 54 years – 11.0%
- Respondents aged 75 years and over – 12.5%
- Respondents with a disability – 30.8%

SATISFACTION WITH COUNCIL SERVICES

For the following questions respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with Council Services.

MOTE PARK

- There were 2,837 responses to the question about satisfaction with Mote Park, including 319 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- Overall, 80.6% of respondents said they were satisfied with Mote Park.
- The most common response was 'very satisfied' with 1,036 answering this way.

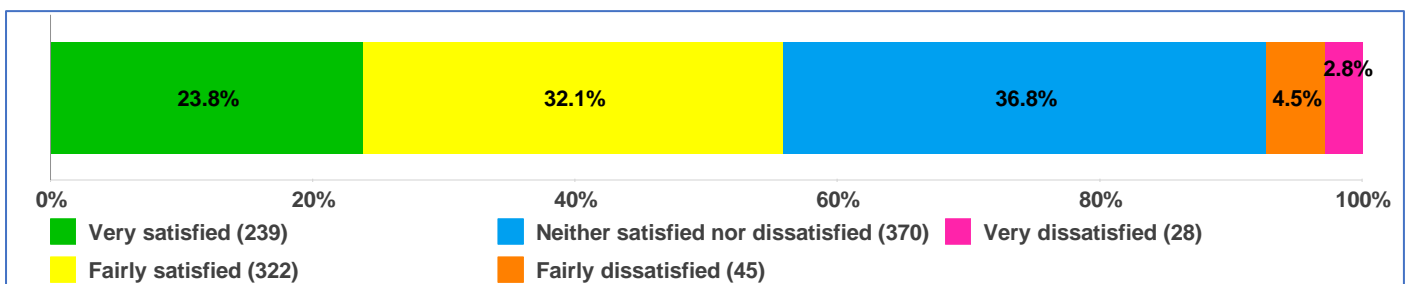


The following groups had the greatest proportion that answered negatively when asked how they felt about Mote Park:

- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 6.3%
- Respondents with a disability – 7.7%

MOTE PARK OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

- There were 2,792 responses to the question about satisfaction with the Mote Park Outdoor Adventure, including 1,788 'don't know/never used' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was 'neither agree nor disagree' with 370 answering this way.
- Overall, 55.9% of respondents said they were satisfied with Mote Park Outdoor Adventure.

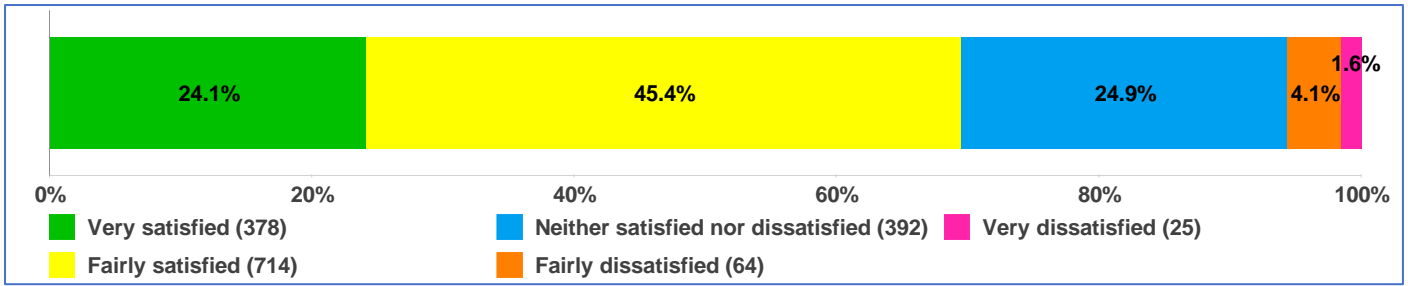


The following groups had the greatest proportion that answered negatively when asked how they felt about their local area as place to live:

- Economically inactive respondents – 13.2%
- Respondents with a disability – 13.3%

COBTREE PARK

- There were 2,814 responses to the question about satisfaction with Cobtree Park, including 1,242 'don't know/never used' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- Overall, 69.4% of respondents said they were satisfied with Cobtree Park.
- The most common response was 'fairly satisfied' with 714 answering this way.



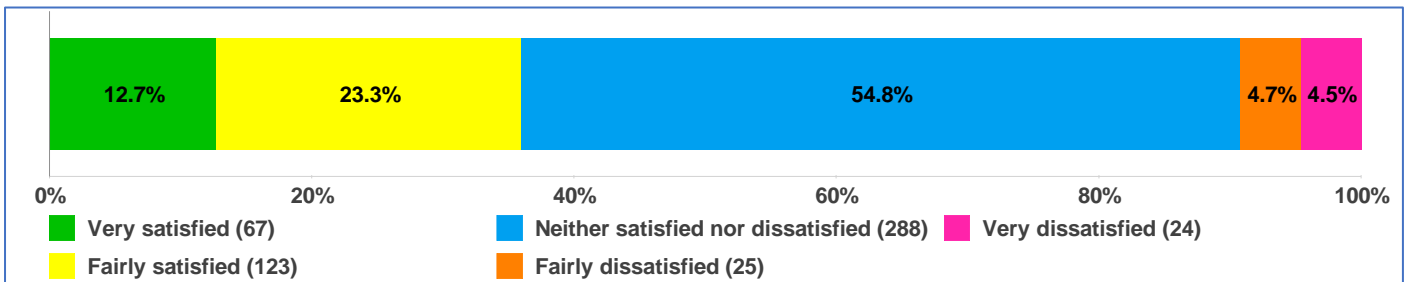
There were no significant differences between demographic groups in the proportions responding negatively to this question.

The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered positively when asked how they felt about Cobtree Park:

- Economically active respondents – 72.3%
- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 78.3%
- Female respondents – 73.6%

COBTREE GOLF COURSE

- There were 2,789 responses to the question about satisfaction with Cobtree Golf Course, including 2,263 'don't know/never used' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- Overall, 36.0% of respondents said they were satisfied with Cobtree Golf Course Park.
- The most common response was 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' with 288 answering this way.



Respondents aged 18 to 34 years had a significantly lower proportion that answered positively at 43.5% compared to the age groups aged 45 years and over. Respondents aged 65 to 74 years had the greatest proportion that answered positively at 64.3%.

OTHER PARKS & OPEN SPACES IN THE BOROUGH

- There were 2,808 responses to the question about satisfaction with parks & open spaces in the borough, including 501 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was 'fairly satisfied' with 1,233 answering this way.
- Overall, 71.2% of respondents said they were satisfied with parks & open spaces in the borough.
- This represents a decrease of 6.9 percent points, compared to the 2022 Resident Survey, when 78.1% of respondents said they were satisfied with parks and open spaces in the borough.

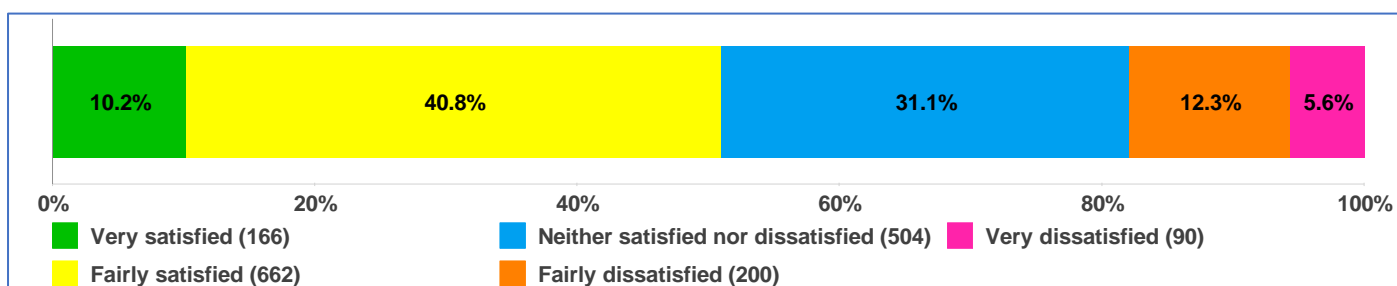


The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about Parks & Open Spaces in the borough:

- Economically active respondents – 7.6%
- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 8.9%
- Respondents from minority groups – 12.0%

MAIDSTONE LEISURE CENTRE

- There were 2,808 responses to the question about satisfaction with Maidstone Leisure Centre, including 1,185 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was 'fairly satisfied' with 662 answering this way.
- Overall, 51.0% of respondents said they were satisfied with Maidstone Leisure Centre.

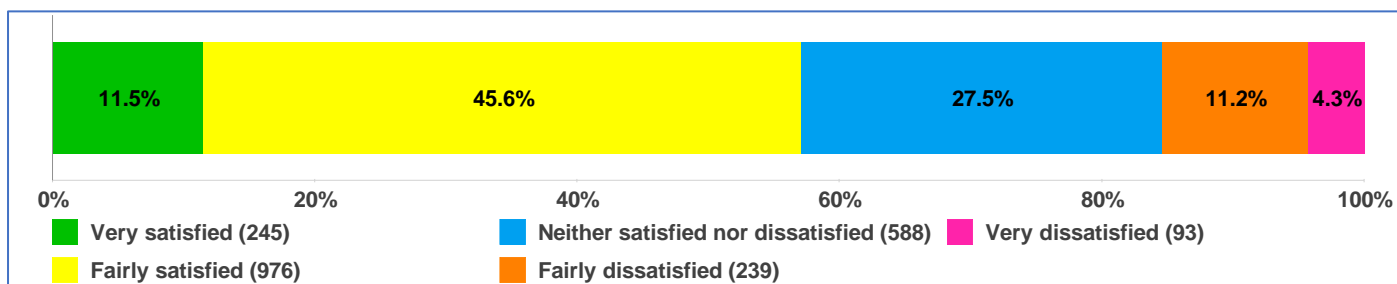


The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about Maidstone Leisure Centre:

- Economically active respondents – 19.4%
- Female respondents – 20.8%
- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 26.7%

LOCKMEADOW ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX

- There were 2,823 responses to the question about satisfaction with Maidstone Leisure Centre, including 683 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was 'fairly satisfied' with 976 answering this way.
- Overall, 57.0% of respondents said they were satisfied with Lockmeadow Entertainment Complex.



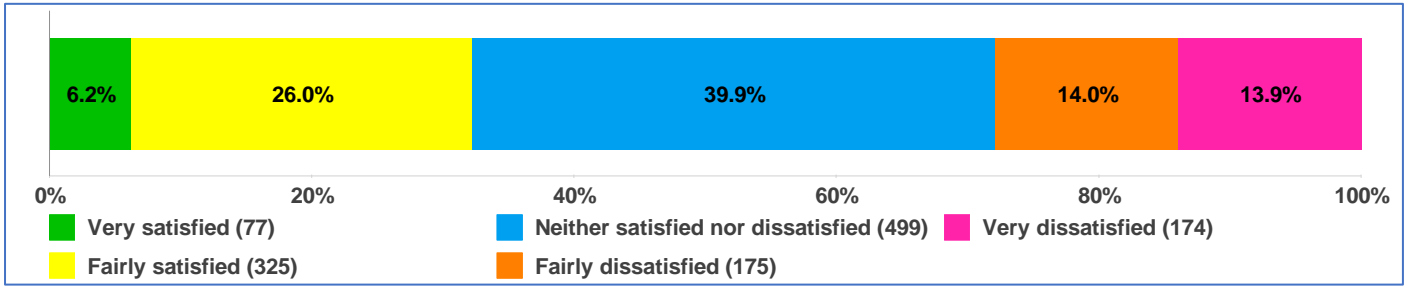
The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about Lockmeadow Entertainment Complex:

- Male respondents – 17.8%
- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years -18.3%

MAIDSTONE MARKET

- There were 2,809 responses to the question about satisfaction with Maidstone Market, including 1,558 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis below.

- The most common response was ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ with 499 answering this way.
- Overall, 32.2% of respondents said they were satisfied with Maidstone Market.

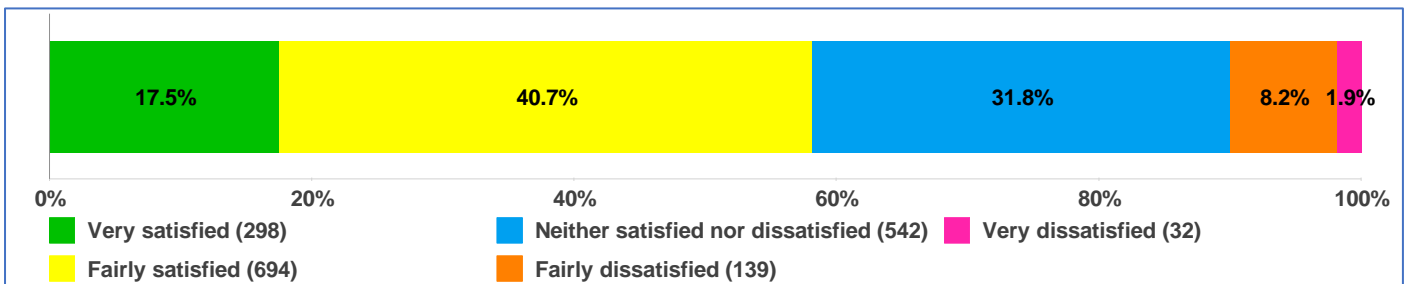


The following groups had the greatest proportion that answered negatively when asked how they felt about Maidstone Market:

- Female respondents – 31.1%
- Respondents aged 64 to 74 years – 35.8%

HAZLITT THEATRE & ARTS CENTRE

- There were 2,806 responses to the question about satisfaction with the Hazlitt Theatre & Arts Centre, including 1,100 ‘don’t know’ responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was ‘fairly satisfied’ with 694 answering this way.
- Overall, 58.2% of respondents said they were satisfied with the Hazlitt Theatre & Arts Centre.



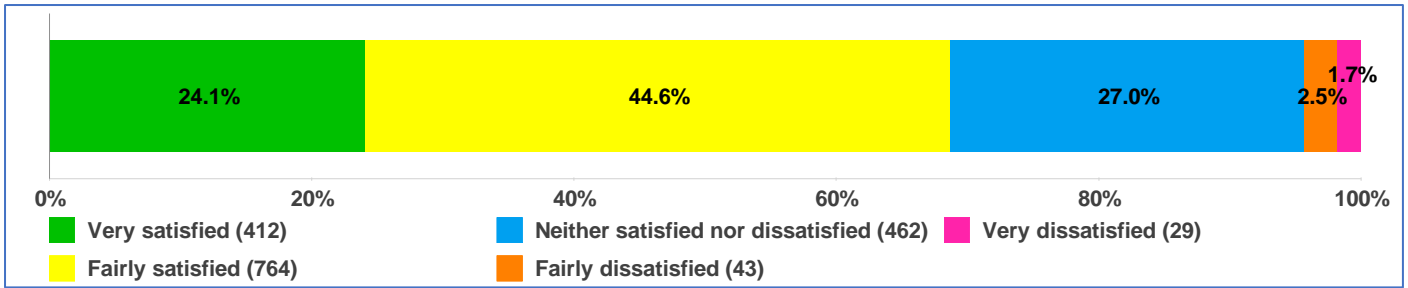
There were no significant differences between the proportions responding negatively across the demographic groups.

The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered positively when asked how they felt about the Hazlitt Theatre & Arts Centre, significantly so when compared to their comparative demographics:

- Female respondents – 60.6%
- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 66.7%
- Respondents without a disability – 60.2%

MAIDSTONE MUSEUMS

- There were 2,798 responses to the question about satisfaction with Maidstone Museums, including 1088 ‘don’t know’ responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was ‘fairly satisfied’ with 764 answering this way.
- Overall, 68.7% of respondents said they were satisfied with Maidstone Museums.
- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 59.1% were satisfied with Maidstone museums – therefore satisfaction has increased by 9.6 percent points.

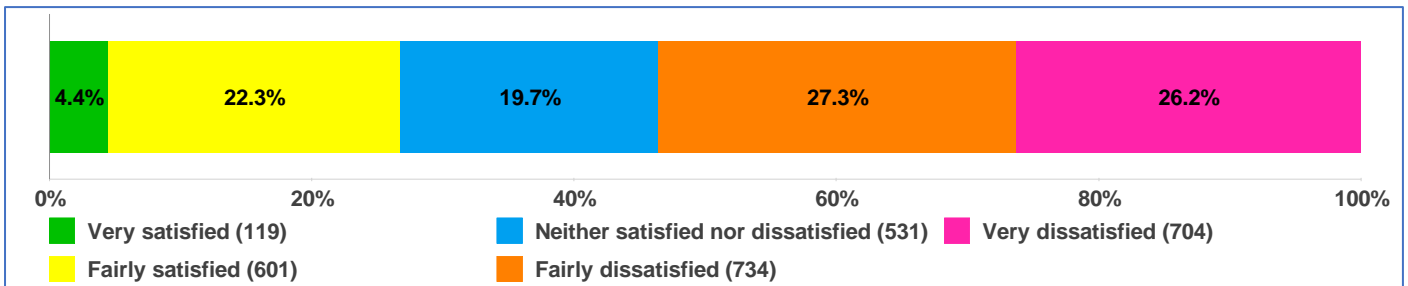


The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered positively when asked how they felt about the Maidstone Museums, significantly so when compared to their comparative demographic groups:

- Female respondents – 72.0%
- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 74.8%
- Respondents without a disability – 70.5%
- Respondents from white groups – 69.6%

MAIDSTONE TOWN CENTRE

- There were 2,828 responses to the question about satisfaction with Maidstone Town Centre, including 140 ‘don’t know’ responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was ‘fairly dissatisfied’ with 735 answering this way.
- Overall, 26.8% of respondents said they were satisfied with Maidstone Town Centre.

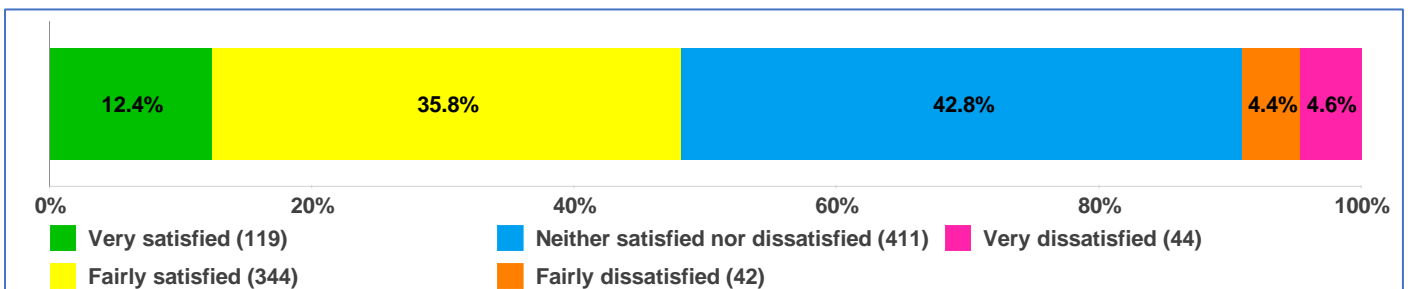


The following group had the greatest proportion that answered negatively when asked how they felt about the Maidstone Town Centre:

- Respondents aged 45 to 54 years – 59.4%

COUNCIL RUN EVENTS

- There were 2,814 responses to the question about satisfaction with council run events, including 1,854 ‘don’t know’ responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ with 411 answering this way.
- Overall, 48.2% of respondents said they were satisfied with council run events.



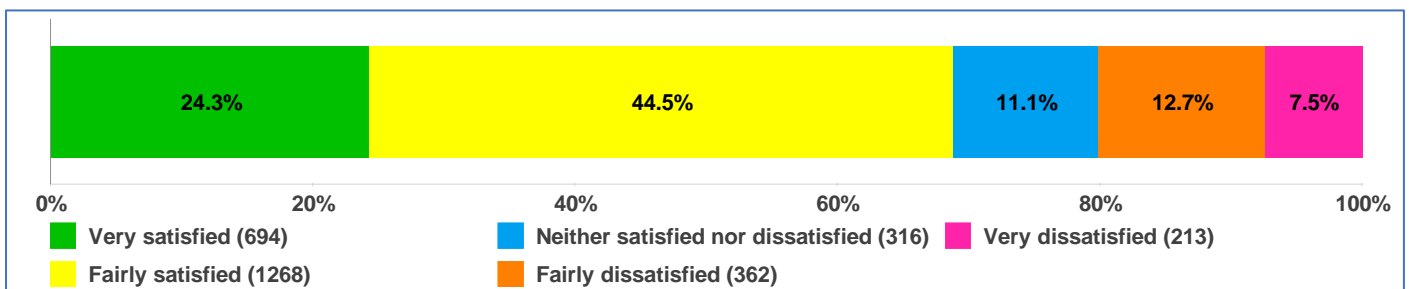
There were no significant differences between the proportions responding negatively across the demographic groups.

The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered positively when asked how they felt about the council run events:

- Female respondents – 57.9%
- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 58.5%
- Respondents from minority groups – 69.4%

GENERAL WASTE COLLECTION

- There were 2,864 responses to the question about satisfaction with general waste collection, including 12 ‘don’t know’ responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was ‘fairly satisfied’ with 1,268 answering this way.
- Overall, 68.8% of respondents said they were satisfied with general waste collections.
- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 85.7% were satisfied with waste collection – therefore satisfaction has declined by 16.9 percent points.

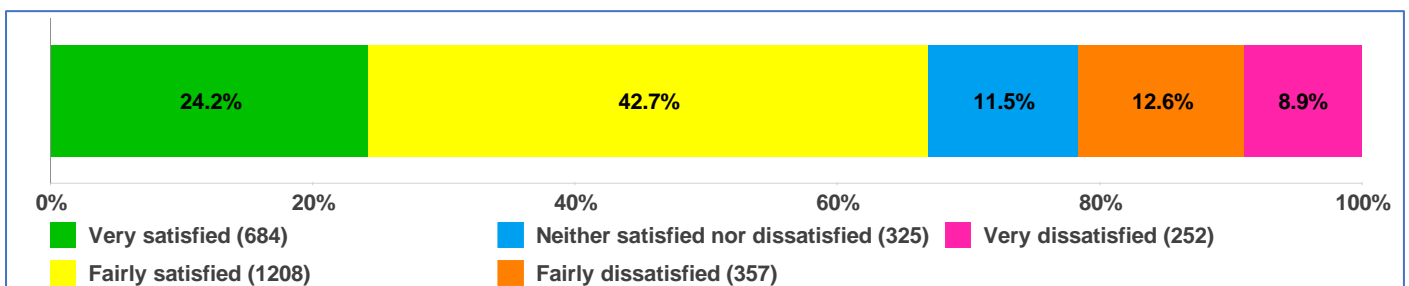


The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered positively when asked how they felt about general waste collections:

- Economically inactive respondents – 74.9%
- Respondents aged 64 to 74 years – 75.4%
- Respondents aged 75 years and over – 82.8%

RECYCLING COLLECTION

- There were 2,855 responses to the question about satisfaction with recycling collections, including 29 ‘don’t know’ responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was ‘fairly satisfied’ with 1,208 answering this way.
- Overall, 66.9% of respondents said they were satisfied with recycling collections.
- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 83.0% were satisfied with recycling collections – therefore satisfaction has declined by 16.1 percent points.

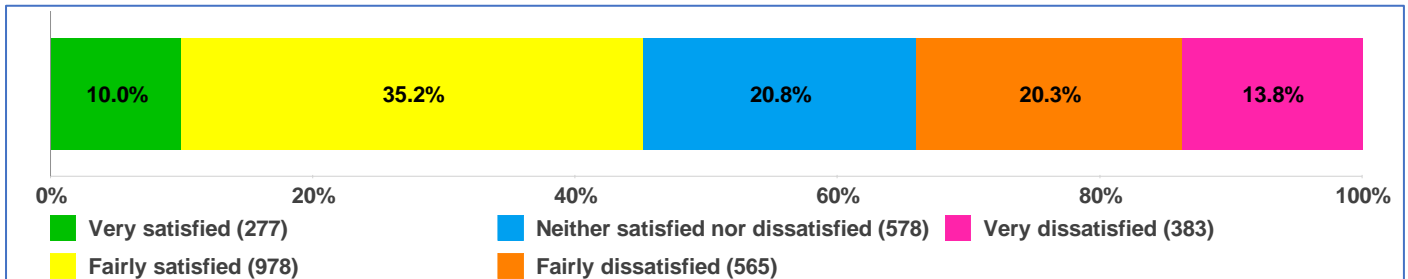


The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered positively when asked how they felt about recycling collections:

- Economically active respondents – 73.1%
- Respondents aged 64 to 74 years – 74.0%
- Respondents aged 75 years and over – 81.8%

STREET CLEANING

- There were 2,854 responses to the question about satisfaction with street cleaning, including 73 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was 'fairly satisfied' with 978 answering this way.
- Overall, 45.1% of respondents said they were satisfied with street cleaning and 34.1% of respondents were dissatisfied.
- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 58.0% were satisfied with street cleaning – therefore satisfaction has declined by 12.9 percent points.

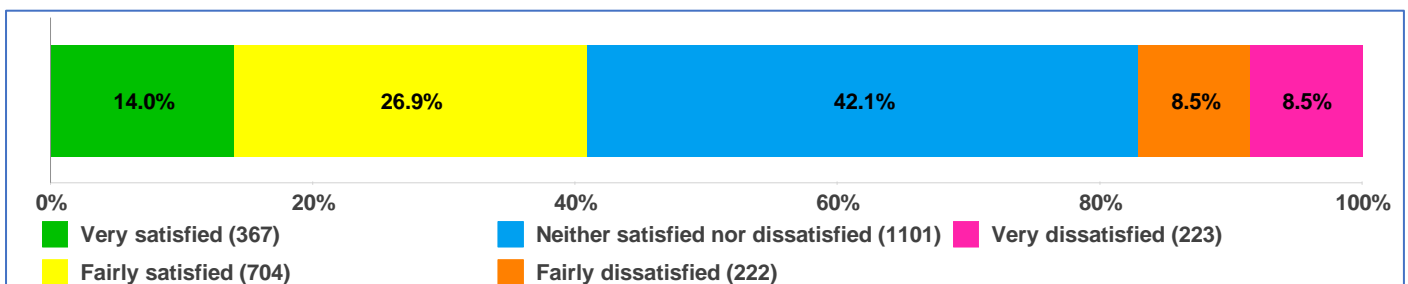


The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about street cleaning:

- Respondents aged 65 to 74 years – 39.2%

COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION

- There were 2,853 responses to the question about satisfaction with Council Tax collection, including 234 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' with 1,101 answering this way.
- Overall, 40.9% of respondents said they were satisfied with Council Tax collection and 17.0% were dissatisfied.
- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 54.3% were satisfied with Council Tax collection – therefore satisfaction has declined by 13.4 percent points.



The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about Council Tax collection:

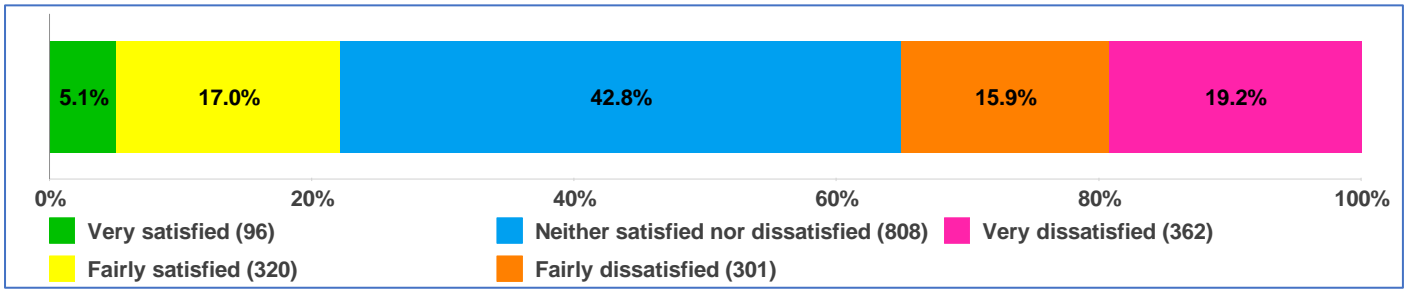
- Economically active respondents – 19.5%
- Respondents with a disability – 22.3%
- Respondents aged 18 to 34 years – 26.4%

The proportion responding negatively decreases as age increases.

PLANNING SERVICES

- There were 2,835 responses to the question about satisfaction with planning services, including 948 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.

- The most common response was ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ with 808 answering this way.
- Overall, 22.0% of respondents said they were satisfied with planning services and 35.1% said that they were dissatisfied.
- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 30.6% were satisfied with planning services – therefore satisfaction has declined by 8.6 per cent points.

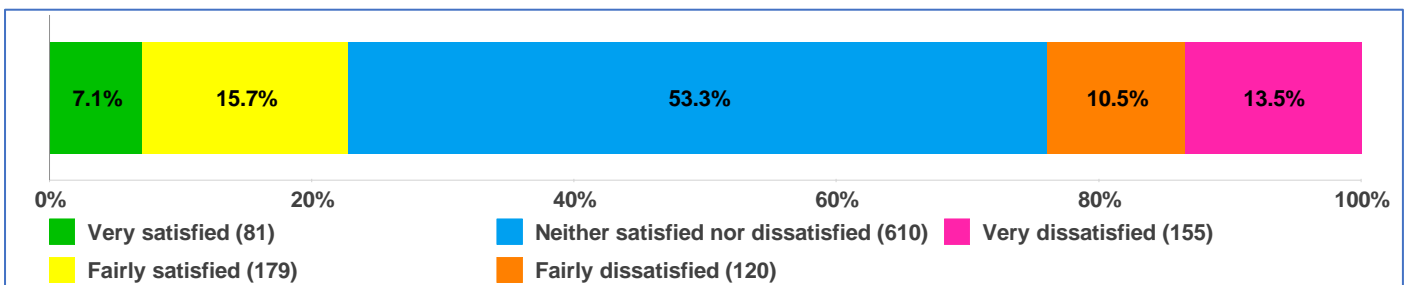


The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about Planning Services:

- Economically inactive respondents – 40.3%
- Respondents aged 65 to 74 years – 42.3%
- Respondents with a disability – 42.3%

BENEFITS

- There were 2,832 responses to the question about satisfaction with Benefits, including 1,688 ‘don’t know’ responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ with 610 answering this way.
- Overall, 22.7% of respondents said they were satisfied with Benefits and 24.0% said that they were dissatisfied.
- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 26.3% were satisfied with Benefits – therefore satisfaction has declined by 3.6 per cent points.



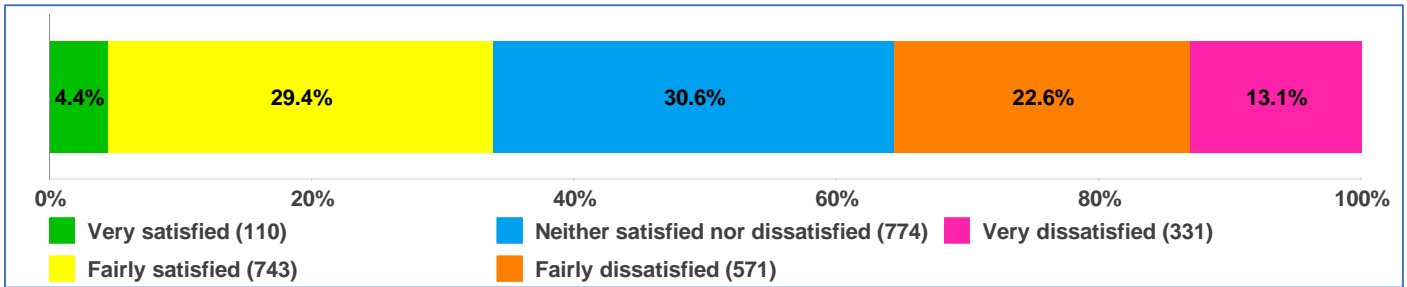
The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about Benefits:

- Respondents aged 18 to 34 years – 31.2%
- Respondents with a disability – 32.7%

CAR PARKS

- There were 2,808 responses to the question about satisfaction with Car Parks, including 278 ‘don’t know’ responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’ with 774 answering this way.
- Overall, 33.7% of respondents said they were satisfied with Car Parks and 35.7% said that they were dissatisfied.

- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 39.4% were satisfied with Car Parks – therefore satisfaction has declined by 5.7 percent points.

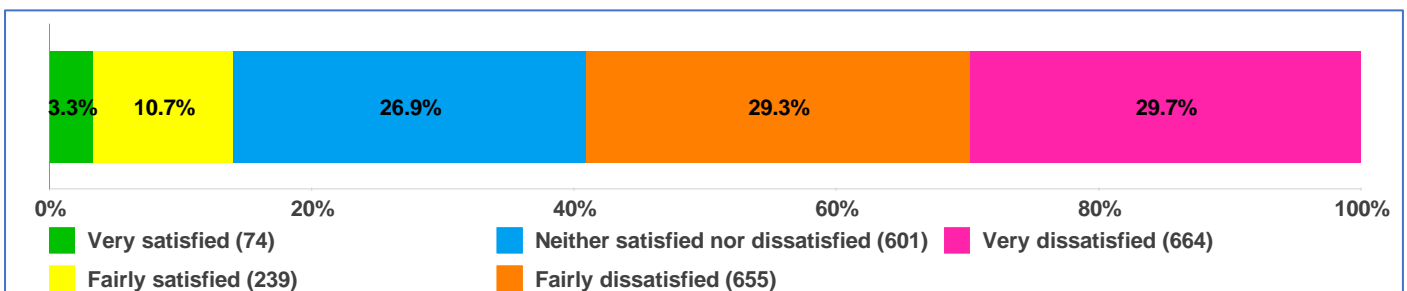


The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about Car Parks:

- Respondents with a disability – 39.9%
- Respondents from minority groups – 43.9%

AVAILABILITY OF ON-STREET PARKING IN THE TOWN CENTRE

- There were 2,848 responses to the question about satisfaction with the availability of on-street parking in the Town Centre, including 615 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was 'very dissatisfied' with 664 answering this way.
- Overall, 14.0% of respondents said they were satisfied with the availability of on-street parking in the Town Centre and 59.1% said that they were dissatisfied.
- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 22.9% were satisfied with the availability of on-street car parking – therefore satisfaction has declined by 8.9 percent points.

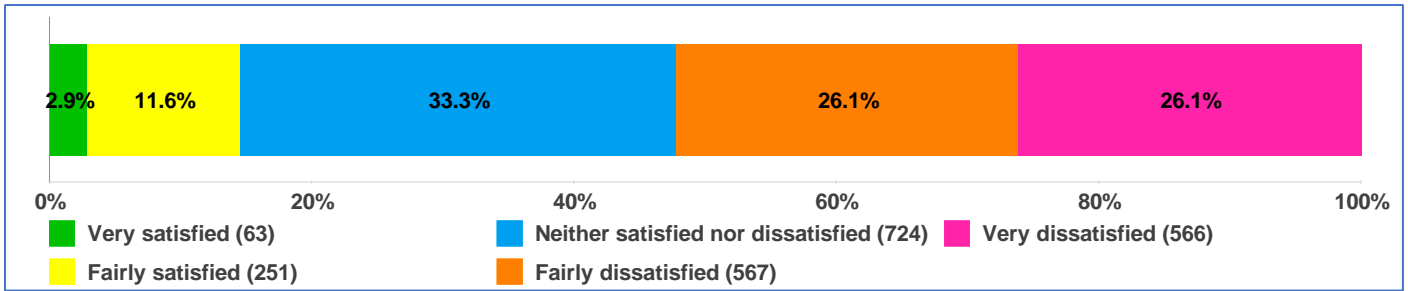


The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about the availability of on-street car parking:

- Female respondents – 61.3%
- Respondents with a disability – 63.7%

QUALITY OF ON-STREET PARKING IN THE TOWN CENTRE

- There were 2,834 responses to the question about satisfaction with the quality of on-street parking in the Town Centre, including 663 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' with 724 answering this way.
- Overall, 14.4% of respondents said they were satisfied with the availability of on-street parking in the Town Centre and 52.2% said that they were dissatisfied.
- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 22.1% were satisfied with the quality of on-street car parking– therefore satisfaction has declined by 7.7 percent points.

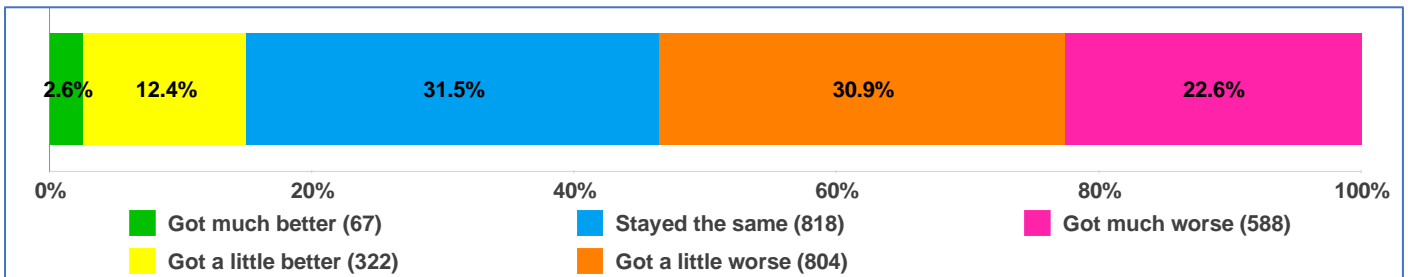


The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about the quality of on-street car parking:

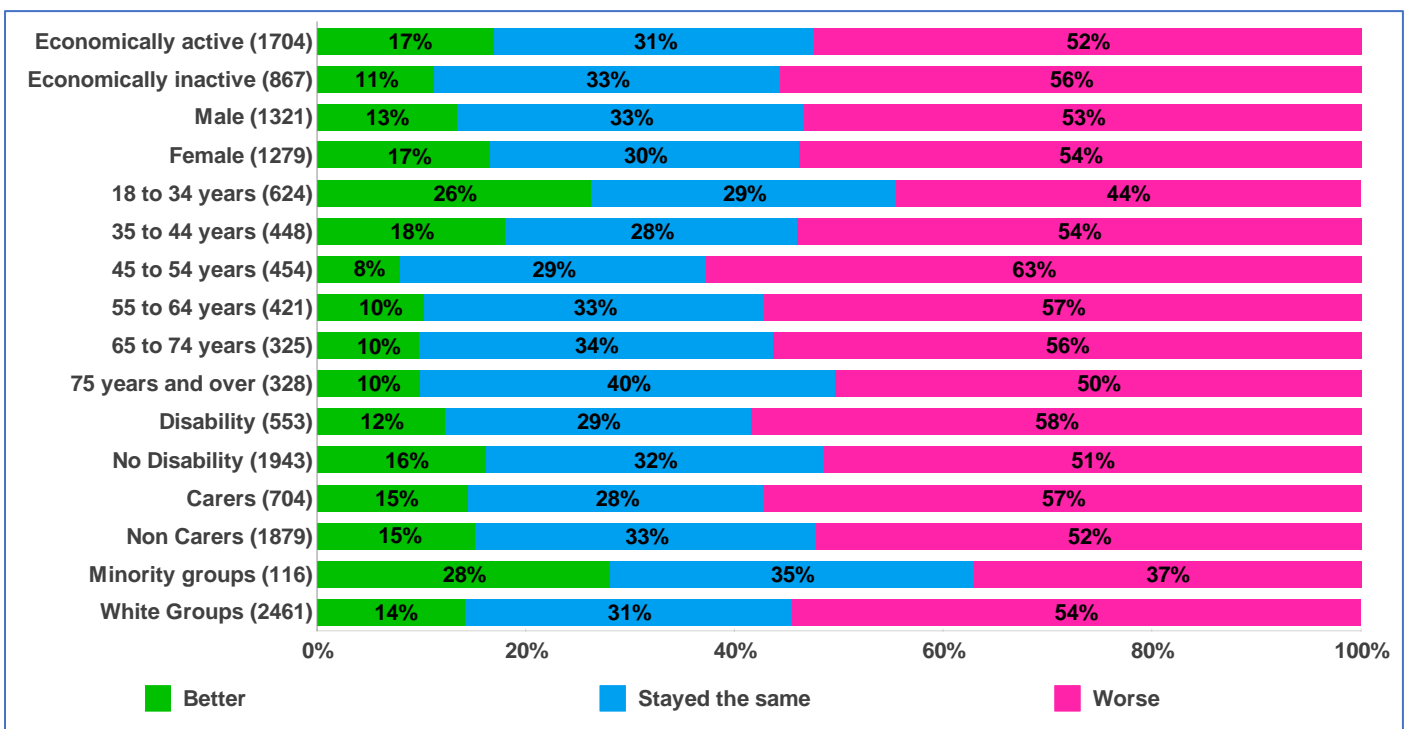
- Female respondents – 55.4%
- Respondents with a disability – 56.2%

SERVICE QUALITY CHANGE

- There were 2,860 responses to the question about how the services have changed over the last five years, including 260 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' with 818 answering this way.
- Overall, 15.0% of respondents said that council services have gotten better in the last 5 years, and 53.6% said they had gotten worse.



DEMOGRAPHICS



The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively:

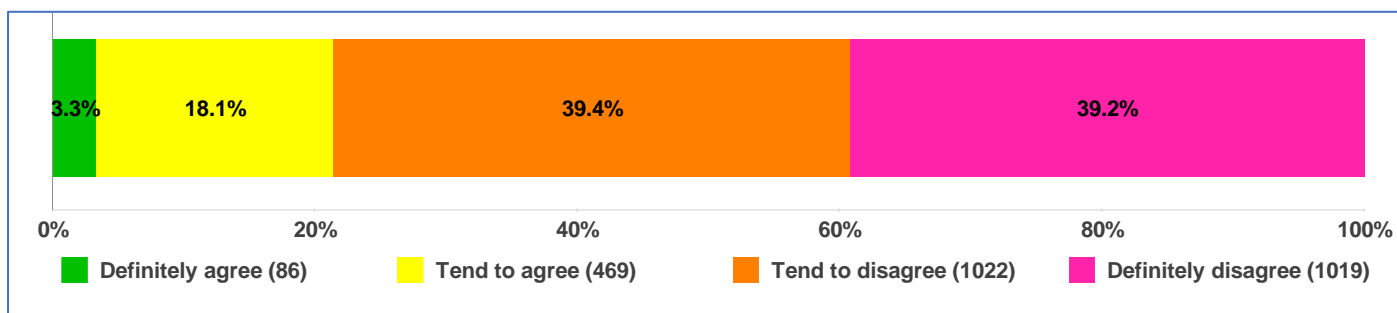
- Respondents aged 45 to 54 years – 62.7%
- Respondents with a disability – 58.4%

PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT

INFLUENCING DECISIONS

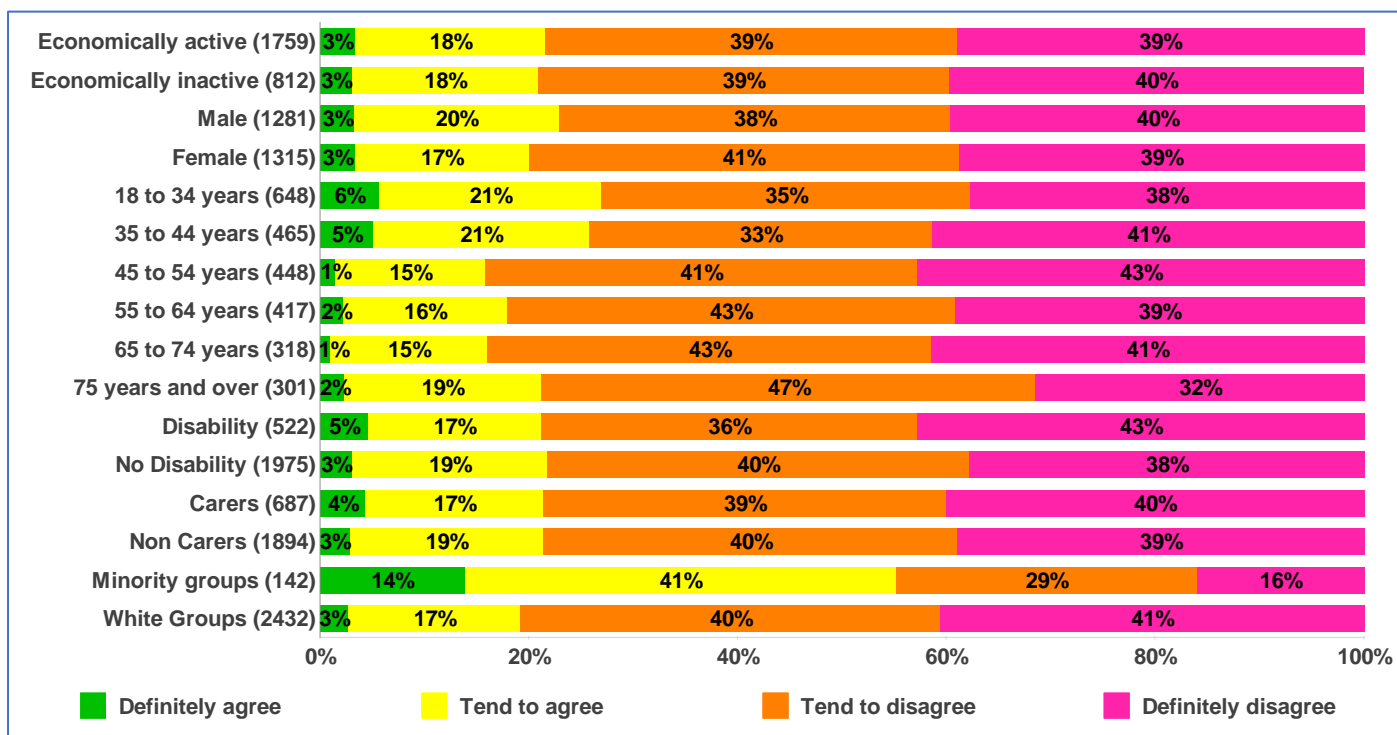
The survey asked ‘to what extent do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?’.

- There were 2,841 responses to the question about ability to influence decisions affecting their local area, including 245 ‘don’t know’ responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was ‘tend to disagree’ with 1,022 answering this way.
- Overall, 21.4% of respondents agreed that they could influence decision in their local area, and 78.6% disagreed.
- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 25.1% answered positively – therefore since 2022 the proportion feeling they can influence decision in their local area has declined by 3.7 percent points.



DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

The table below shows the response across the demographic groups.



The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when asked how they felt about influencing decisions:

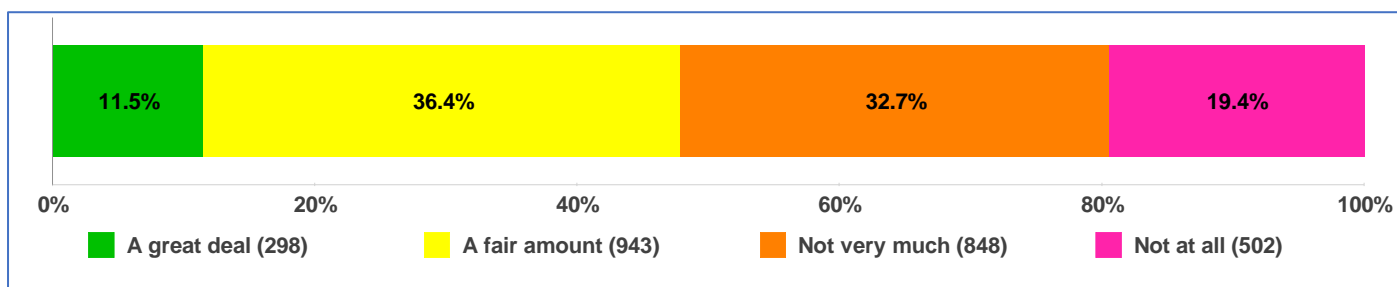
- Respondents aged 45 to 54 years – 84.1%
- Respondents aged 65 to 74 years – 83.9%
- Respondents from white groups– 80.8%

Respondents from minority groups had the greatest proportion that agreed at 55.2%.

YOUR LOCAL COUNCILLORS

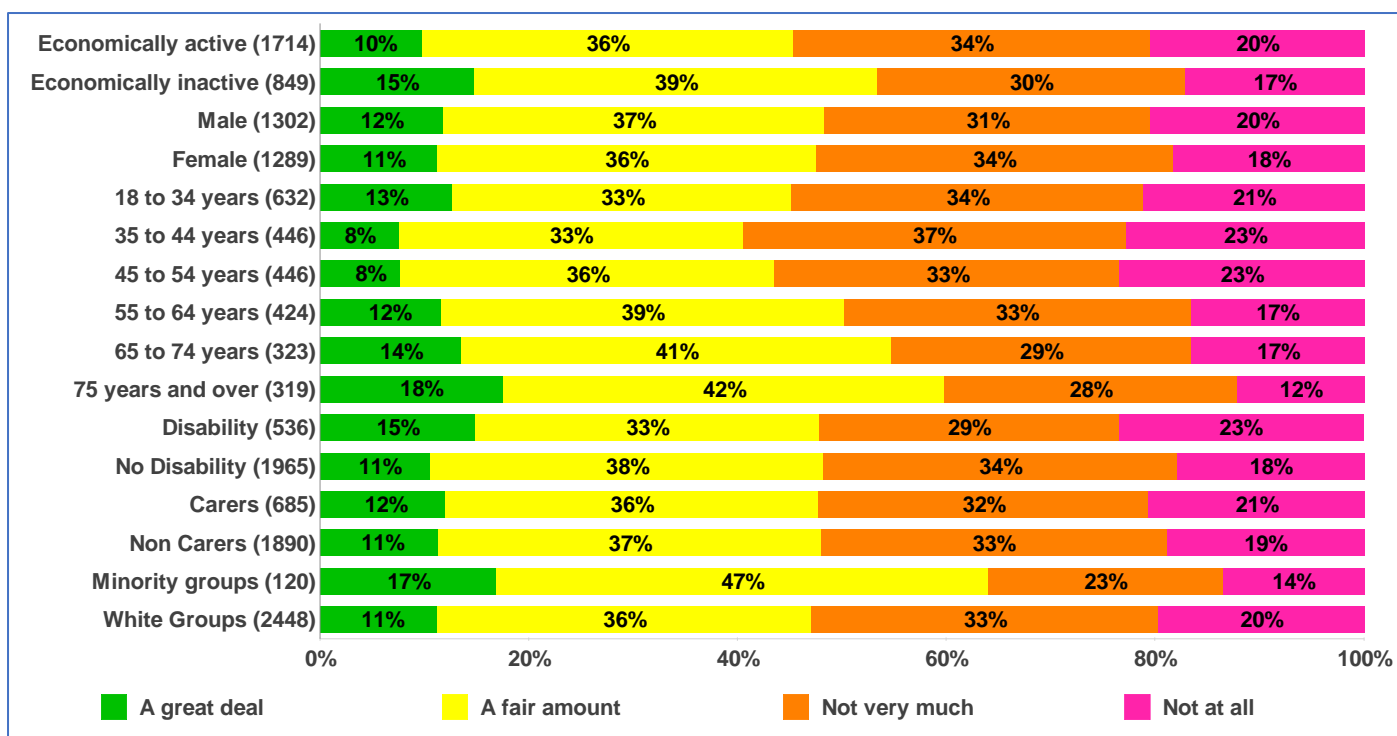
The survey asked respondents how much they trusted local councillors to act in the best interest of people in their local area.

- There were 2,835 responses to this question, including 244 ‘don’t know’ responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was ‘a fair amount’ with 943 answering this way.
- Overall, 47.9% of respondents were positive ‘a great deal’ and ‘a fair amount’ responses combined.



DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

The table below shows the response across the demographic groups.



The following group had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when considering how much they trust local Councillors:

- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 59.5%

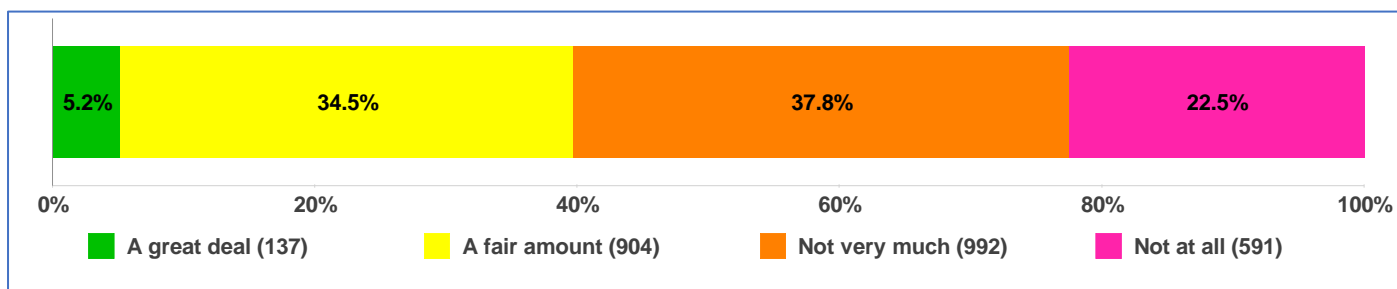
The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered positively when considering how much they trust local Councillors:

- Respondents aged 65 to 74 years -54.6%
- Respondents aged 75 years and over – 59.8%
- Respondents from minority groups – 64.0%

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

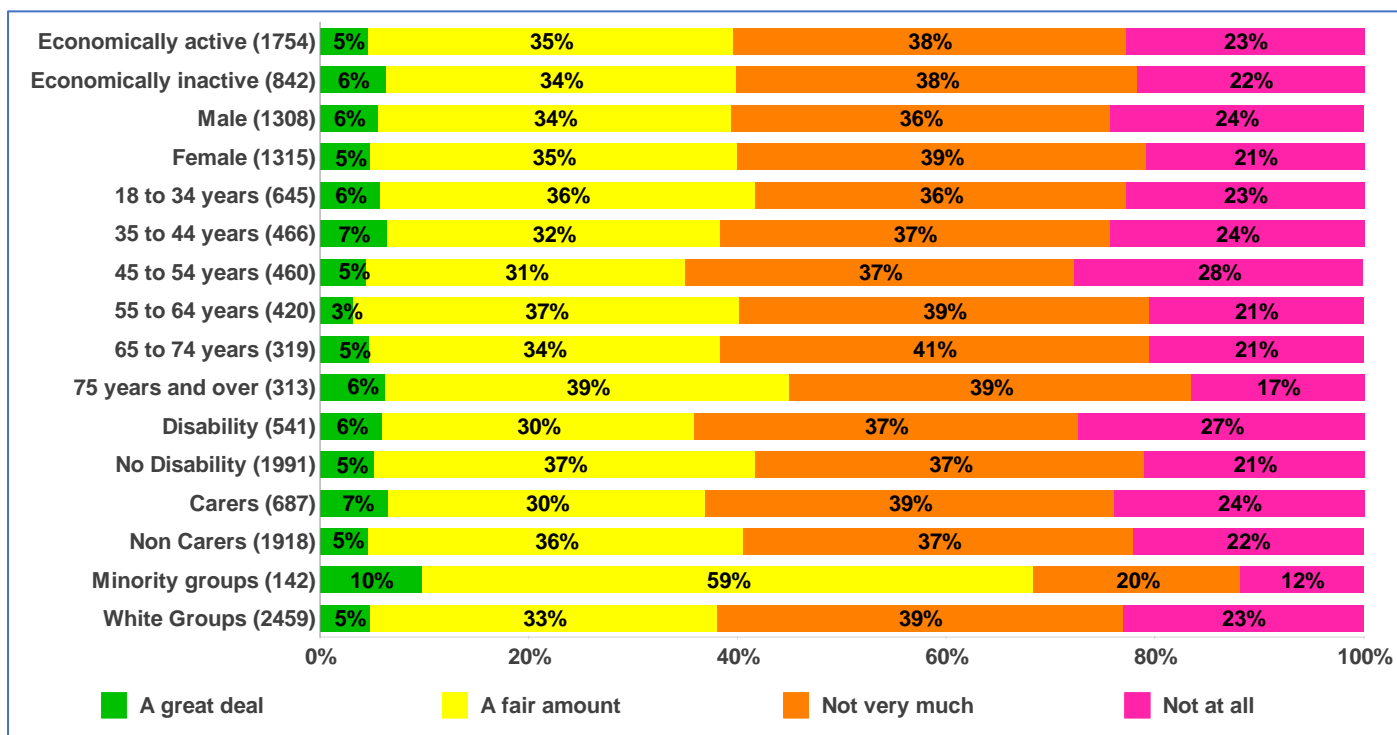
The survey asked respondents how much they trusted MBC to act in the best interest of people in their local area.

- There were 2,844 responses to this question, including 221 ‘don’t know’ responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was ‘not very much’ with 992 answering this way.
- Overall, 39.7% of respondents were positive (‘a great deal’ and ‘a fair amount’ responses combined).



DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

The table below shows the response across the demographic groups.



The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively when considering how much they trust Maidstone Borough Council:

- Respondents aged 45 to 54 years – 64.9%
- Respondents with a disability – 64.3%

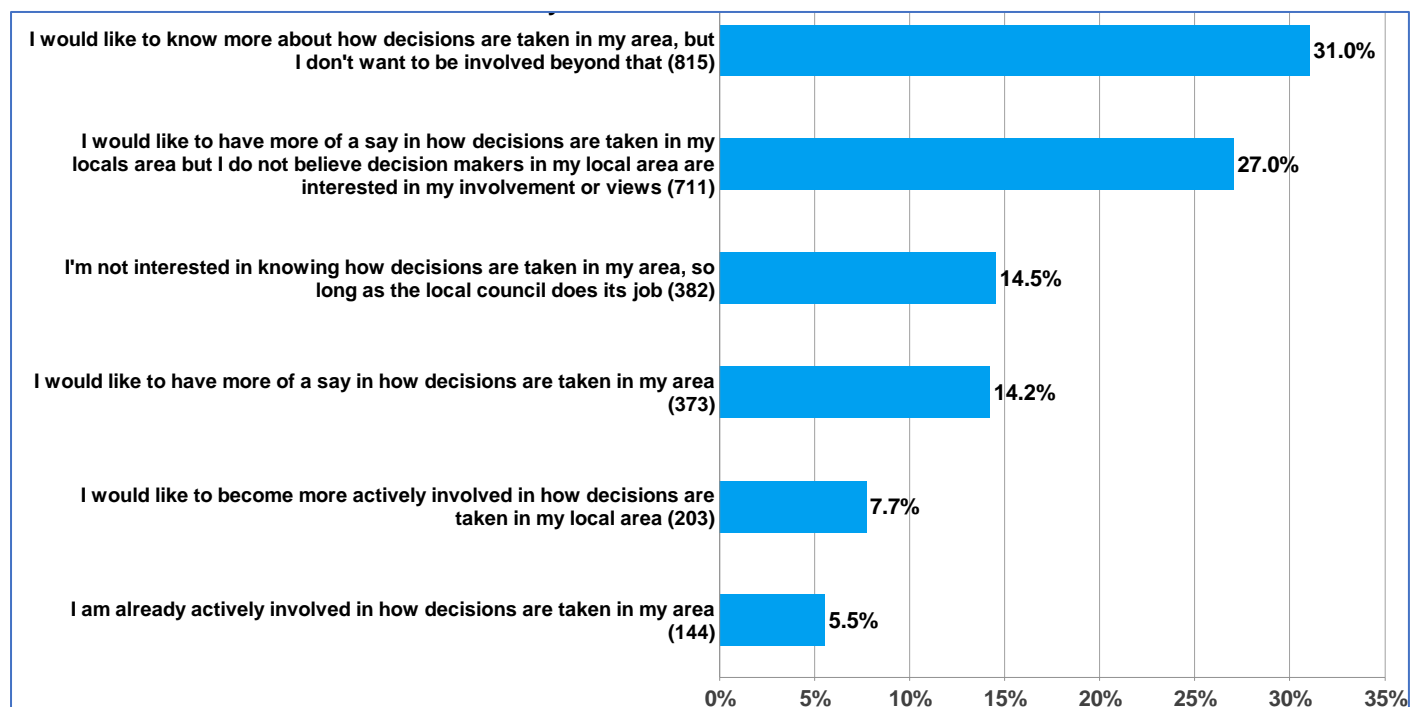
The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered positively when considering how much they trust Maidstone Borough Council:

- Respondents aged 75 years and over -45.0%
- Respondents from minority groups – 68.5%

PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

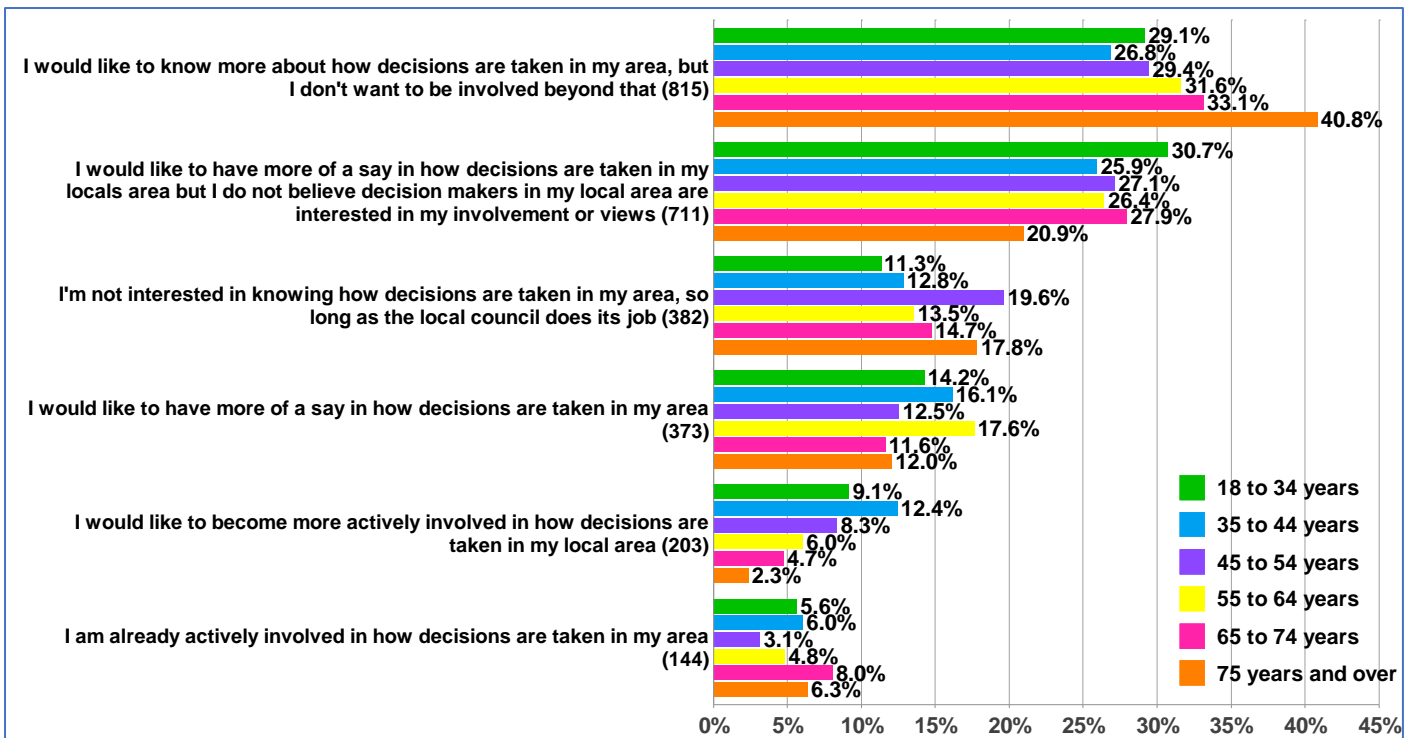
Respondents were asked to select which statement was closest to their own views about how the Council makes decisions about public services in their area.

- There were 2,854 responses to the question about views of involvement in decision making, including 225 'don't know' responses, which are excluded from the analysis.
- The most common response was 'I would like to know more about how decisions are taken in my area, but I don't want to be involved beyond that' with 815 answering this way.
- Overall, 5.5% of respondents said they were already actively involved in how decisions are taken in their local area.
- Overall, 48.9% of respondents said they would like more say in decision making.
- 31.0% said they would like to know more about how decisions are taken but didn't want to be involved.
- 14.5% of respondents said they were not interested in knowing how decisions are taken in my local area.



DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

The table below show the demographic difference across the age groups.



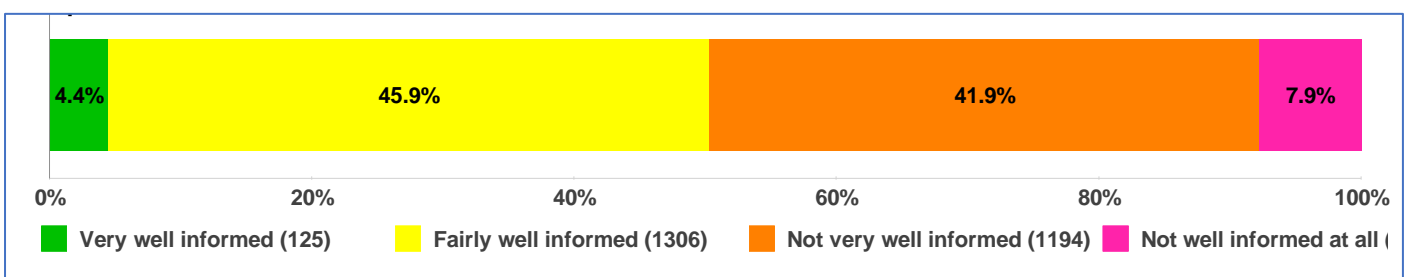
- The 45 to 54 years group had the greatest proportion that said they were not interested in knowing how decisions are made, as long as the Council does its job at 19.6%.
- The 65 to 74 years had the greatest proportion of respondents already actively involved in how decisions are taken in their local area at 8.0%.
- Respondents aged 75 years and over and female respondents had the greatest proportions that said they would like more information about decision making but didn't want to be involved any further at 40.8% and 35.2% respectively.

The following groups had the greatest proportions that said they were interested in having more of say in decisions impacting their local area:

- Male respondents – 54.4%
- Respondents aged 35 to 44 years – 54.4%
- Minority group respondents – 61.5%

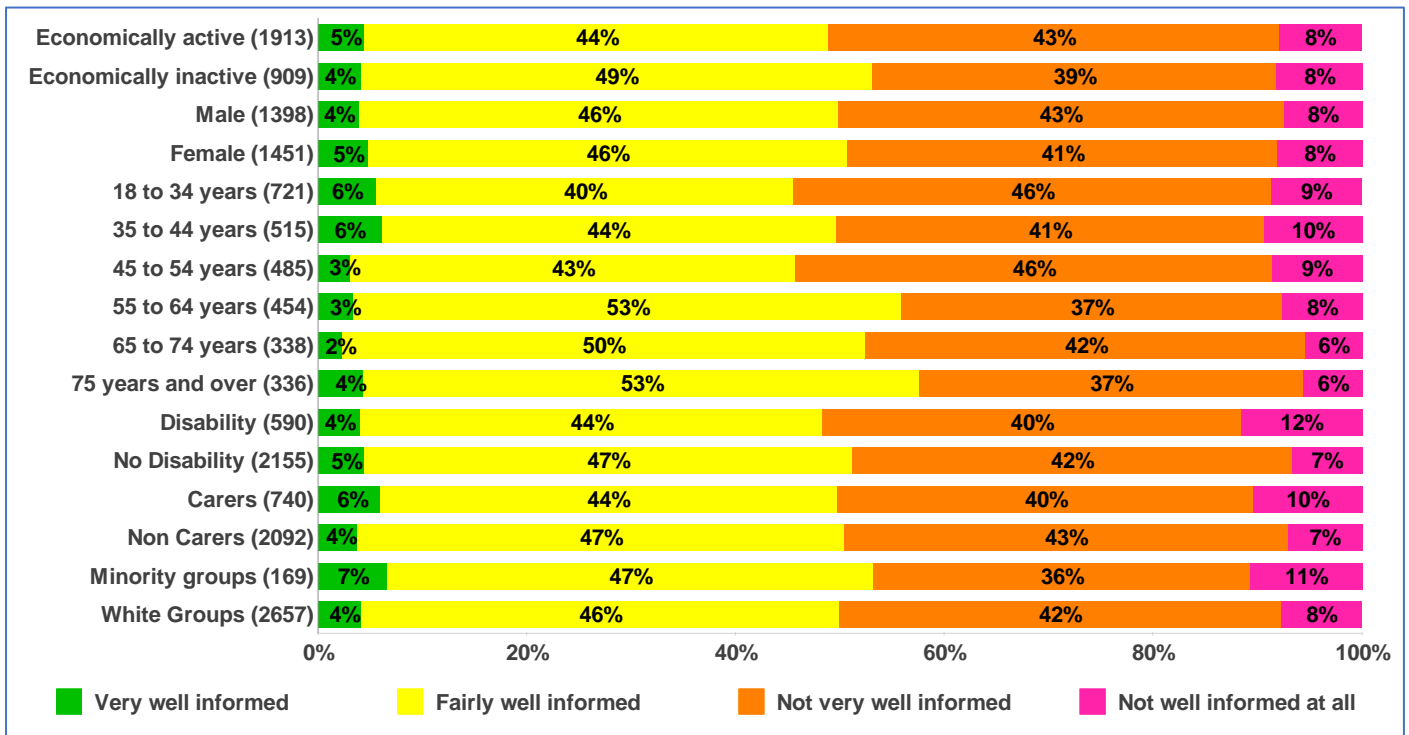
HOW WELL INFORMED

- There were 2,849 responses to the question asking how well-informed people feel the MBC keeps them about services and benefits.
- The most common response was 'fairly well informed' with 1,306 answering this way.
- Overall, 50.2% of respondents were positive ('very well informed' and 'fairly well informed' responses combined), and 49.8% were negative ('not very well informed' and 'not well informed at all' responses combined).
- In previous Resident Survey (2022), 58.9% said they felt very or fairly well informed – therefore satisfaction has declined by 8.7 percent points.



DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

The table below shows the response across the demographic groups.

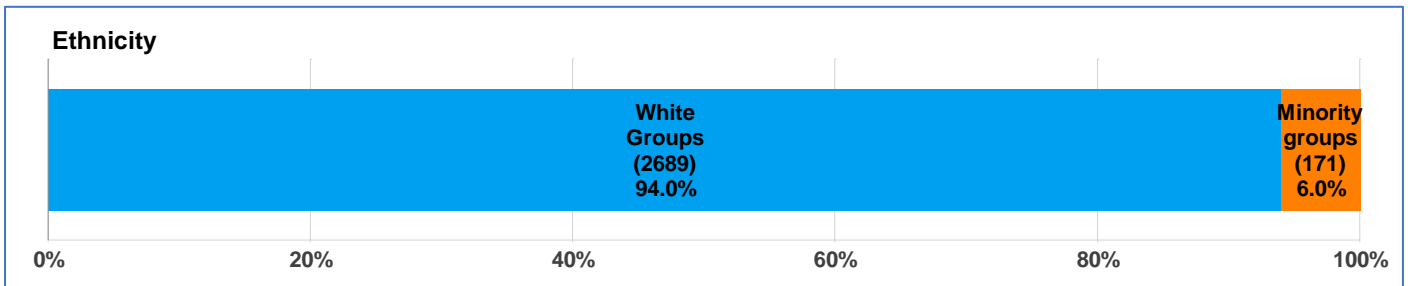
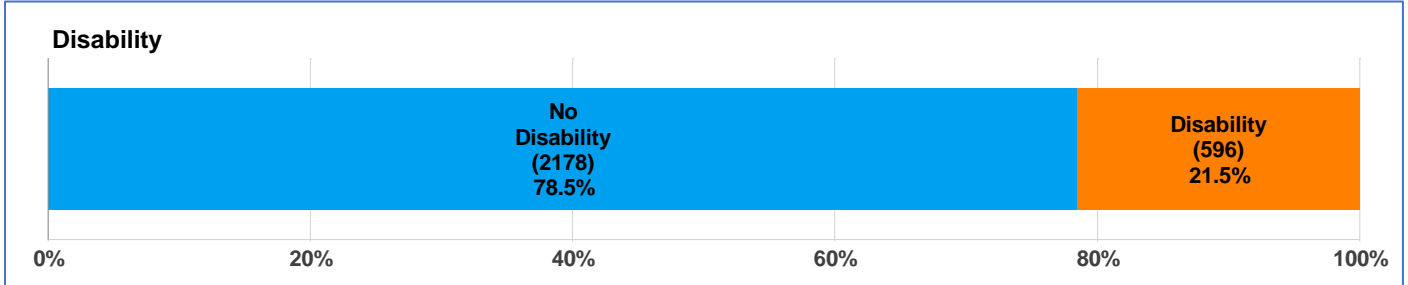
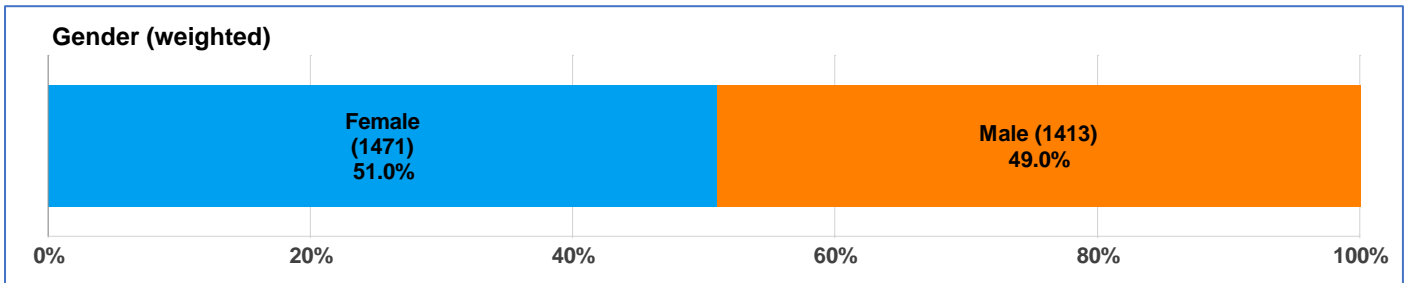
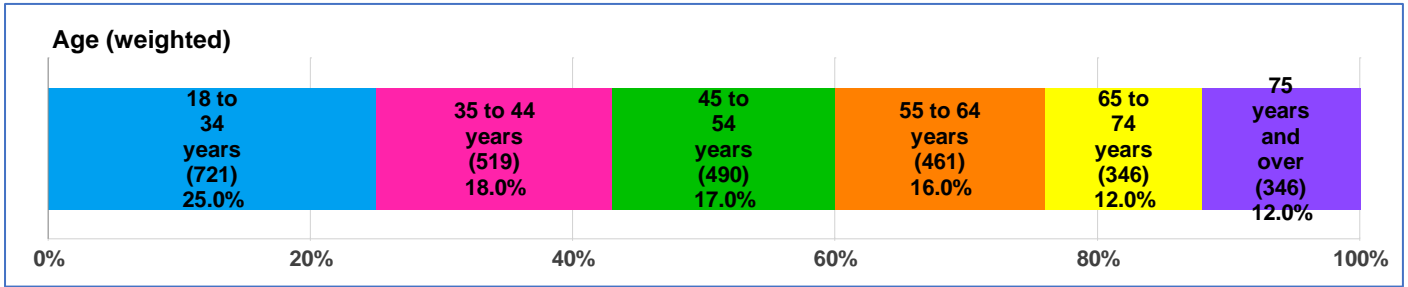
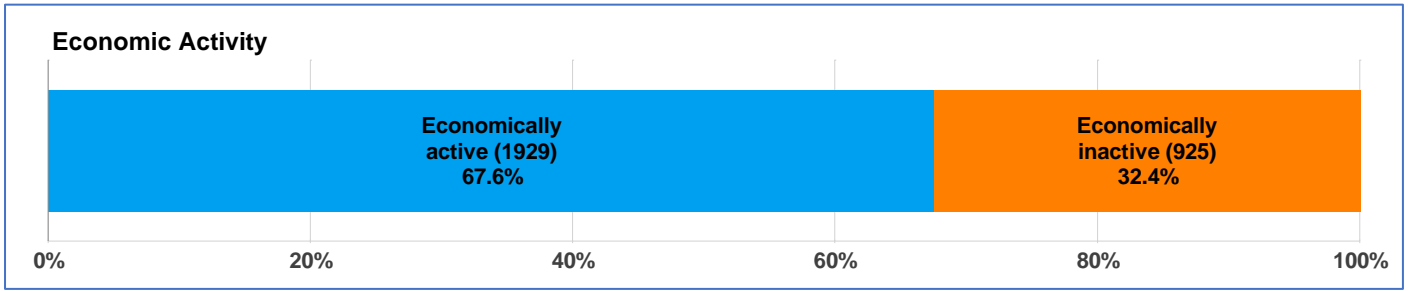


The following groups had the greatest proportions that answered negatively:

- Respondents aged 18 to 34 years – 54.4%
- Respondents aged 45 to 54 years – 54.3%

Respondents from aged 75 years and over had the greatest proportion that answered positively at 57.7%.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS



BIG QUESTIONS ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Maidstone Borough Council Officers hosted 14 engagement events across the borough to promote the Resident Survey 2024. At these events we asked our big questions:

- I love where I live because...
- My biggest worry right now is...
- My hope for my local area for the next five years is...
- What would you change about Maidstone?

These questions were replicated as online engagement activity on Let's Talk Maidstone. There was also the opportunity (online and in person) to provide additional comments about the Council, its services and living in Maidstone.

I LOVE WHERE I LIVE BECAUSE...

The survey provided respondents with a free text box to explain why they love living in Maidstone. These comments have been categorised into themes in the table below. Some comments may span more than one theme. The top four themes with examples are shown.

The most common theme was Parks and Open Spaces. This includes positive sentiments about rivers, parks, nature reserves and other open spaces being easily accessible.

Theme	Examples
Parks and Open Spaces (92)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have access to a wide range of interesting and beautiful outdoor spaces including parks such as Mote Park, the paths along the river and the North Downs (to name just a few). I enjoy exploring the rich diversity of wildlife, plants and fungi these have to offer while being active outdoors. • I live by the river, which is well controlled by the weirs. It's full of beauty and wildlife. • I'm close to Mote Park and many nature reserves for walking my dogs. The nature reserves and parks are a treasure to have in a town centre. • I love the river, the outdoor spaces, and all of the events that are put on in the community throughout the year.
Community Support (86)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lovely area with excellent local councillors and a fabulous community spirit. • A good area, nice people, near Mote Park, low crime. • A friendly community with lots of clubs and activities going on. • It's rural, peaceful, un-stressful, my neighbours interact with each other, there are lots of local clubs where I feel supported.
Support Infrastructure (50)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have everything close, i.e., shops, doctors, Mote Park. • I am on a main bus route near my GP, dentist and shops. Lovely walks near a river. • Can reach shops, theatre and river with my mobility scooter. • There are good local shops and relatively easy access to large town leisure facilities.
Quiet & Safe (42)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's usually a quiet area where I feel safe at night (I live alone) so feeling safe at night is very important. • This area of Maidstone seems relatively safe and is reasonably quiet away from the main road. • We have good neighbours, live in a quiet residential road, good amenities within walking distance to the village shops, and feel safe in the community. • I feel safe, secure and surrounded by neighbours that I know and trust.

MY BIGGEST WORRY RIGHT NOW IS...

The survey provided respondents with a free text box to explain their biggest worry right now. These comments have been categorised into themes in the table below. Comments may span more than one theme. The top four themes with examples are shown below.

The most common theme was overdevelopment and infrastructure. Residents are concerned about housing development, lack of supporting infrastructure, and the impact on traffic congestion and green spaces.

Theme	Example
Overdevelopment and Support Infrastructure (124)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of new houses being built. Roads are at capacity in Maidstone, Doctors (GP) cannot cope, schools are overflowing. • The poor infrastructure (roads) made worse by too many new building developments without due consideration for long term issues (services including water, waste, electricity). • The catastrophic over development of the South East with little or no infrastructure provision – doctors, schools, dentists, leisure centres, roads, social activities... it's at breaking point. • Planning process and new legislation, leading to increased poor building, destruction of countryside and nature, overcrowding, too much demand in public services, roads blocked with traffic.
Crime and Policing (71)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety, particular at the junction of High Street, Gabriel's Hill and King Street. Gangs are collecting there and outside Coleman House, it is very intimidating, need more security there please. • Unsociable behaviour by council tenants placed in temporary housing nearby. Large groups of children/teenagers congregating in Maidstone, often near fast food outlets, behaving in a very unsociable manner, and intimidating people. • Influx of criminal activity and poor policing. • Crime – everywhere constantly smells of cannabis, there is a clear issue with widespread and unpoliced drug use, excessive alcoholism, homelessness and crime. Maidstone used to be a nice place to live but not anymore!
Roads and Traffic (69)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The traffic into town along the Ashford road is absolutely horrendous and yet the park and ride never started back up after Covid. • The traffic congestion in Maidstone is stifling the town and the town needs some sort of bypass to at least move the huge lorries from the town centre. • The road systems can't cope with the increased traffic caused by the massive housing programme. Clearly, the traffic congestion is getting worse every year as more and more houses are built. There does not seem to be a plan to counter this. A Maidstone by-pass is as much a distant pipe dream as it has been for the forty years I've lived in the area. • Traffic is worse than ever.
Decline of the Town Centre (33)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centre is becoming a slum town with huge amounts of very poor housing in former office blocks with no decent outdoor space. • We no longer visit the town centre because of the increase in crime, anti-social behaviour and poor-quality shops. • The state of Maidstone town centre – it used to be a smart stylist town, but this is not the case now. There are times where I do not feel as safe walking around as I use to. Also, the High Street, Week Street and Bank Street do not offer any pleasant retail shops anymore. Also, Upper and Lower Stone Street area is an eyesore. • We now boycott Maidstone town centre due to the feral children, underage vaping and illegal vaping shops that sell to underage children. There is little police presence or action. It is rapidly becoming a ghetto and a no-go area.

MY HOPE FOR MY LOCAL AREA FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS IS...

The survey provided respondents with a free text box to explain their hopes for their local area in the next five years. These comments have been categorised into themes in the table below. Comments may span more than one theme. The top five themes with examples are shown below.

The most common theme related to development and infrastructure. A significant portion of respondents hope for improved public transport and better road management, better planning for infrastructure alongside new developments, and protection of green space.

Theme	Example
Traffic, Roads & Sustainable Transport (45)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That something will be done about the traffic congestion and parking. Sometimes it can take an hour to do a 20 minute journey! • That traffic, especially HGVs, will be diverted away from main residential roads – A229, A20. • That it becomes less car-centred, with buses for people who can't always walk or cycle everywhere, and a culture shift to let school children travel independently. • That the gridlock of the roads to the south of the town is removed, possibly by the building of the Leeds Langley bypass first agreed in 1990.
Less Development (42)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A halt to house building. • No more building on agricultural land or areas of natural beauty and no more house building. • That someone will pay attention to the needs of people who already live here instead of just the people who want to make more money by building houses to move people in from outside. • That there will be no more infilling with housing and increase in industrial buildings, we are losing so much of our beautiful countryside that was on our door step, villages are losing their identities as villages.
Support Infrastructure (32)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That many of the current problems with infrastructure will get resolved and not be worsened by the never ceasing influx of new housing. • That more doctors, dentists and schools are provided to cope with the huge population increase in the area. • That the village will still have decent pubs, with a safe environment to enjoy our social time with friends and neighbours & that there are excellent support services for the community such as GPs, schools, public transport
Town Centre Regeneration (27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalise the town centre, more quality and independent shops. No more vape shops. • That we get more safety in the town centre, areas outside shops are cleaned and the county town gets its status back again. • The town centre needs to become more vibrant to encourage more shops and to retain the great selection of restaurants we already have. I think the River Medway is an underutilised asset for the town and needs to have investment to encourage waterfront cafes and bars and more events on the rivers. • The town centre attracts more shops, including independent retailers, the river area is developed with some nice cafes etc and the Hazlitt Theatre is given a makeover... compared to the Marlowe in Canterbury it's awful!
A Safer Maidstone (24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To feel completely safe walking around. Need a bigger police presence. • To become cleaner and less criminal damage and to feel safe walking alone. • Good policing so feel safe when visiting Maidstone town centre. Better facilities for teenagers and reduction in anti-social behaviour. • More visible pro-active rather than reactive policing, thus making for a safer town centre, particularly after dark and at weekends.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The survey provided respondents with a free text box to offer general comments. These comments have been categorised into themes in the table below. Comments may span more than one theme. The top three themes with examples are shown below.

Theme	Example
Council Services and Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questions about facilities didn't include public toilets. Having to walk too far to find one is a deterrent to walking on days when walking is painful. The number of bins in park especially quieter areas is limited. Would improve litter and dog poo facilities. Since the bin contractor changed service has gone down hill considerably. Bring back park and ride. The Borough Insight magazine is no longer available in Staplehurst would it be possible to have a supply available in Staplehurst library.
Feedback on the Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am shocked that this survey did not include anything about the state of the roads, road quality, traffic volume and the state of public transport. Your questions are so vague, it is impossible to answer most of them, so your survey is inaccurate. In the next survey, could you please have a section on our G.P services and health care, as well as a section on what residents of Maidstone would like to see restored that have been taken from us, e.g., public toilets, 6 monthly large waste collections etc. Both the MBC and KCC websites require simplification, they are both unwieldy and unnecessarily complicated. I was almost put off completing this survey as it is very long and some questions I didn't even really understand. Some of the questions were also confusing like Q24. I think a more user friendly format or shorter survey would increase your response rate.
Development and Supporting Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please can you explain, when thousands of houses are being built on the Sutton Road who are all paying council tax, why you don't appear to be doing anything regarding the infrastructure to alleviate the horrendous traffic jams. As I stated earlier in this survey, there is far too much housing development in Maidstone an in particular the Allington area which has simply become unacceptable. There is far too much housing development in Maidstone, and whilst I appreciate new homes are needed a radical new think needs to be done on how its provided. We need good, low cost housing to help local people not damn great executive homes for people to move into from out of area.

WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE ABOUT MAIDSTONE

The engagement activities included a map-pinning exercise and a comment box to indicate what they would change about Maidstone. These comments have been categorised into themes in the table below. Comments may span more than one theme. The top four themes with examples are shown below.

Theme	Example
Traffic and Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install a speed camera on Malling Road, Teston with the junction of Liversy Street. Plains Avenue Loose Road junction is dangerous and impossible to exist and turn right into town. Install traffic light controlled pedestrian crossings in Hermitage Lane just beyond the station. Secondary exit from this staff car park at the hospital ONLY for use for those turnings towards Aylesford to try and help ease congestion faced by hospital staff.
Overdevelopment and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No new houses at Beacon Park, and Firmins Land etc. No more new developments! Enough building here please. More than done its bit to help provide much needed housing for our younger generations. Make this the last addition to 'skyscraper city'.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demolish all the new housing estates built in the last 5 years and restore back to green belt spaces.
Environmental Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River footpath keeps flooding next to new development, it never used to. • The hedges on Oakwood Road here have been trimmed a while back but are still very thick. The footpath, used by hundreds of schoolchildren, is covered by half and pushchairs struggle to get past. • Nettles are growing up again along Scrubbs Lange – need a weedkiller treatment and removal. • Generally around this area – less verge mowing, and perhaps add some low growing wildflower seed to the existing grass to encourage natural diversity.
Parks and Open Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we add a playground to this park? We would use it a lot if it had one. • Table tennis tables have been really positively used, can there be more across Maidstone? • Large open field. Could do with football goals/multisport area. Well used by local kids. • Could there be something installed in the park that's suitable for teens to do? Basketball court perhaps? The skate park is really tiny and suited to little kids so something more challenging would be great.

STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT & SURVEY

INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

The Council sought the views of local businesses and organisations so that they can be taken into account as it considers the Priorities for the next three years.

Local businesses and third sector voluntary and community organisations were invited to provide feedback on the priorities and the Council's economic development services.

The survey was open from 9 October to 6 November 2024.

A total of 57 responses were received to the survey.

The Economic Development Team also held two workshops for local businesses. They were asked open questions about how they felt about conducting their business in Maidstone and the challenges faced. There were 26 attendees across the two workshops.

Notes:

Not every respondent answered every question, therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed not to the survey overall. The number of responses for each question is shown in brackets on the charts.

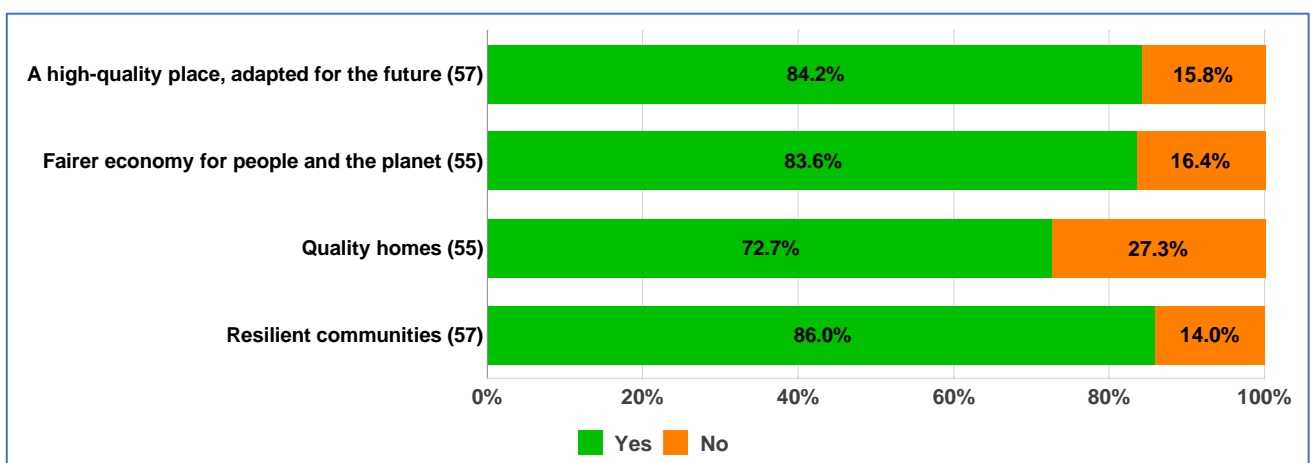
Rounding means that some charts may not add up to 100%.

Open questions were analysed using code frames and assigning each issue, or opportunity raised by respondents in their response, a code. The use of coding allows the same issue or opportunity raised by multiple respondents to be logged and categorised together within the coding frame, thereby, making it possible to quantify how many times the same or very similar issue or opportunity was made by respondents.

PRIORITIES

Respondents were presented with the four priorities and were asked if they were the correct areas of focus for MBC.

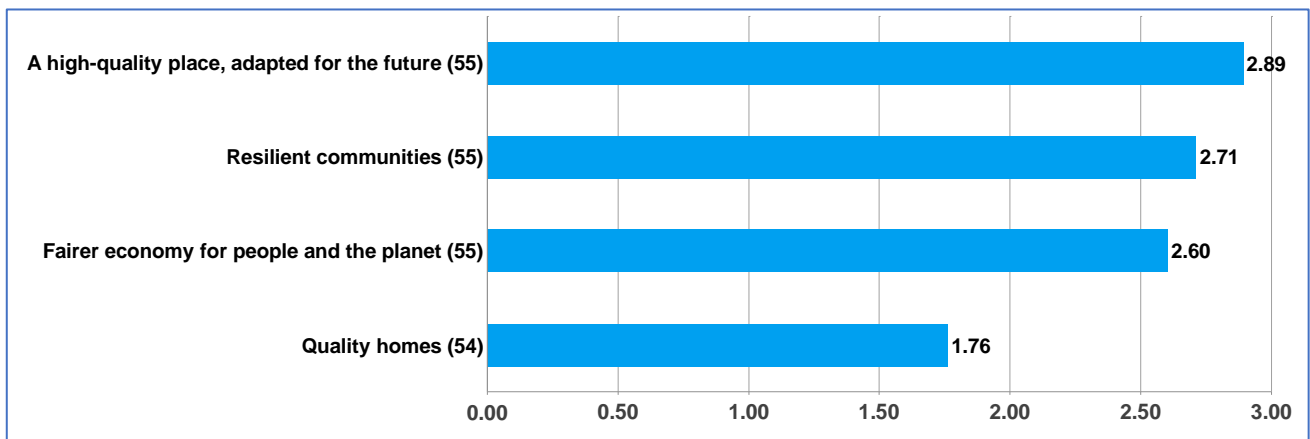
- Resilient Communities had the greatest proportion that said this was the correct priority for Maidstone Borough at 86.0%.
- Quality homes had the greatest proportion that said this was not the correct priority for Maidstone Borough at 27.3%.



Respondents were also asked to rank the priorities in order of importance to them.

- A total of 55 responses were received to this question.
- The top-ranking priority was 'a high quality place, adapted for the future'.

- The bottom ranking priority was 'quality homes'.
- The top and bottom ranked priorities are in the same positions (first and fourth) as was ranked by residents are part of the Resident Survey 2024.



COMMENTS ON CONTRIBUTING TO DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Respondents were asked: 'How do you think your Business/organisation may want to contribute to delivering these priorities'.

- At total of 46 comments were received.
- There were two respondents who answered that they were unsure what was meant by this question.
- The most common theme was respondents stating they provide some form of community support, including help for the homeless, mental health support and by providing or improving access to community services.

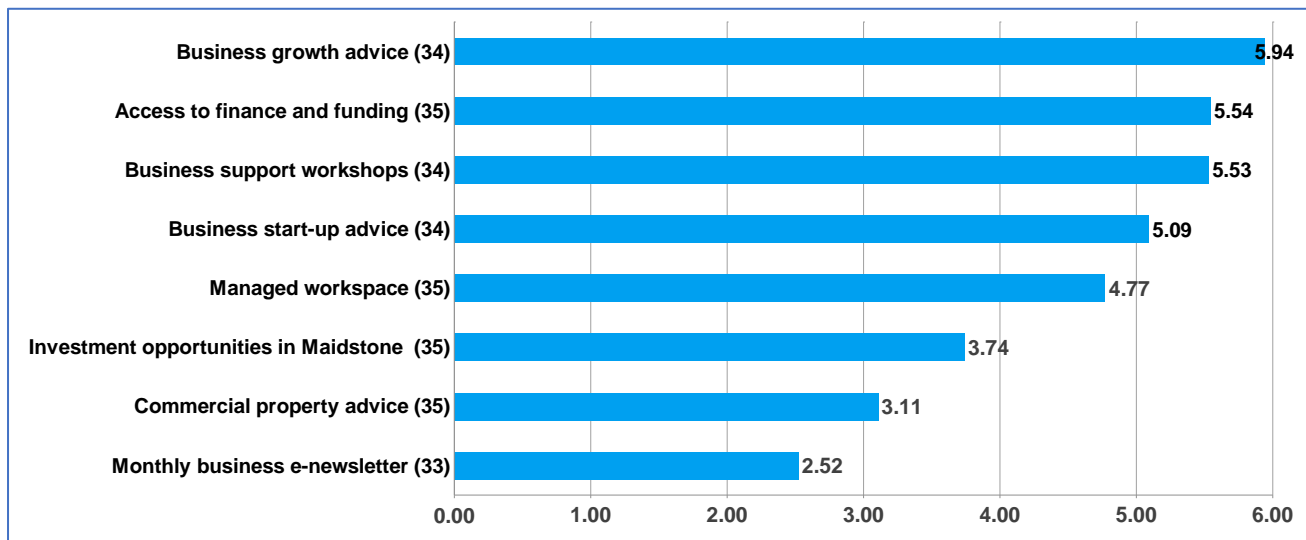
Theme	No.	Examples
Community Support	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide a place for the community to come together and support for those who need it. • I believe that my business is helping towards the 'resilient communities' goal because I am supporting people with their mental health by providing a private psychotherapy service. • We already do quite a lot to help improve the resilience of our community. We will continue to do this- but would like for this work to be recognised by the borough council (including financially) rather than being expected to take up the strain and plug the gaps at our own expense.
Other - Own Operations	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have been working on high quality developments in the borough and could assist with a more creative approach to placemaking, working with creative people to create more connected communities. Potentially co-creating artworks with artists and new communities. • Installation of Quality commercial heating / plumbing. • We work hard at environmental issues.
Other Comments	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not use weird terminology such as 'resilient communities', and don't ask leading questions such as "fairer economy for people and the planet" - what right-minded person doesn't want fairness?. • We would love to help with Place branding. We have such a vibrant city but I don't feel it is celebrated enough! • To be funded to offer the right support and interventions as and when needed.
Education & Skills	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are delivering quality qualifications and apprenticeships. • Education on health and well-being that is evidence based. • Provision skills to youth that promote creative uses of tech alongside development of key soft-skills.
Business Support	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting SME's in building strong business strategy to be profitable and thrive.

Theme	No.	Examples
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing high quality office and ancillary accommodation to enable a wide variety of businesses to thrive in the borough.
Jobs	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By being able to employ local people in a growing business. This requires fair charging for local services and a population who are available for work. So a vibrant local community and good public transport facilities as well as roads and parking that are fit for purpose. Providing jobs in high knowledge industry (medtech).
Traffic & Development Comment	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist by completing surveys and providing feedback on plans. The biggest issue really for us as a business that you have not touched on, is the traffic issues in Maidstone town centre which is cited as the number one reasons for our staff preferring to work from home, next is the awful Running Horse roundabout which our staff cite as a major safety concern. The new layout hasn't helped and traffic lights, which may result in delays but will provide safer use of the roundabout, is preferred. The other concern is feeling unsafe in Maidstone Town Centre, again contributing to our staff not wanting to attend the office.
Feedback & Collaboration	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working closer with MBC.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES

Respondents that identified themselves as being a business in Maidstone were asked to consider how important they felt the different types of business support provided by the Council's Economic Development Team were.

- A total of 35 responses were received to this question.
- The most important business support service was 'business growth advice'.
- The least important business support service was 'monthly business e-newsletter'



WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT BEING A BUSINESS/ORGANISATION IN MAIDSTONE?

Respondents were asked: 'What do you love about being a business/organisation in Maidstone?'

- At total of 59 comments were received. This included 12 comments from Business Workshops.
- The most common themes were location and accessibility.

Theme	No.	Examples
Location & Accessibility	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central location with generally good access. • Maidstone is easily accessible from other towns, particularly for drivers. There is a fairly diverse range of people to access my service. • Fairly central location that is (technically, without the traffic) easy to get to, just about some greenery and connection to the countryside left despite the fact that most of it is being built over.
The local community/ The People	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An incredible community who are well connected and who have a real passion for Maidstone. There is a tier of people who have grown up in Maidstone and who have made their businesses and lives here and they want to see Maidstone succeed. • People are very dynamic and robust. • I love the diversity in our community, both culturally and socioeconomically.
Helping Locally/Giving Back	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We like to contribute to the local environment and community well-being. • Helping local people and seeing people move forward with their lives. • Always lived in the town so pleased to be assisting in the recruitment of the area.
Green spaces	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a community hub and seeing the community work and socialise together. Encouraging people to use and appreciate green spaces. • Walking down the river len into the town centre is a great escape. • The Countryside.
Economic Development Team & Services	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business events are good for SMEs. • Being a member of the business terrace.
Nothing	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing at the moment, it seems to be on the decline and we are looking to relocate our business. • Not much - no facilities and terrible road layouts.
Other Businesses	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of creative businesses. • Turkey Mill is a great place to work and a well established business community.
Other themes		Leisure & Hospitality – 2 Business Terrace – 2 Generally positive -3

WHAT CAN THE COUNCIL DO TO HELP GROW/SUSTAIN YOUR BUSINESS/ORGANISATION

Respondents were asked: 'What can the Council do to help/grow your Business/organisation?'

- At total of 68 comments were received. Including 16 comments from Business Workshops.
- The most common theme was around business rates with requests for these to be lower or for exemptions.

Theme	No.	Examples
Rates	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fair method of calculating business rates and some services for those rates that actually benefit the business. Where you own property, if you don't deal with it 'in house', use an agent that is proactive and helpful. Make planning permissions for businesses easier. How about a presumption that the answer is YES rather than the current ABSOLUTELY

Theme	No.	Examples
		<p>NOT unless you can prove it's ok. I understand it isn't always like that but the process is long-winded and incredibly expensive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low or zero business rates for new businesses in first 5 years. • no business rates.
Promote/ Recommend our Business/ Organisation	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help building visibility, promotion and recommendation. • Be more open to funding church based projects without fear of 'promoting religion'. Encourage council and community groups to hire church buildings. Publicise and promote church events, groups and facilities. Partner with churches to provide community services and events. • Promote my business to the local community.
Funding & Grants	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a more transparent tender process for available funding. As a third sector organisation we need to be in a position to maintain our services in increasingly challenging financial times. • Provide grants, as we have no guaranteed income. • Increase in grants and financial support for growing businesses who want to employ people in the community.
Business Advice & Support (inc Economic Development Team initiatives)	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More events, more networking, more support for small business, better quality advisors with real experience, bring together local investors to evaluate local opportunities - encourage entrepreneurship (classes / workshops). We fundamentally lack local tertiary education facilities - e.g. universities, business schools etc.. in Maidstone. • Broker introductions to Developers, recommend our business, networking opportunities that include the planning team. • Provide networking opportunities, grants for tiny businesses.
Planning/Development Infrastructure	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create better infrastructure as you are building too many homes. • Engage with businesses! This is the first consultation in 2 years, listen to local employers. The local plan needs to provide more employment land to create growth and opportunities.
Educations & Skills	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational funding to enable schools to access extra-curricular activities. • Free & accessible higher education courses, youth support, innovation hubs. Free transport to town centre, parking, busses, park and ride, cycling infrastructure.
Traffic/Transport/Access	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have a 600 year old building which is a landmark in the town and have absolutely no help from MBC, so much heavy traffic causes damage and pollution. Lots of antisocial behavior in Knightrider Street, be honest if I could move it somewhere else I would. • Reduce traffic so that our team and clients can travel to our offices with ease, provide more parking, or at least parking that is proportionate to the number of people in a property, raise the limit where business rates are paid (or even better, remove them entirely) so that it is not prohibitive for businesses to grow and increase the size of their offices.
Workspaces, Offices & Premises	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a fair priced shared workspace. • Provision of Business Rates Relief for permanent offices Flexible workspaces for start-ups
Other Themes		<p>Community Safety – 3 Sharing & Partnership Working – 3 Parking – 3 Promote & Improve Maidstone – 2 Community Support - 2</p>

WHAT GROWTH CHALLENGES DO YOU HAVE AS BUSINESS/ORGANISATION

Respondents were asked: 'What growth challenges you have as a Business/organisation?'

- At total of 58 comments were received. This included 11 comments from Business Workshops.
- The most common theme was around finances and funding with comments in relation to the cost of living as well as accessing funding/grant streams.

Theme	No.	Examples
Finance & Funding	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of statutory funding for statutory services. • Increasing costs and rising demand but not a similar increase in income (our services are all free at the point of use, as are targeted at disadvantaged families, so we are reliant on fundraising/grant income). • Difficult for SME growth due to cost of living, inflation and lack of infrastructure.
Traffic & Transport	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area has really deteriorated over the last 10 years, traffic is a major issue and uncontrolled housing without any major road infrastructure apart from one single junction, no wonder it's a standstill. • Infrastructure has not had enough investment. Congestion is a major problem in the town and has been getting worse with population increases. Taking 1 hour+ during rush hour to do less than 2 miles is regular occurrence. One example - there were promises 10 years ago about Bearsted Road and Junction 7 improvements with KIMS but these have not been delivered. • Traffic closures are worse than ever. We are considering relocating
Marketing & Promotion	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Maidstone we have one support group, we are a national charity - however lack of awareness and support do provide the group with challenges. • Promoting the Business, re-furbishing properties, creating consumer branding awareness
Staffing & Recruitment	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing high quality personnel (recruitment). • Finding enough clients, recruiting good people.
Parking	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mall parking for a day is £9 which is prohibitively expensive for full time workers wanting to work in town centre. Cost of parking and traffic make trips to town a waste of time and money. Business terrace is great but need to be able to get there cheaply to actually work from there. • Parking, our customers find parking challenging , expensive and stop them attending our classes.
Premises, Offices & Workspaces	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of availability of commercial office space/buildings from which to offer our services - the use of statutory provisions rent free would be exceptionally beneficial. Promotion of services is always a challenge. Offering the services of a comms team would be beneficial. • There is never a offer of the opportunity to work locally forcing us to work in London.
Development & Infrastructure	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the housing puts pressure on our ability to adequately serve the community. • Lack of supporting infrastructure, disconnected town and county. • lack of rural broadband and mobile.
Demand for Product & Services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right now — people are struggling to commit to working with my business due to cost of living. I'm hearing the same from all across my local network. • High competition in service led sectors.
Other themes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Safety – 3 • Town Centre - 2

WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE ABOUT MAIDSTONE?

Respondents were asked: 'What would you change about Maidstone?'

- At total of 66 comments were received. This included 18 comments from Business Workshops.
- The most common theme was around the Town Centre with comments about the range and variety of shops and the need for regeneration/rebranding of the area.

Theme	No.	Examples
Town Centre	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to restore the town centre and facilities so that they are relevant for serious businesses to be able to be established and thrive. Currently it appears to be that rather than being the administrative centre for Kent, is is the entertainments capital. • The town centre is less welcoming and feels less safe. • Bring a lot more varied businesses into the town rather than all the Barbers that are there. The town needs regeneration and become a nice place to visit.
Traffic & Transport	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install traffic lights at the Running Horse Roundabout so our staff don't feel like using it puts their lives at risk and they are luck to make it to work safely, address the traffic jam issues in the town centre and rejuvenate the town centre. • Investment in public transport and address derelict and empty property in the town centre. I would encourage MBC to be brave and to try new things. • The high levels of traffic, the timing of roadworks where many closures seem to happen at the same time making driving in Maidstone very difficult. Improved phasing of traffic lights to allow better flow of traffic.
Community Safety	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More police presence to deter crime. • The town centre is in need of significant investment and attracting more independent stores / businesses. I believe rents / rates are far too high. Plus the systematic conversion of office space into housing is bordering on the criminal. Absolutely appalling accommodation that has transformed the 'town centre' resident profile... Cant walk down the street without the stink of drugs. • More Police at weekend nights, more public toilets.
Development & Infrastructure	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The over-development, lack of coherence in planning, lack of community, over crowding, lack of connected cycle lanes and reliable transport - many things! • The rate housing is going up, without adapting the infrastructure and the amount of traffic on the roads. • Stop building houses.
Housing Policy (inc inward migration)	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop London boroughs using properties to house their residents and prioritise homes for Maidstone residents. • Offering better housing in the most deprived areas and better communication channels and services from housing providers.
Promotion	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the business owner perspectives I would like to see more involvement of the Council getting to know and promoting individual small businesses. • build better communities and have more information about events around the town. • Developing tourism not just the town centre for 6 weeks a year.
Parking	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking. You should be able to park for free for 15/20mins to support the local shops by being able to stop and grab some breakfast or a greeting card or use the toilet etc without having to pay for an hour of parking. • The town centre should be more accessible. At the moment, I avoid it, as do a lot of people, mainly because traffic is a nightmare and the parking

Theme	No.	Examples
		is limited and expensive. This makes it a less attractive place to visit. I would make parking much cheaper and more accessible, especially with drop off/pick up parking free for a short time, as sometimes all you want to do is pick something up from a shop without worrying about getting a ticket. The quality of the shops should be improved. There are lots of low quality nail salons, barbers, cheap supermarkets and takeaways that cheapen the feel of the town. MBC should take a much more selective role in raising the calibre of shops and the overall environment. At the moment the whole town just feels dishevelled and run down. The town centre could be better 'zoned' too, with specific areas for retail, food and dining, living areas, offices and workspaces etc. But traffic is by far the biggest problem with Maidstone. Also, stop allowing so many HMOs as this is also lowering the standards and causing a lot of issues. Maidstone has a lot of heritage and could be a beautiful town if the overall approach was elevated. Also, for goodness sake, knock down that awful 'toilet roll' Travel Lodge by the bridge.
Other themes		Leisure/Heritage – 3 Rates & Charges – 3 Council Leadership -3

BUSINESS/ORGANISATION RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

