



West Lancashire Borough Council Citizen's Survey

Prepared for West Lancashire Borough Council

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1 Executive summary

The West Lancashire Borough Council citizen's survey was undertaken with residents across the borough of West Lancashire. The aim of the survey was to determine residents' views on council spending, communication and community safety and their opinions on the council as a whole.

An eight page survey was posted to 3,729 residents of West Lancashire borough on 24 September and the fieldwork ended on 5 November 2010. In total 910 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 24%.

1.1 Key findings

Council spending

- Four fifths of respondents say spending on management and administrative support should be cut (86%). Almost three quarters say spending should be cut for planning and development (72%) and grants to external organisations (70%). Culture and heritage was also highlighted (68%).
- The three services where respondents are most willing to see spending cuts made are culture and heritage (53%), management and administrative support (52%) and grants to external organisations (40%).
- The three services where respondents most think cuts should not be made are refuse (54%), recreation and sport (38%) and recycling (38%).

Contacting the council

- The most popular method of contacting the council is by telephone (56%). The website was the second most popular method (18%). Respondents' experiences of contacting the council are very positive.
- Two fifths of respondents have used the council website in the last 12 months (40%). The most popular use for the website is to find information (77%) followed by online services (27%).
- The main reasons respondents don't use the website are lack of access to a computer and preferring to use other methods to contact the council.

Community safety

- Three quarters of respondents agree that West Lancashire is a safe and secure place to live (75%) and two thirds agree that investing in community safety contributes to improving West Lancashire residents' quality of life (66%). Respondents' opinion on whether CCTV cameras

help reduce the fear of crime in their community is more split (44% agree but 23% disagree).

- Nine out of ten respondents feel safe in their area during the day (90%). This proportion drops to two thirds after dark (66%).

General

- Four fifths of respondents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (83% very or fairly satisfied).
- Around two fifths of respondents agree that West Lancashire Borough Council provides value for money (44%) while a fifth disagree (18%). A large proportion of respondents however are unsure (32% neither agree nor disagree).
- Overall, three fifths of respondents are satisfied with the way West Lancashire Borough Council runs things (58%) and less than a fifth are dissatisfied (16%).
- Respondents in the Skelmersdale/Up Holland area feel less safe and are more dissatisfied with both their area as a place to live and with West Lancashire Borough Council in general than respondents in other areas.

2 Introduction

Councils all over the country are facing spending reductions. Many authorities will have to cut back on services for residents as a result of significant reductions in government funding. This will have a major impact on the council in future years.

To help make decisions about where limited resources should be targeted, West Lancashire Borough Council commissioned a survey of residents to gather their views on council spending, contacting the council, community safety and overall satisfaction with the council.

3 Research objectives

The research objectives are to:

- gather local people's views about what they think the council should do and spend money on as priorities;
- understand preference for, and satisfaction with, customer access channels;
- update community safety perceptual measures; and
- gather local people's views on the council as a whole.

4 Methodology

The citizen's survey was sent by post to 3,729 households on 24 September. A reminder was sent on 15 October, with a final closing date of 5 November. Stratified random sampling was used to ensure that questionnaires were mailed in proportion to the population in each of the borough's wards. Whilst response rates differed by ward, each household in each ward had the same chance of receiving a questionnaire. The sample frame was drawn from the Postal Address File (PAF) database.

In total 910 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 24%.

In order to ensure that the survey reached people in all sections of the community, respondents were asked to provide information about themselves including gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion and ethnicity. The breakdown of respondents by these demographic groups is provided in the appendix .

All data are weighted by age, ethnicity and gender to reflect the overall population of West Lancashire, and figures are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated. The weighted responses have been scaled to match the effective response of 599, which is the equivalent size of the data if it had not been weighted and was a perfect random sample.

4.1 Limitations

The table below shows the sample tolerances that apply to the results in this survey. Sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample as well as the percentage results.

Number of respondents	50/50 + / -	30/70 + / -	10/90 + / -
50	14%	13%	8%
100	10%	9%	6%
200	7%	6%	4%
500	4%	4%	3%
750	4%	3%	2%
1000	3%	3%	2%

On a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 500 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 out of 100 that the answer would be between 46% and 54% (i.e. +/- 4%), versus a complete coverage of the entire West Lancashire population using the same procedure.

The following table shows what the percentage differences between two samples on a statistic must be greater than, to be statistically significant.

Size of Sample A	Size of Sample B	50/50	70/30	90/10
100	100	14%	13%	8%
100	200	12%	11%	7%
500	500	6%	6%	4%

(Confidence interval at 95% certainty for a comparison of two samples)

For example, where the size of sample A and sample B is 500 responses in each and the percentage result in each group you are comparing is around 50% in each category, the difference in the results needs to be more than 6% to be statistically significant. This is to say that the difference in the results of the two groups of people is not due to chance alone and is a statistically valid difference (e.g. of opinion, service usage).

For each question in the survey, comparisons have been made between different sub-groups of respondents (e.g. age, gender, disability, ethnicity, geographic area) to look for statistically significant differences in opinion. Statistically valid differences between sub-groups are described in the main body of the report. Some groups cannot be included in the sub-group analysis as there were too few respondents to allow statistically significant results (e.g. young people, ethnic minorities).

In this analysis, West Lancashire has been split into three areas by ward:

- **Skelmersdale/Up Holland:** Ashurst, Birch Green, Digmaor, Moorside, Skelmersdale North, Skelmersdale South, Tanhouse and Up Holland
- **Ormskirk/Aughton and Western Parishes:** Aughton and Downholland, Aughton Park, Bickerstaffe, Derby, Halsall, Knowsley, Scarisbrick and Scott
- **Northern Parishes:** Burscough East, Burscough West, Hesketh-with-Becconsall, Newburgh, North Meols, Parbold, Rufford, Tarleton and Wrightington

In charts or tables where responses do not add up to 100%, this is due to multiple responses or computer rounding.

5 Main research findings

5.1 Council spending

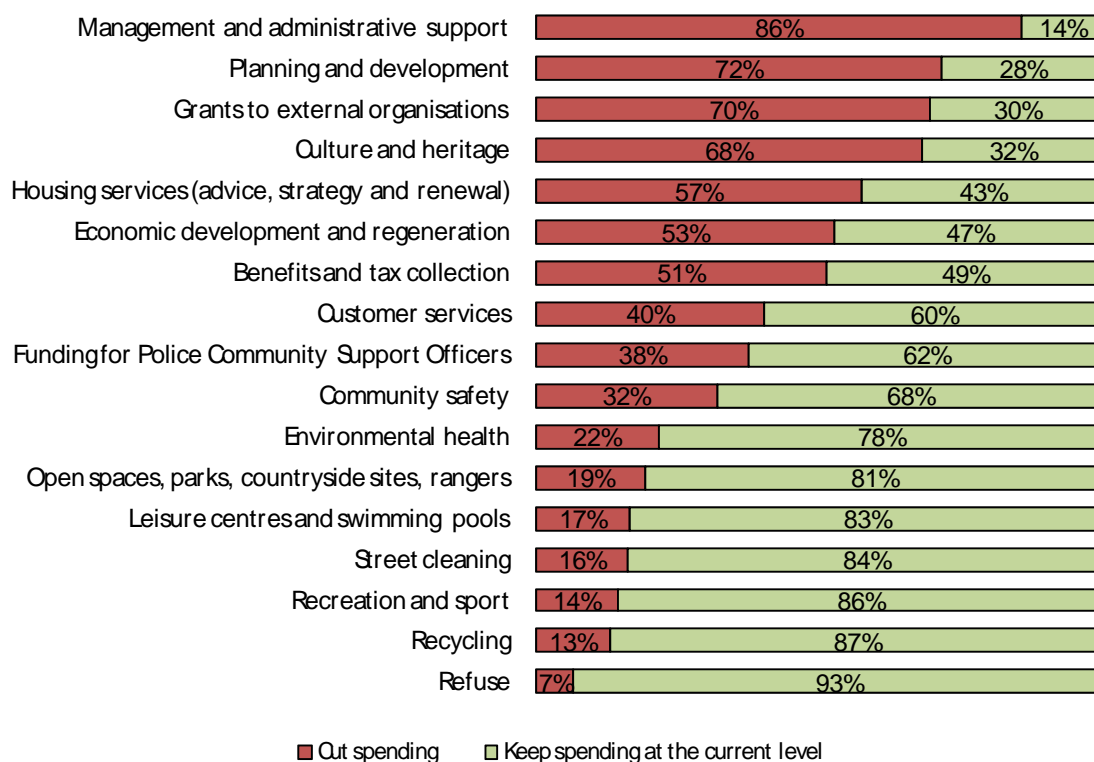
Q1: Spending on specific service areas

Respondents were given a list of 17 service areas and were asked to decide, for each service area, whether spending should be cut or kept at current levels.

Over four fifths of respondents feel that spending on management and administrative support should be cut (86%). Around seven tenths feel that spending should be cut for planning and development (72%), grants to external organisations (70%) and culture and heritage (68%).

Refuse, recycling, recreation and sport and street cleaning are the service areas where respondents most feel spending should remain at current levels (93%, 87%, 86% and 84% respectively).

Chart 1 - For each of the following service areas do you think we should either cut spending, or keep spending at the current level?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 812, weighted 586)

Female respondents are more likely to think that spending should be kept at the current level for environmental health (85%), community safety (77%)

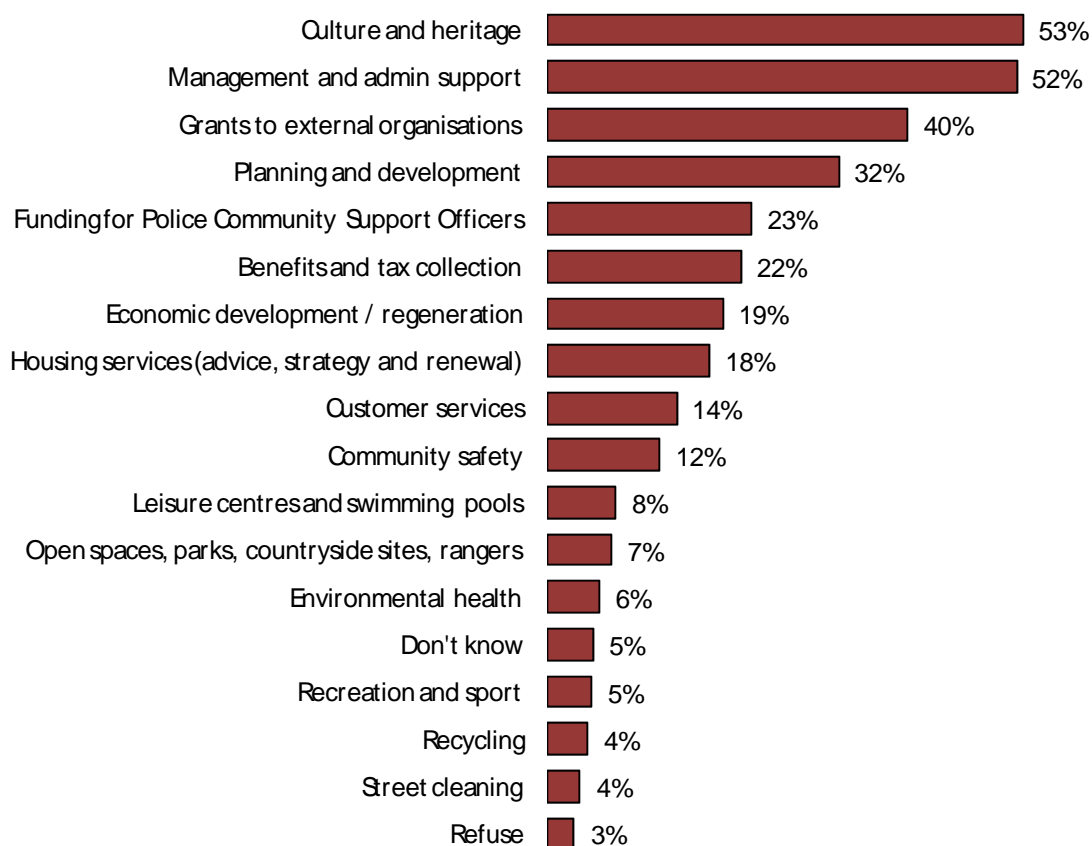
and funding for Police Community Support Officers (70%). Disabled respondents are more likely to think that spending should be kept at current levels for benefits and tax collection (57%), housing services (51%), management and administrative support (24%) and customer services (70%).

Respondents from the Northern Parishes area are less likely to think that spending on community safety should be kept at current levels (61%). Respondents from Skelmersdale/Up Holland are more likely to think that spending should be kept at current levels for housing services (58%) and management and administrative support (22%).

Q2: Three service areas where cuts should be made

Respondents were then asked to select, from the same list, three service areas where they would be most willing to see spending cuts made. The most common response is to cut culture and heritage (53%). In line with the previous question, management and administrative support and grants to external organisations are in the top three responses (52% and 40% respectively).

Chart 2 - Please choose three service areas where you would be most willing to see spending cuts made



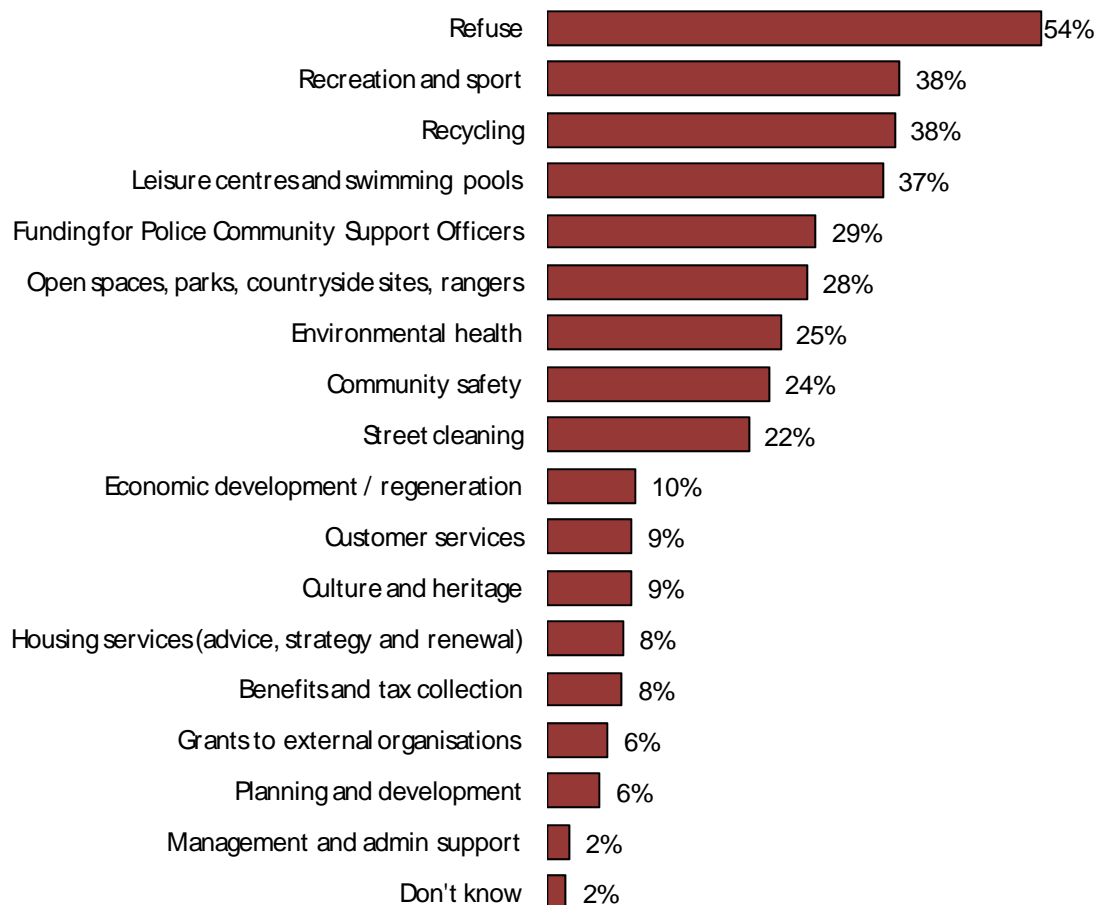
Base: All respondents (unweighted 868, weighted 621)

Disabled respondents are more likely to be willing to see cuts to culture and heritage (65%) and planning and development (43%). Respondents from Skelmersdale/Up Holland are also more likely to be willing to see cuts to culture and heritage (66%). Respondents from Northern Parishes are less likely to be willing to see cuts made to customer services (8%).

Q3: Three service areas where cuts should not be made

When asked to select three service areas where spending cuts should not be made, the most popular responses were refuse (54%), recreation and sport (38%) and recycling (38%).

Chart 3 - Please choose three service areas where you most think spending cuts should not be made



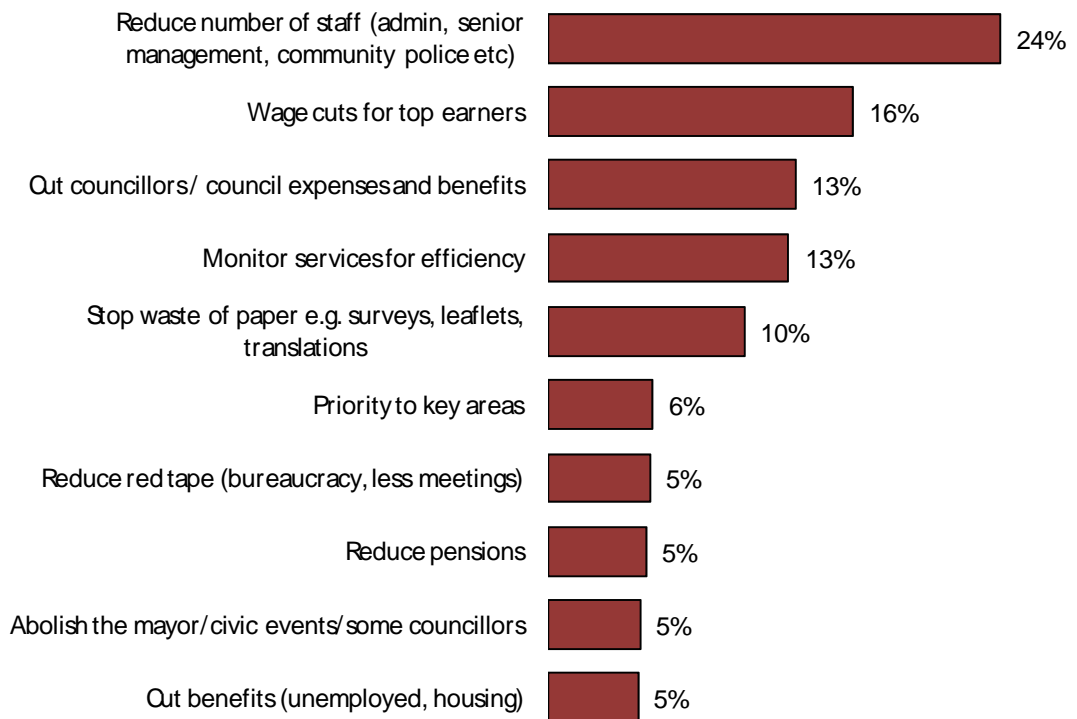
Base: All respondents (unweighted 874, weighted 627)

Disabled respondents are more likely to think cuts should not be made to environmental health (36%) and community safety (34%). Respondents from Skelmersdale/Up Holland are more likely to think cuts should not be made to funding for Police Community Support Officers (39%), customer services (17%) and housing services (17%).

Q4: Other suggestions

Respondents were asked to provide suggestions for how the council could reduce its spending. Less than a third of respondents answered this question (31%). A quarter of respondents to the question suggested the council should reduce the number of staff (24%).

Chart 4 - Do you have any other suggestions for how the council could reduce its spending?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 282, weighted 221)

Male respondents are more likely to suggest wage cuts for top earners as a way for the council to reduce spending (21%).

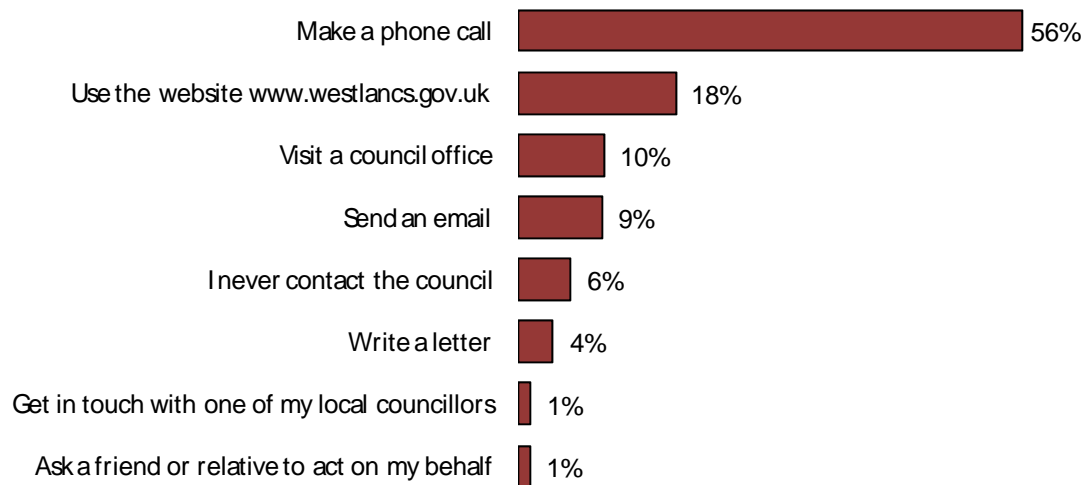
5.2 Contacting the council

Respondents were then asked a series of questions about how they contact the council and their experiences of contacting the council.

Q5: Preferred method of contact

By far the most popular method of contacting the council is by telephone (56%). The second most popular method is the website - around a fifth of respondents (18%).

Chart 5 - What is your preferred method of contacting the council when you want to request a service or find information?



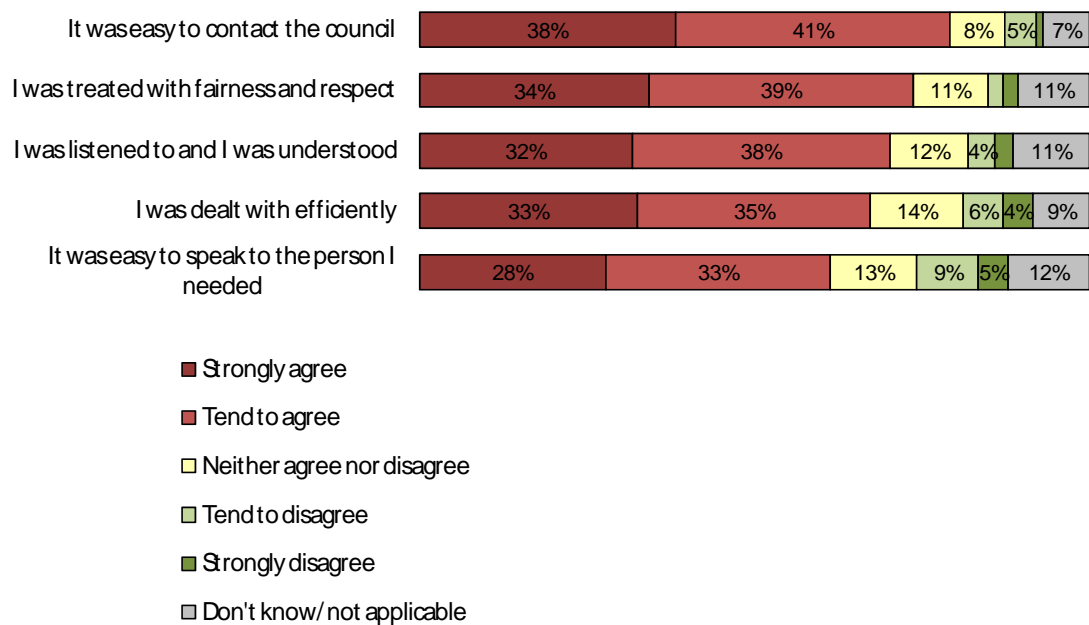
Base: All respondents (unweighted 899, weighted 642)

Older respondents are more likely to prefer to contact the council by phone (67% for 55-64 year olds and 70% for over 65s) while respondents in the 25-44 age group are more likely to prefer to use the website (30%). Disabled respondents are more likely to prefer to write a letter (11%).

Q6: Recent contact with the council

Respondents were asked a series of questions thinking about the last time they contacted West Lancashire Borough Council through their preferred method. Responses to these questions were broadly positive. Four fifths of respondents agreed it was easy to contact the council (79% strongly agree or tend to agree) and three quarters agreed that they were treated with fairness and respect (74%).

Chart 6 - Thinking of the last time you contacted West Lancashire Borough Council in this way, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



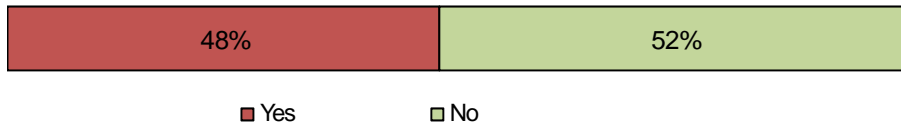
Base: All respondents (unweighted 824, weighted 603)

The only significant difference between groups of respondents to these questions was that respondents over the age of 65 are more likely to agree that they were dealt with efficiently (81% strongly agree or tend to agree).

Q7: Contacting Customer Services

Around half of respondents have contacted the council's Customer Services by telephone in the last 12 months (48%).

Chart 7 - Have you contacted the council's Customer Services by telephone on 01695 577177 in the last 12 months?

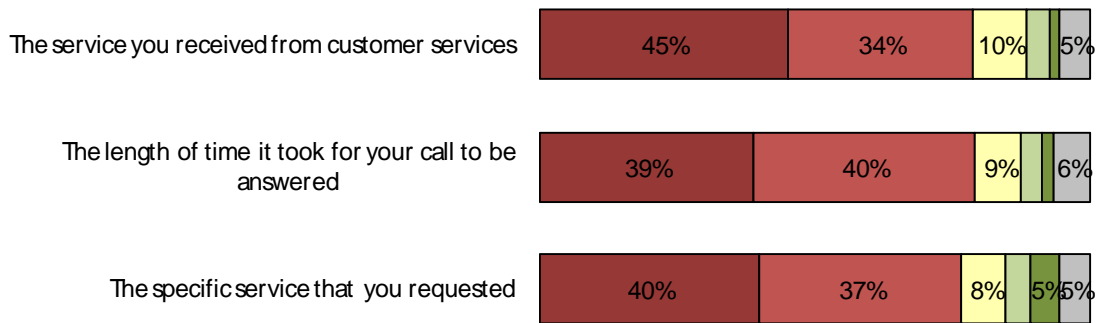


Base: All respondents (unweighted 770, weighted 560)

Q8: Satisfaction with Customer Services

Respondents who had contacted customer services were then asked about the service they received. Again, results were very positive and the vast majority were satisfied or very satisfied with the length of time it took for their call to be answered (79%), and the service they received (79%). Around one in twenty respondents were dissatisfied with the service received (6% fairly or very dissatisfied) and the length of time taken to answer their call (6%).

Chart 8 - Thinking about the last time you contacted Customer Services, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the following?



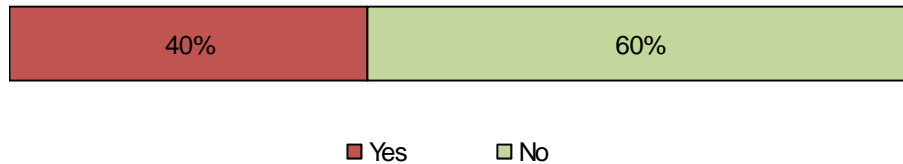
- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

Base: Respondents who have contacted Customer Services (unweighted 518, weighted 365)

Q9 The council website, www.westlancs.gov.uk

Two fifths of respondents have used the council's website in the last 12 months (40%).

Chart 9 - Have you used the council's website www.westlancs.gov.uk in the last 12 months?



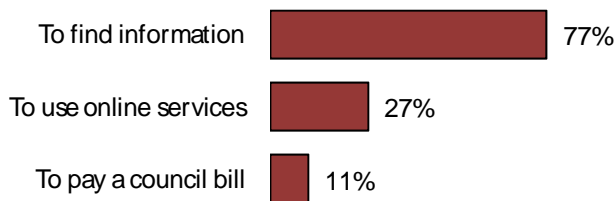
Base: All respondents (unweighted 890, weighted 637)

Respondents over 65 and disabled respondents are less likely to have used the website in the last 12 months (82% and 76% answered no respectively).

Q10: Use of the website

Those who have used the website were asked what they used it for and were given three options and asked to tick all that apply, or write in their answer. The most popular use of the website is to find information (77%). More than a quarter use it for online services (27%) and a tenth have used it to pay a council bill (11%).

Chart 10 - What did you use the website for?



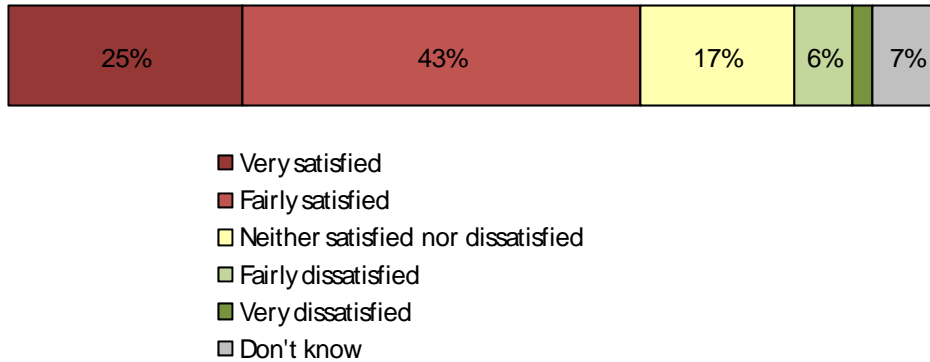
Base: Respondents who have used the council's website (unweighted 317, weighted 269)

Respondents in the Skelmersdale/Up Holland area are more likely to have used the website to pay a council bill (22%).

Q11: Satisfaction with the website

Seven tenths of respondents who have used the website are satisfied with it (68%) while less than a tenth are dissatisfied (8%). However, a significant proportion are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (17%).

Chart 11 - How satisfied are you with the council website?

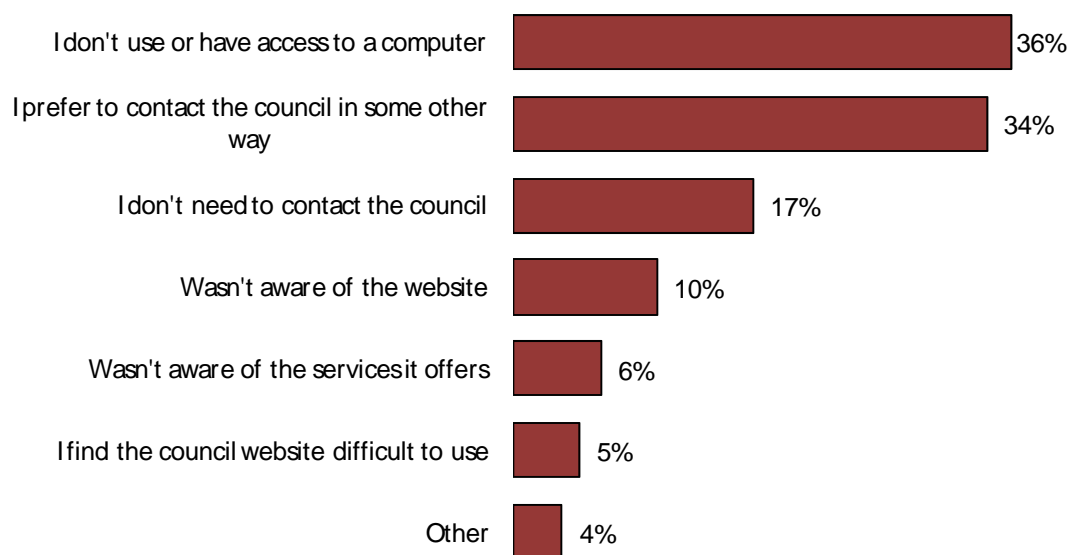


Base: Respondents who have used the council's website (unweighted 348, weighted 289)

Q12: Reasons for not using the website

Those respondents who have not used the council's website were asked why. They were given a list of options and asked to choose all that apply. A third of respondents say they don't have access to a computer (36%) or prefer to contact the council in another way (34%). 17% say they have no need to contact the council.

Chart 12 - Why don't you use the council's website?



Base: Respondents who have not used the council's website (unweighted 615, weighted 399)

Respondents over 60 and disabled respondents are more likely to say they don't use the council's website because they don't use or have access to a computer (62% and 51% respectively).

The proportion of respondents who don't use the council's website because they don't use or have access to a computer varies by geographic area as shown in table 1 (please note: these are proportions of the 60% of respondents who have not used the website in the last 12 months).

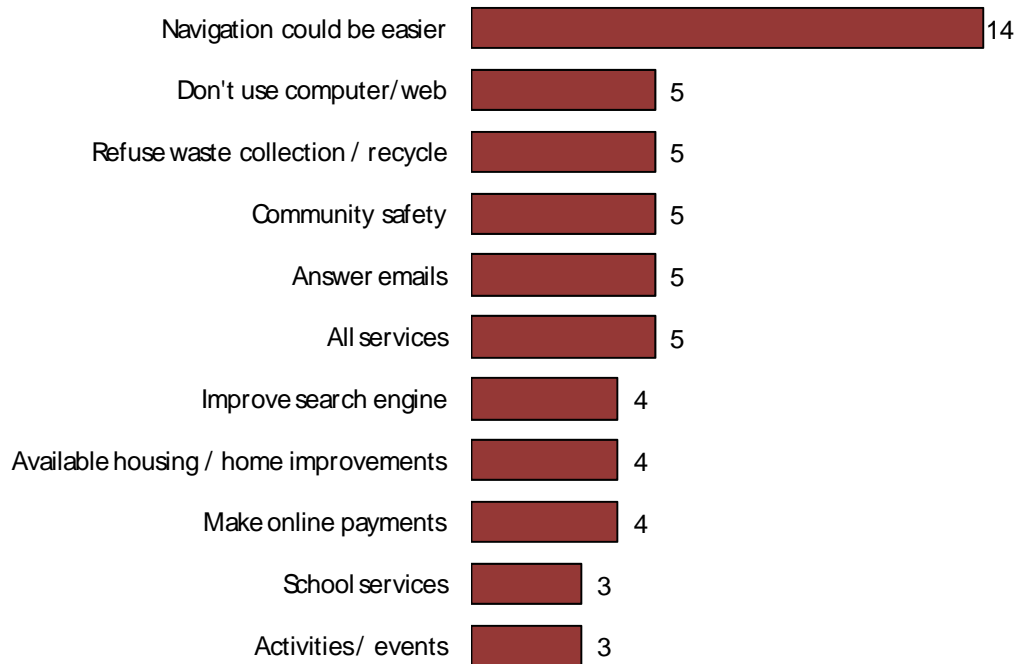
Table 1 - Access to computer

Area	Don't use or have access to a computer
Skelmersdale/Up Holland	46%
Ormskirk/Aughton and Western Parishes	32%
Northern Parishes	31%

Q13: Ideas for the website

Respondents were asked to write in ideas about information or services they would like to be able to access through the council website. Only 67 of all respondents answered this question (7%). Almost a fifth of the responses related to making the navigation easier (14 respondents). Some other responses mentioned services or information that are in fact already on the website e.g. refuse collection and online payments.

Chart 13 - Do you have any ideas about information or services that you would like to be able to access through the council website?



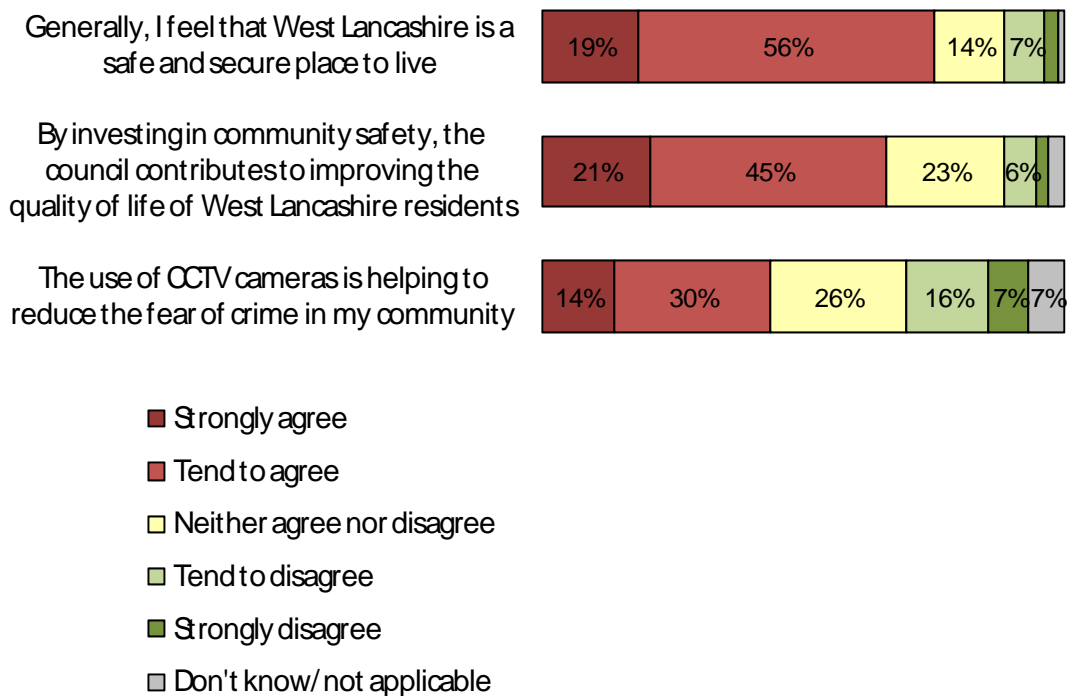
Base: All respondents (unweighted 67, weighted 65)

5.3 Community safety

Q14: Perceptions of community safety

Three quarters of respondents agree that West Lancashire is a safe and secure place to live (75%) and two thirds agree that investing in community safety contributes to improving West Lancashire residents' quality of life (66%). Respondents' opinion on whether CCTV cameras help reduce the fear of crime in their community is more split (44% agree but 23% disagree). There is also a significant proportion of respondents who aren't sure (26% neither agree nor disagree).

Chart 14 - Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements



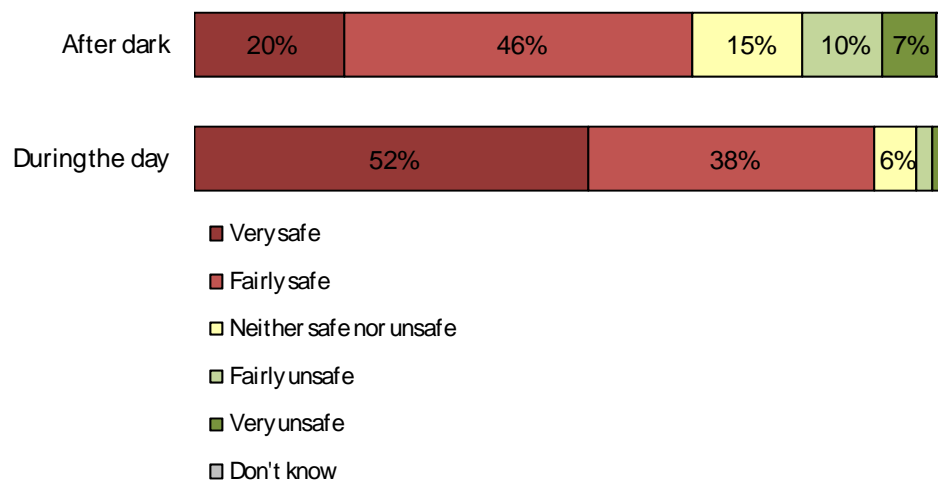
Base: All respondents (unweighted 879, weighted 631)

Respondents in the Skelmersdale/Up Holland area are more likely to disagree that West Lancashire is a safe and secure place to live (23% strongly or tend to disagree). Respondents in the 25-44 age group are more likely to disagree that CCTV cameras help to reduce fear of crime in their community (30%).

Q15: Feeling safe in the local area

The majority of respondents feel safe in their local area during the day, with around half of respondents feeling very safe (52%). This proportion drops after dark to a fifth of respondents feeling very safe (20%). Only a small proportion of respondents feel very unsafe in their local area (1% during the day, 7% after dark).

**Chart 15 - a) How safe or unsafe do you feel in your local area after dark?
b) How safe or unsafe do you feel in your local area during the day?**



Base: All respondents (unweighted 885, weighted 632)

Disabled respondents and respondents from Skelmersdale/Up Holland are more likely to say they feel unsafe after dark in their local area (29% and 35% respectively). Respondents from Skelmersdale/Up Holland are also more likely to say they feel unsafe during the day (9%).

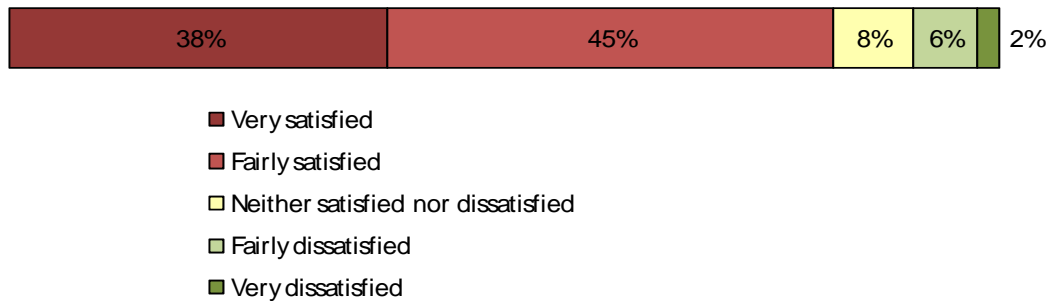
5.4 General opinions of the council

In the final section, respondents were asked questions about what they think of the council and area as a whole.

Q16: Satisfaction with local area

Four fifths of respondents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (83% very or fairly satisfied) and less than a tenth are dissatisfied (9% very or fairly dissatisfied).

Chart 16 - Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?



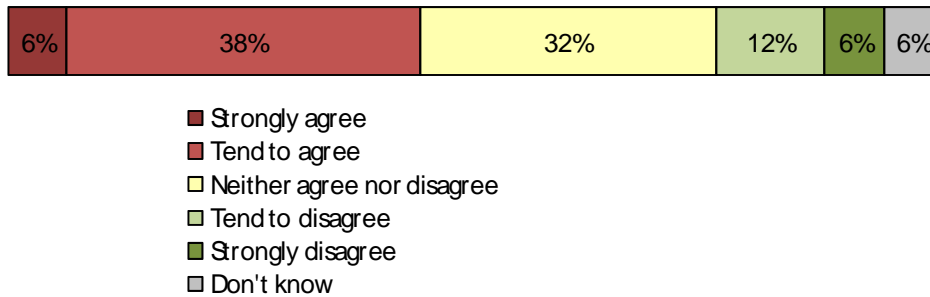
Base: All respondents (unweighted 896, weighted 639)

Respondents over 65 are more likely to be satisfied with their area as a place to live (93% very or fairly satisfied). Respondents from Skelmersdale/Up Holland are more likely to be dissatisfied (20% very or fairly dissatisfied).

Q17: Value for money

Around two fifths of respondents agree that West Lancashire Borough Council provides value for money (44%) while a fifth disagree (18%). However, a large proportion of respondents are unsure (32% neither agree nor disagree).

Chart 17 - To what extent do you agree or disagree that West Lancashire Borough Council provides value for money?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 895, weighted 639)

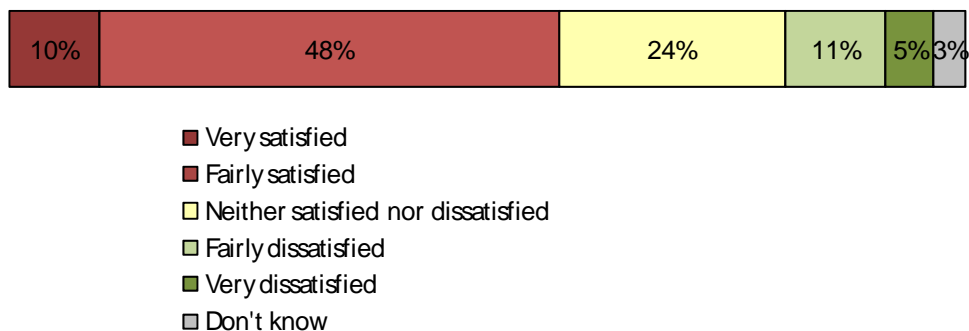
Respondents over 65 are more likely to agree that the council provides value for money (59%).

Respondents who are very satisfied with their local area as a place to live are more likely to agree that West Lancashire Borough Council provides value for money (77%). Those that are very dissatisfied with their local area are more likely to say they don't know whether the council provides value for money (42%).

Q18: Satisfaction with the way the council runs things

Overall, three fifths of respondents are satisfied with the way West Lancashire Borough Council runs things (58%) and less than a fifth are dissatisfied (16%). A significant proportion of respondents are unsure (24% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).

Chart 18 - Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way West Lancashire Borough Council runs things?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 895, weighted 638)

Over 65s are more likely to be satisfied with how West Lancashire Borough Council run things (70% satisfied) while respondents in the Skelmersdale/Up Holland area are more likely to be dissatisfied (23% dissatisfied).

Respondents who are very satisfied with their local area as a place to live are more likely to be satisfied with the way West Lancashire Borough Council runs things (78% very or fairly satisfied). Respondents who strongly agree that the council provides value for money are more likely to be very satisfied with the way the council runs things (77% very satisfied) and respondents who strongly disagree that the council provides value for money are more likely to be very dissatisfied with the way the council runs things (50% very dissatisfied).

5.5 Getting involved further

Respondents were asked to leave contact details if they are interested in getting involved in future consultations or to be kept informed of council news. 393 respondents filled in their details. 162 of these respondents gave an email address.

6 Appendix – demographic breakdown

Question	Responses	Unweighted base	Unweighted %	Weighted base	Weighted %
Q19 - Are you...?	Male	891	48	632	49
	Female		52		51
Q20 - What was your age on your last birthday?	16-24	878	1	617	5
	25-44		15		31
	45-54		17		20
	55-64		25		19
	65+		42		25
Q21 - Are you a deaf person or do you have a disability?	Yes	884	23	630	17
	No		77		83
Q22 - Have you ever identified as transgender?	Yes	862	1	616	1
	No		95		95
	Prefer not to say		4		4
Q23 - What is your sexual orientation?	Bisexual	838	2	604	2
	Gay man		1		1
	Lesbian/gay woman		1		1
	Heterosexual/straight		90		89
	Prefer not to say		7		7
Q24 - What is your religion?	Christian	879	81	624	75
	Buddhist		0		1
	Hindu		0		0
	Jewish		0		0
	Muslim		0		0
	Sikh		0		0
	Other religion		2		2
	No faith		12		16
	Prefer not to say		4		5
Q25 - Which best describes your ethnic background?	White	876	99	623	97
	Asian/Asian British		1		2
	Black/Black British		0		0
	Mixed		0		0
	Other		0		0