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Budget Consultation Report 2016

For the 2017/18 Budget

Produced by Staffordshire County Council

On behalf of Tamworth Borough Council

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Vision and priorities

Tamworth Borough Council has a revised vision for 'One Tamworth, Perfectly Placed – Open for business since the 7th Century A.D'. The general consensus from respondents was very much in support of the vision and this was reflected in one respondents comment; *"I think it's great news that the revised 'vision' could be totally coordinated, bringing together priorities across all areas to do with quality of life, growth and services".*

Support was also evident for the three strategic priorities which sit beneath the vision for 'living a quality life in Tamworth', 'growing stronger together in Tamworth' and 'delivering quality services in Tamworth'. Endorsement was provided through respondents views on the priorities themselves and also reflected in residents outlook on what's important and what needs improving in the local area.

All priorities under 'living a quality life in Tamworth' were given a high importance rating by half of all respondents or more. The most important priority was 'working together with residents to maintain and improve a safe, clean and green environment' with 82% giving this a high rating.

Similarly, all priorities under 'growing stronger together in Tamworth' were considered important with three quarters or more giving a high importance rating to each of the priorities. Considered most important was 'working with businesses and developers to create a vibrant and sustainable town centre. 83% gave this a high importance rating.

Over half of all respondents or more also gave a high importance rating to all the priorities under 'delivering quality services in Tamworth'. Of the five priorities, 'demonstrating value for money' was the most important priority with 82% giving this a high importance rating.

Some respondents did express an interest in *"finding out how Tamworth are working to achieve their vision and priorities".*

1.2 Spend on services

Respondents expressed a high level of support for maintaining current levels of spend and this was the case in 11 of the 12 major cost areas. Respondents most wanted to maintain spend on 'refuse and recycling services' (71%). Maintaining current spend was not the main priority for 'tackling anti-social behaviour'. Over half (51%) wanted to see more spend on this cost area.

Spending less was generally residents second priority for spend. Respondents would most prefer to see less spend in each of the following areas; 'grants for voluntary organisations and charities', 'improved access to information/customer services' and 'business support and advice'. 28% said they wanted to see less spend in each of these areas.

If the Council were to consider changes to the charges it places upon it's services, increasing charges for 'leisure and other activities' would be met with least resistance. 61% of respondents would support increased charges for this. Conversely, decreasing charges for 'car parking' would be a popular move. Three quarters of respondents (76%) said that they would like to see these decreased.

The largest proportion of residents (45%) would prefer the lowest level of Council Tax increase (a 0.62% increase). The second lowest level of increase (a 1.98% increase) was the second most popular option. 38% of residents chose this option which was most similar to the average level of increase witnessed for all authorities across the West Midlands (of 1.5%) according to CIPFA's (Charted Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) latest annual council tax survey.

1.3 What makes Tamworth a better place to live and prosper?

'Low levels of crime', 'good health services' and 'good job prospects' were considered by residents to be highly important in making somewhere a good place to live. All three of these were also high priorities for improvement, in making Tamworth a better place to live. For businesses, 'the cost of business rates' was the main request for improvement. What makes Tamworth a better place to live and better for business are highlighted from high to low in the graphic below. Common synergies between the two groups are also annotated.

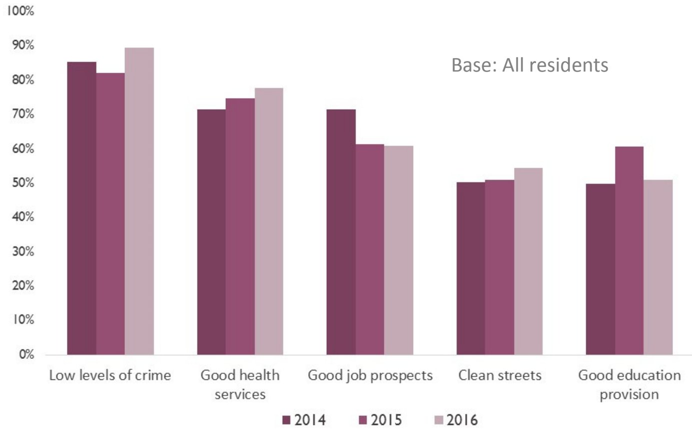
Figure 1.1: What makes Tamworth a 'better place to live' and 'better for business'

What has changed over time?[1]

1.4 What's important in the local area?

The top three priorities of what makes somewhere a good place to live ('low levels of crime', 'good health services' and 'good job prospects') have remained unchanged since last year. This year, 'clean streets' is in the top five priorities (ranking 4 out of 10 compared to 6 out of 10 last year. It replaced 'affordable decent housing' which ranked 7 out of 10 this year compared to 5 out of 10 last year. Trend data on performance for the current top five priorities is contained in the graph below.

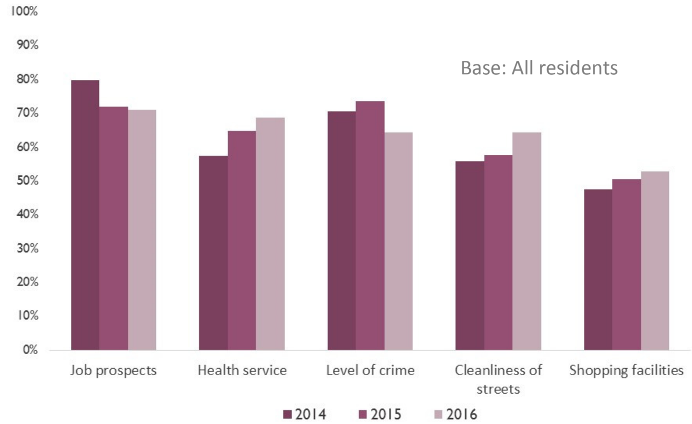
Figure 1.2: What's important in the local area? (%)



1.5 What needs improving in the local area?

Four out of the top five priorities for improvement ('job prospects', 'health services', 'cleanliness of streets' and 'level of crime') remain unchanged since last year. This year 'shopping facilities' replaced 'affordable decent housing' in the top five priorities for improvement. 'Shopping facilities' now ranks 5 out of 10 and 'affordable housing' 6 out of 10. Trend data for the performance for the current top five priorities is contained in the graph below.

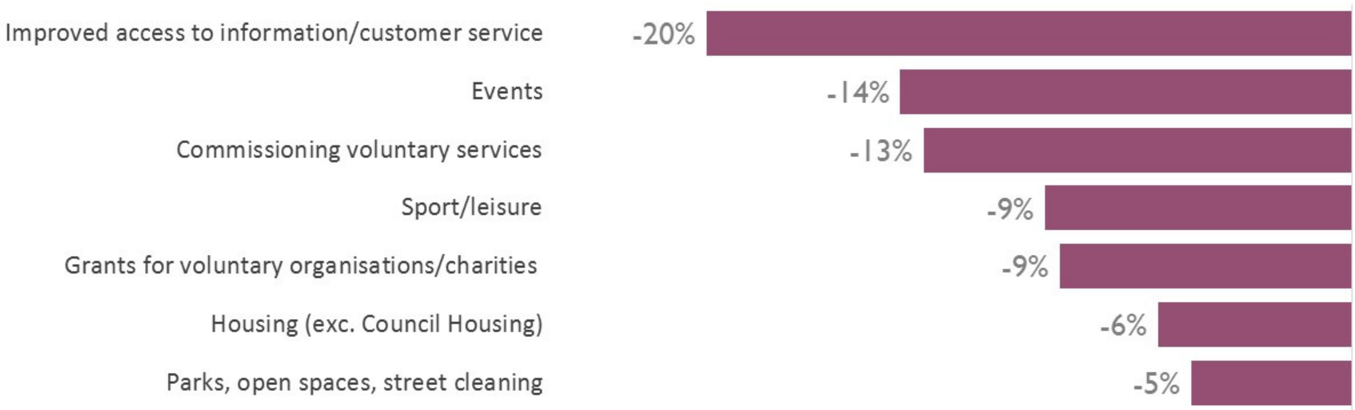
Figure 1.3: What needs improving in the local area? (%)



1.6 Views on spend over time

This year, as with last, it was most common for respondents to want the level of spend to remain the same. Respondents most wanted to maintain spend on 'refuse and recycling services'. This year as with last year, respondents second overall priority was for reduced spend. However, during the last year respondents strength of feeling has changed with the overall proportion of respondents wanting reduced spend seeing a decline in all key service areas. The greatest changes have been documented in the figure below.

Figure 1.4: Percentage change between 2015 and 2016 in people saying they would spend less (% change)

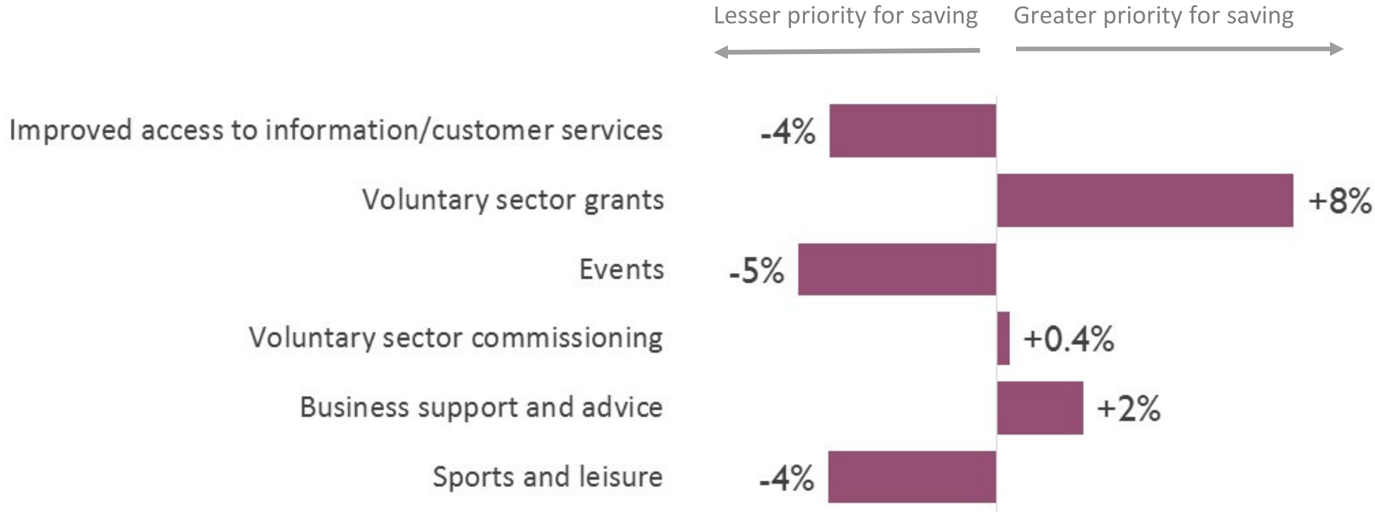


[1] Some caution should be applied when interpreting residents results over time. This is because residents responses have an overall confidence interval of +/-6% meaning that the percentage responses they have given to any questions could fall in the range of 6% higher or 6% lower than the actual response given. Results should be seen as indicative of possible trends which could be explored further through additional research.

1.7 Priorities for savings

This year, the most important priorities for saving were 'improved access to information/customer services', 'voluntary sector grants', 'events', 'voluntary sector commissioning', 'business support and advice' and 'sports and leisure'. These were also the main priorities for savings in 2015. However, since 2015, respondents perceptions of these priorities has changed. The most noticeable change is for 'voluntary sector grants' with a greater proportion of respondents now wanting to see savings in this area when compared to last year. Respondents were slightly less likely to want to see savings made to 'events', 'improved access to information/customer services' and 'sports and leisure'.

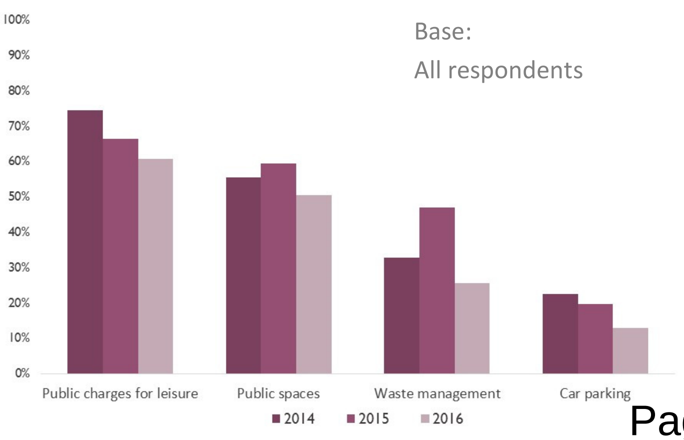
Figure 1.5: Percentage change in the most important priorities for saving between 2015-2016 (% change)



1.8 Increasing charges

Over the last three years it has been most common for respondents to indicate that increased public charges would be most acceptable for 'leisure and other activities'. The proportion of respondents who selected this as an option has however declined steadily over the last three years. Conversely, increases for 'car parking' were least popular. Since 2015, fewer respondents indicated their support for increased charges across all four service areas.

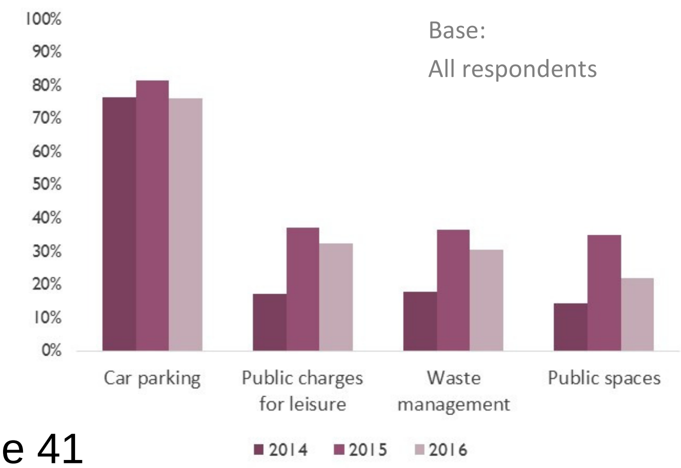
Figure 1.6: Views on increasing charges over time (%)



1.9 Decreasing charges

It was most common for respondents to want decreased charges for 'car parking' over the last three years and this has been a consistent trend over the last three years. Decreasing charges was less important in the other three services areas. All service areas experienced a reduction in the proportion of people wanting decreased charges between 2015 and 2016.

Figure 1.7: Views on decreasing charges over time (%)



2. 1 Introduction

Tamworth Borough Council reviews it's council tax and charges on an annual basis and this helps to develop the Council's budget and ensures funding is put into areas which are of priority.

Residents, businesses and the voluntary sector are always an important part of this process. Therefore this year as in previous years, all these groups were invited to share their views on priorities for the year ahead. This year there are some new additions to the surveys including revisions to the vision and the priorities.

This report summarises the views of those who participated. While this is not fully representative of Tamworth opinion it provides a helpful addition to the information that will inform the Council's budgeting decisions for the year ahead.

The report presents the analysis of the combined results from all three respondent groups and emphasises where there are differences in opinions between the different groups. Comparisons with the results of the consultation from previous years have also been made in order to identify commonality or differences in opinions over time.

2.2 Methodology

The consultation for the 2017/18 budget ran from 1st August to the 12th September 2016 and three key groups (residents, businesses and the voluntary sector) were encouraged to share their views through tailored paper and online surveys.

These surveys were developed by Tamworth Borough Council in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council's Insight, Planning and Performance Team. These were largely based on surveys from previous years and were adapted slightly to reflect Tamworth's revised vision and corporate strategic priorities

All three surveys were promoted via a range of communications channels. These included press releases in the local newspaper (The Tamworth Herald), a prominent feature on the Tamworth Borough Council website and through social media including Twitter, Facebook, the Tamworth Borough Council blog and Gov delivery.

Specific groups were also targeted to take part in the consultation. These included;

- Members of the Tamworth Borough Council Citizens' Panel and Tamworth Borough Council Housing Tenants. Both groups received a direct letter or email encouraging them to participate in the residents survey.
- Businesses received an email encouraging them to participate in the business survey. This was also widely promoted by the Economic Development Team.
- Voluntary sector organisations were also emailed to encourage their involvement. Their involvement was also supported and promoted by Support Staffordshire and Tamworth Borough Council's Community Development Team.

2.3 RESPONSES

A total of 255 responses were received to the consultation and these consisted of:

- 231 residents.
- 19 businesses; 32% were based in a 'town centre site', 32% were on an 'industrial estate', 21% were 'out of town', 11% were 'based at home' and 5% were in a 'local neighbourhood area'.
- 5 community and voluntary organisations; three of these were 'voluntary groups', one a 'registered charity' and one a 'community group'.

For the purpose of analysis, responses from all three groups have been combined. Where differences were apparent by respondent type, these have been highlighted graphically or through a textual summary.

Some caution should be applied when interpreting the results, particularly in relation to those business and voluntary organisation responses. Responses from these groups were relatively low and therefore should not be viewed as representative of the overall communities which they represent.

2.4 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS FOR THE RESIDENTS SURVEY

In total, there were 231 responses to the Tamworth residents survey. This equates to 0.4% of the adult population of Tamworth[2] and compares similarly to last years response rate.

In statistical terms, the 95% confidence level has been applied to the residents survey results. This means that if the survey was repeated, in 95 out of 100 cases, the same response would be achieved.

Residents responses have an overall confidence interval of +/-6% meaning that the percentage responses they have given to any questions could fall in the range of 6% higher or 6% lower than their actual response. A confidence interval of +/-3-4% is fairly typical for a statistically robust survey[3].

When considering key demographics, responses were representative of some key characteristics but were less so of others:

⇒ The residents survey falls within an acceptable range of representation by gender; 54% of respondents were male and 46% were female[4].

⇒ It was more common for older residents to participate in the residents survey and therefore the results are generally over representative of those respondents aged 55 and above, representative by those aged 45-54 and under representative of those residents aged 44 and below[4].

⇒ By disability, the survey results are slightly over representative of those respondents who had a disability. 34% of respondents said they had a disability compared to 18% in the overall population[5].

⇒ Responses are representative of the most commonly occurring ethnicities of White British and White Other. In their survey responses, 93% described themselves as White British and 5% as White Other[5].

[2] The adult population of Tamworth includes those residents who are aged 18 and above, MYE 2015.

[3] To achieve a +/-4% confidence interval for the residents survey, 500 responses would need to be achieved from Tamworth Borough Residents and to achieve a +/-3% confidence interval, 800 responses would need to be returned.

[4] Mid Year Population Estimates, 2015, ONS

[5] Census 2011, ONS

3. VIEWS ON THE CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The Council has a revised vision for 'One Tamworth, Perfectly Placed—Open for business since the 7th Century AD' with a focus upon working with partners to ensure:

'Living a quality life in Tamworth': which includes protecting vulnerable people, tackling inequalities, enabling healthy lifestyles and ensuring a safe, clean and green environment.

'Growing stronger together in Tamworth': which includes encouraging economic growth and development, working with schools to encourage higher skilled, better paid jobs, creating a vibrant and sustainable town centre, protecting culture and heritage and adopting a commercial approach to asset management.

'Delivering quality services in Tamworth': which includes providing accurate information, improving access, supporting residents and businesses, enabling greater public engagement and ensuring value for money.

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the importance of the priorities which sit beneath the visionary themes of 'living a quality life in Tamworth', 'growing stronger together in Tamworth' and 'delivering quality services in Tamworth.' Respondents were asked to rate how important each of the priorities were on a scale of 1-5 (or 1-9 for 'growing stronger') with one being the most important and 5 or 9 being the least important.

3.1 Living a quality life in Tamworth

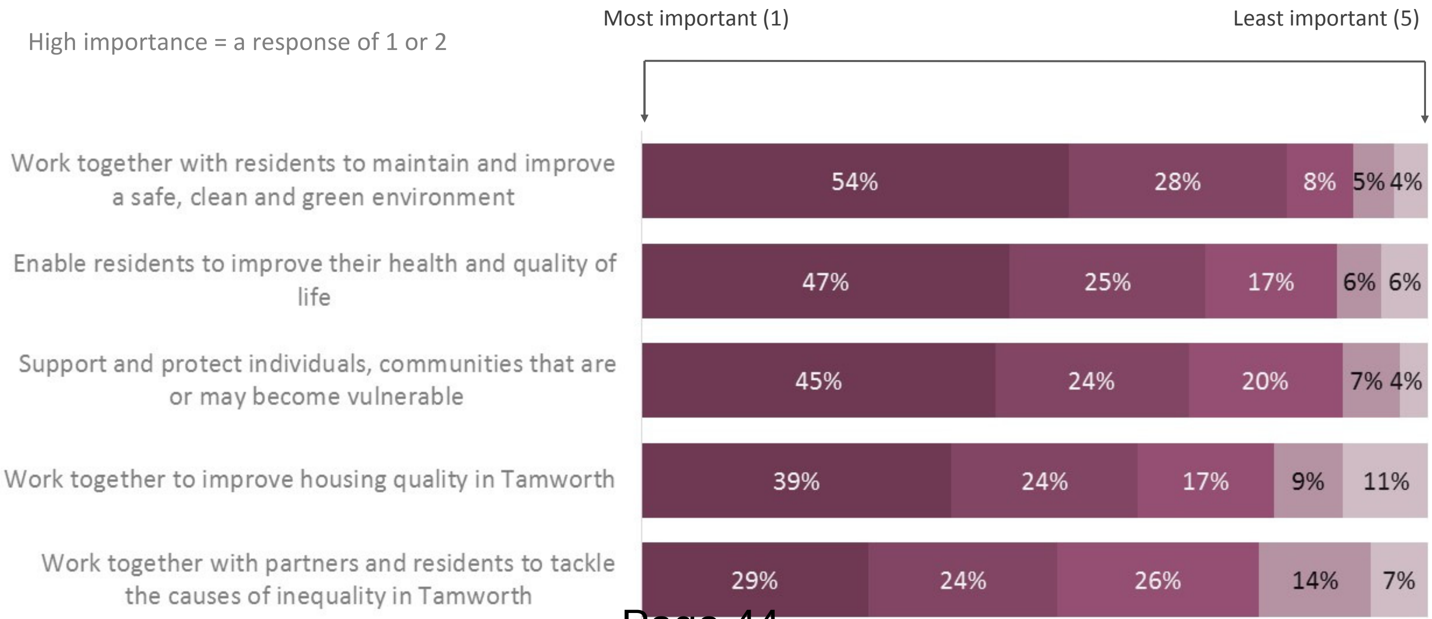
⇒ All priorities under 'living a quality life in Tamworth' were given a high importance rating by half of respondents or more.

⇒ The most important priority was 'working together with residents to maintain and improve a safe, clean and green environment'. 82% gave this a high rating. This was closely followed by 'enabling residents to improve their health and quality of life' and 72% gave this a high importance rating.

⇒ Considered least important was 'working together with partners and residents to tackle the causes of inequality in Tamworth'. However, 53% still gave this a high importance rating.

⇒ Respondents overall views are documented in the figure below.

Figure 3.1: Please tell us how important our priorities under 'living a quality life in Tamworth' are to you/your business/ organisation, with 1 being most important and 5 being the least important (%)



Base: All respondents

3.2 Comparing results by respondent group

The graph below illustrates the breakdown of responses for each priority by respondent group. The results shown are the proportion of each group who felt that each of the priorities were of high importance (i.e. respondents provided an importance rating of one or two). Differences by respondent group are outlined below;

⇒ The most important priority overall, 'working together with residents to maintain and improve a safe, clean and green environment' was a greater priority for businesses (with 88% giving it a high importance rating). Fewer residents (82%) and community and voluntary groups (80%) gave it a high importance rating.

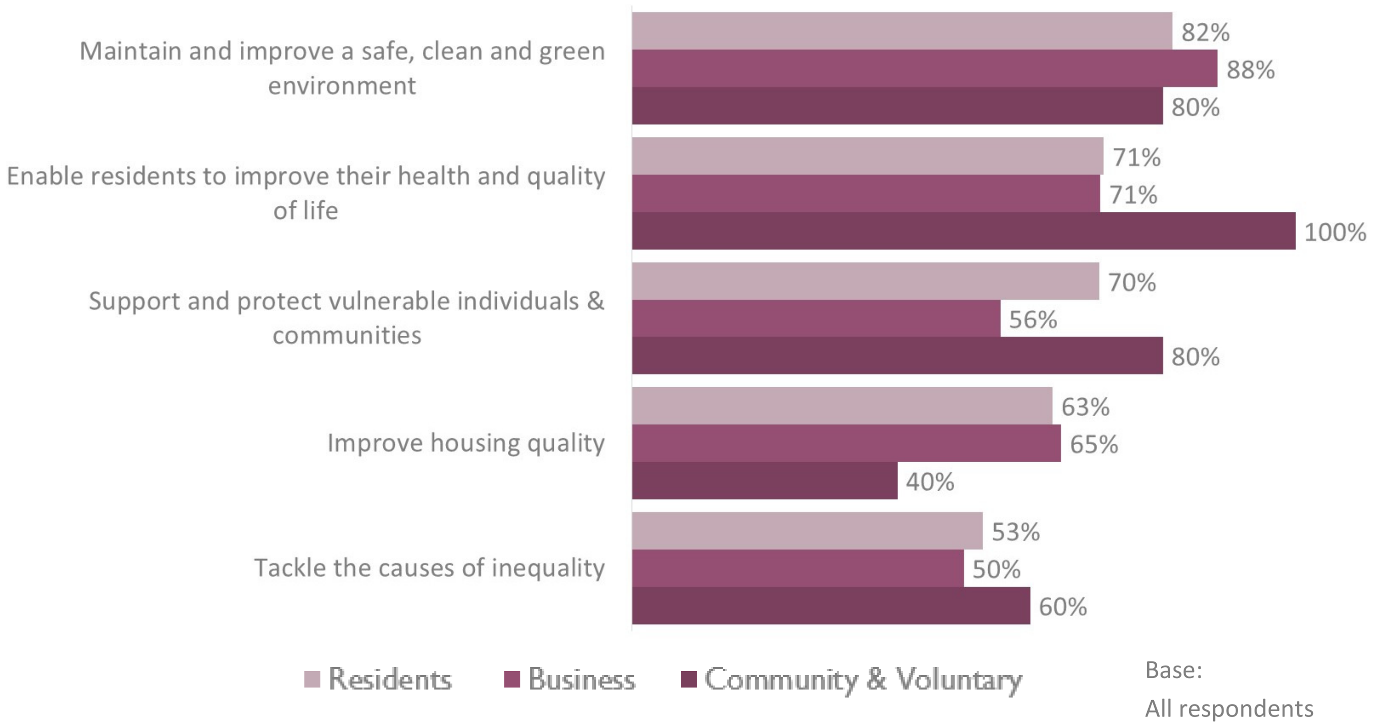
⇒ Broadly speaking, the top two overall priorities of 'working together with residents to maintain and improve a safe, clean and green environment' and 'enabling residents to improve their health and quality of life' were important across all three groups.

⇒ However, residents and businesses both ranked 'working together with residents to maintain and improve a safe, clean and green environment' as their most important priority whilst community and voluntary groups ranked this joint second.

⇒ Community and voluntary groups considered 'enabling residents to improve their health and quality of life' as most important whilst residents and businesses ranked this second.

⇒ Whilst there were minimal differences in the overall priorities between the three groups, community and voluntary groups did reflect a greater strength of feeling in three of the five priorities.

Figure 3.2: The importance of priorities under 'living a quality life in Tamworth' by respondent group (%)



Base:
All respondents

When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the business respondent group and the community and voluntary groups responses are considerably smaller than the residents response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

3.3 Growing stronger together in Tamworth

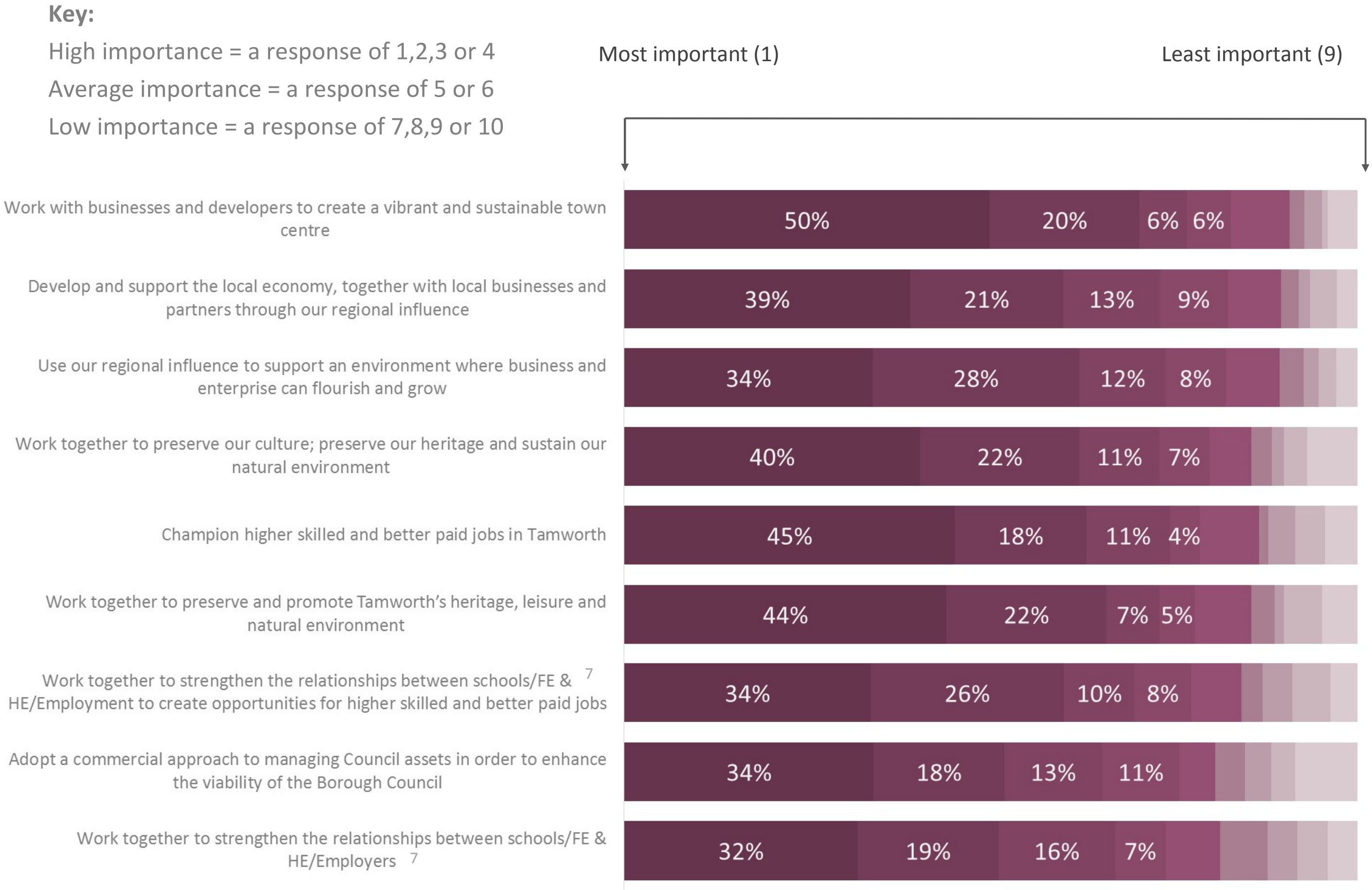
⇒ All priorities under 'growing stronger together in Tamworth' were considered important.

⇒ Three quarters or more gave a high importance rating to each of the priorities.

⇒ Views ranged from 83%[5] giving a high importance rating to 'working with businesses and developers to create a vibrant and sustainable town centre' to 74% rating 'working together to strengthen the relationships between schools/FE & HE/Employers' as highly important.

⇒ Respondents overall views are documented in the figure below.

Figure 3.3: Please tell us how important our priorities under 'growing stronger together in Tamworth' are to you/your business/organisation, with 1 being most important and 9 being the least important (%)[6]



Base: All respondents

[6] Where responses in the graph do not exactly match reported figures in the text, this is due to rounding to the nearest percentage point in the graphical display.

[7] FE & HE refers to further education and higher education

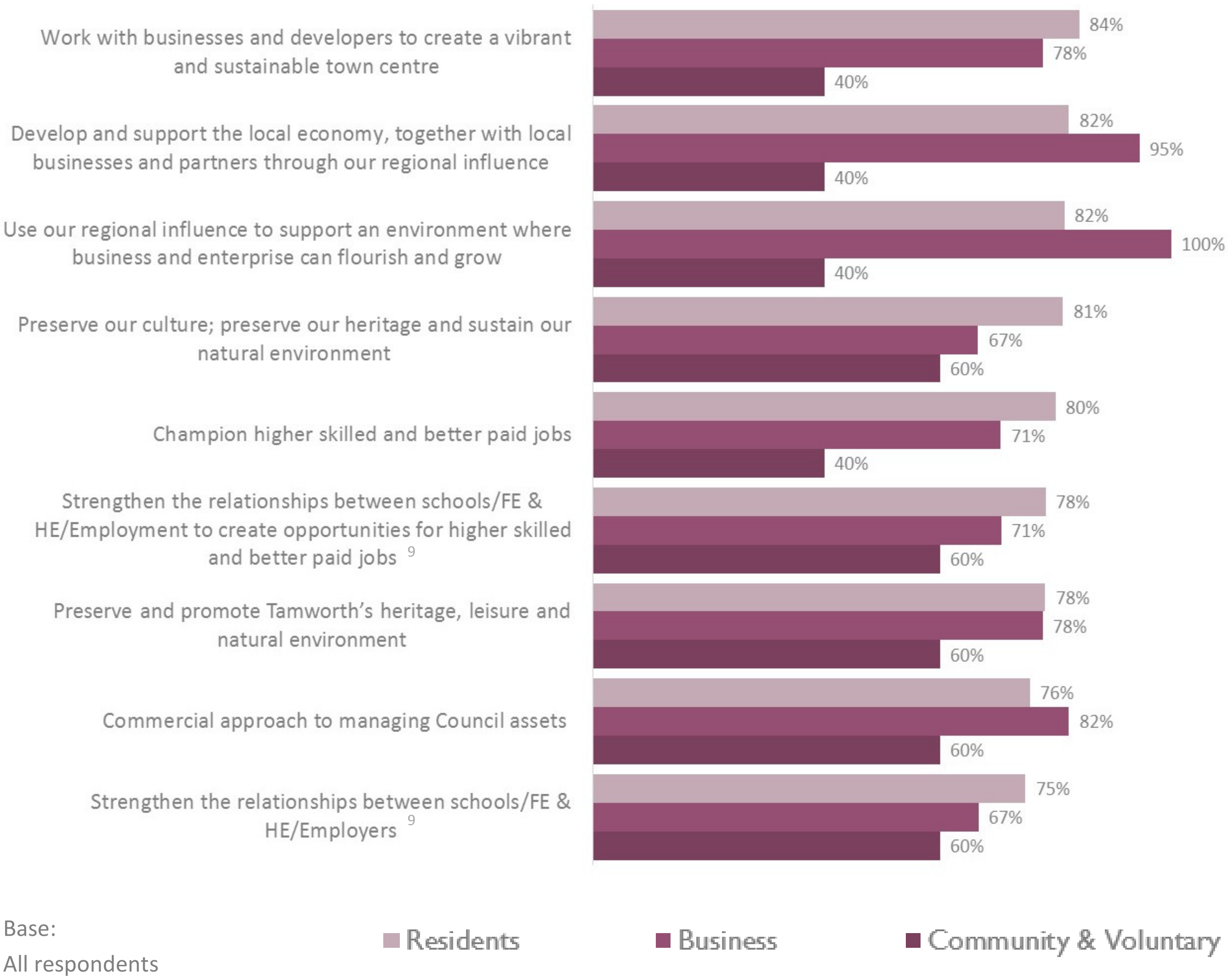
3.4 Comparing results by respondent group [8]

The graph below illustrates the breakdown of responses against each priority by respondent group. The results shown are the proportion of each group who felt that each of the priorities were of high importance to address.

⇒ There was some commonality in the responses by group. Two of the top three priorities, 'develop and support the local economy, together with local businesses and partners through our regional influence' and 'use our regional influence to support an environment where business and enterprise can flourish and grow' were among the top three priorities for both residents and businesses. These were not among the most important priorities for community and voluntary groups.

⇒ Businesses gave higher priority to 'using our regional influence to support an environment where business and enterprise can flourish and grow' and to 'developing and supporting the local economy together with local businesses and partners through our regional influence'.

Figure 3.4: The importance of priorities under 'growing stronger together in Tamworth' by respondent group (%)



Base:
All respondents

⇒ Residents and businesses were more likely than community and voluntary groups to give a higher importance rating to each of the nine priorities under 'growing stronger together in Tamworth'.

[8] When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the business respondent group and the community and voluntary groups responses are considerably smaller than the residents response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

[9] FE & HE refers to further education and higher education.

3.5 Delivering quality services in Tamworth

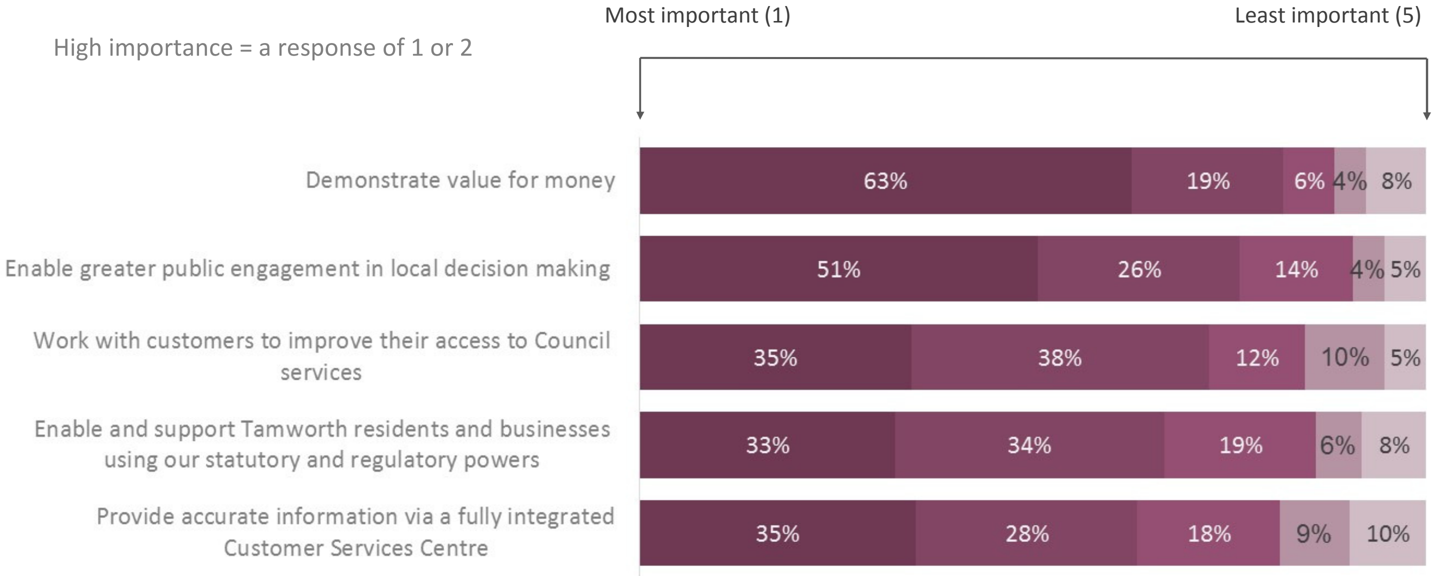
⇒ All priorities under 'delivering quality services in Tamworth' were given a high importance rating by half of respondents or more.

⇒ Of the five priorities, 'demonstrating value for money' was the most important priority with 82% rating this as highly important.

⇒ Considered least important was 'providing accurate information via a fully integrated customer services centre'. However, 63% still gave this a high importance rating.

⇒ Respondents overall views are documented in the figure below.

Figure 3.5: Please tell us how important our priorities under 'delivering quality services in Tamworth' are to you/your business/ organisation, with 1 being most important and 5 being the least important (%)



Base: All respondents

3.6 Comparing results by respondent group[10]

The graph below illustrates the breakdown of responses for each priority by respondent group. The results shown are the proportion of each group who felt that each of the priorities were of high importance (i.e. respondents provided an importance rating of one or two).

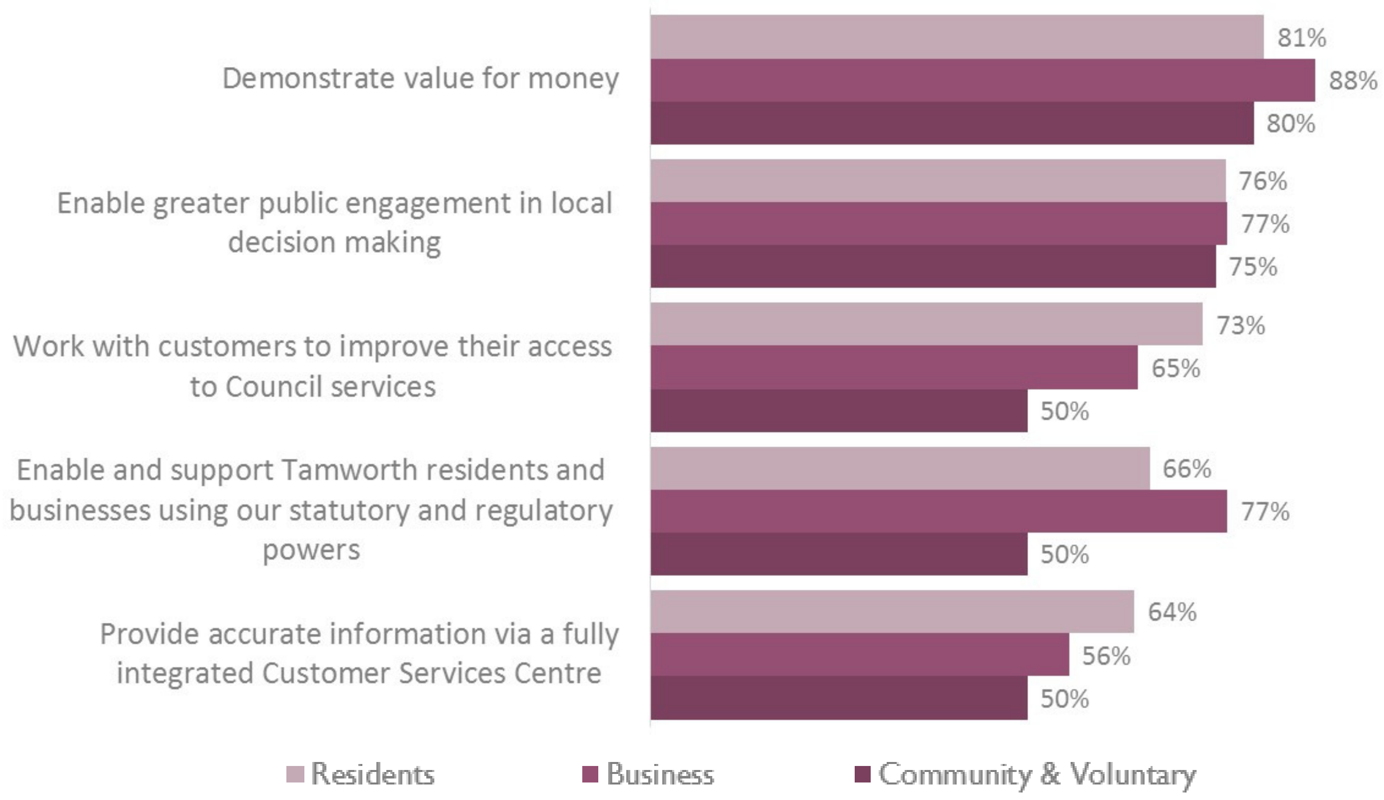
⇒ There was commonality in the responses by group. All groups rated 'demonstrate value for money' as their most important priority and 'enable greater public engagement in local decision making' as their second (or joint second) most important priority.

⇒ All groups also rated 'providing accurate information via a fully integrated Customer Services Centre' as their least (or joint least) most important priority.

⇒ Community and voluntary organisations rated all five priorities lower than residents and businesses. The greatest differences was for 'enabling and supporting Tamworth residents and businesses using our statutory and regulatory powers' and 'working with customers to improve their access to Council services'.

Figure 3.6: The importance of priorities under 'delivering quality services in Tamworth' by respondent group (%)

High importance = a response of 1 or 2



Base: All respondents

[10] When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the business respondent group and the community and voluntary groups responses are considerably smaller than the residents response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

3.7 Views on the revised vison and priorities

The general consensus was very much in support of both the vision and the priorities which lie beneath it. For example, *"I consider how you have set out your vision to be of sound reasoning", "the revisions are good and insightful"* and *"I think it's great news that the revised 'vision' could be totally coordinated, bringing together priorities across all areas to do with quality of life, growth and services".*

All of the 'priorities' were considered important for Tamworth as a community and this was reflected through the importance ratings they attributed to each of the priorities. However for some this had made it *"difficult to prioritise".* Some did also express concerns. For example, *"some of the priorities partly duplicate and distract"* from what they felt should be *"the highest priority, creating higher paid jobs"*. Some also felt priority should be given to different areas and this included support for *"education"*.

Respondents were generally keen to comment on both the strategic priorities and the priority aims which fall beneath these. Those comments shared were not necessarily reflective of all respondents. They may however be of use to decision makers as they raise questions, queries and present ideas for reflection. Comments were shared by respondents on both 'living a quality life in Tamworth' and 'growing stronger together in Tamworth' and these have been summarised below;

'Living a quality life in Tamworth'

- *"Quality of life is also about being surrounded by green spaces essential for exercise and happiness. Please stop building on green sites".*

'Growing stronger together in Tamworth'

- *"What does 'growing stronger together' mean? The title needs to be more specific and less generic".*
- *"Growing stronger together must include the environment. I note we have some issues with air quality in the town and cannot avoid a reference to our 'fat town' title. We must build a plan to encourage people to walk and cycle more, not simply drive to the retail parks".*
- *"I feel that Tamworth Borough Council are farming out services too much and too easily. These are not forward movements but steps backward".*
- *"Working together to strengthen the relationships between schools/Further Education & Higher Education/Employers is an important sector, but if you consider the lifetime period after formal education is considerably longer than that within it, 'community education' needs a higher profile".*
- *"I think that promoting Tamworth - both heritage and shopping - is important as it brings both visitors and investment. However, Ventura needs to be addressed as the traffic congestion actually deters people from coming to Tamworth even though we have big name shops".*
- *"Stop looking at 'heritage' as it is a waste of money. Look to the future instead of to the past".*
- *"We need to work closely with these other districts to develop modern 'Tamworth' and to increase our 'regional' influence".*
- *"It's important that businesses offer youngsters the chance to develop new skills but there should be support from the council to help businesses which provide opportunities to young people to grow".*
- *"We need to move on from being a commuter town to being a serious employer of a skilled and educated workforce for progressive modern businesses".*

4. SPENDING ON SERVICES

Respondents were provided with planned spend on major cost areas for 2016/17 and were asked whether they felt the Council should increase, decrease or keep spending the same.

⇒ It was most common for respondents across the majority of service areas to say that they would prefer the level of spend to remain the same. This was the case in 11 of the 12 major cost areas.

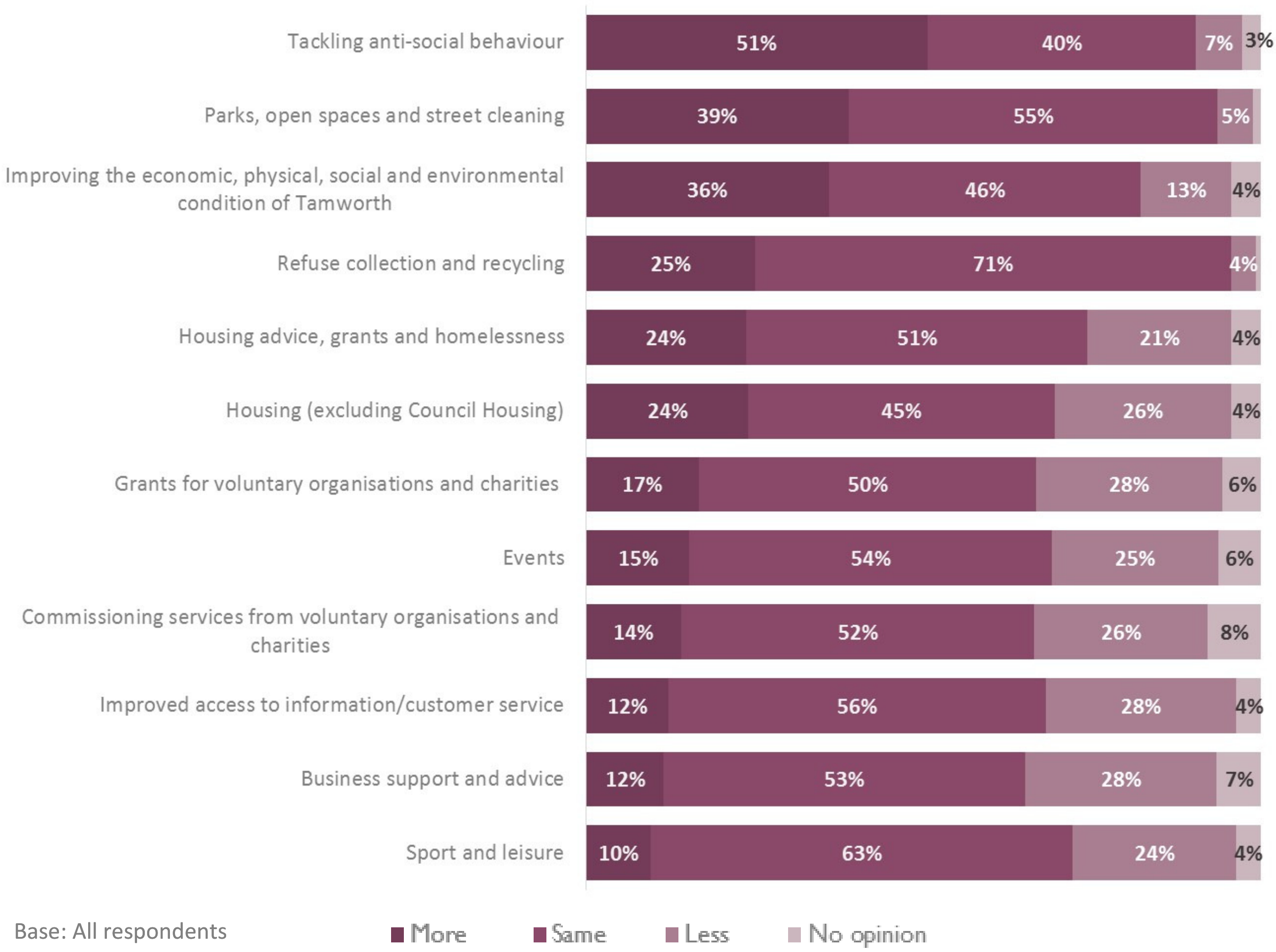
⇒ This was particularly apparent regarding spend on 'refuse and recycling' with 71% wanting to maintain the same level of spend on this service. In addition, nearly two thirds (63%) indicated their preference for keeping spend on 'sport and leisure' the same.

⇒ Spending less was the second most common response (in 8 out of the 12 major cost areas). 28% wanted to see less spending in each of the following areas; 'grants for voluntary organisations and charities', 'improved access to information/customer services' and 'business support and advice'.

⇒ Spending more was still a priority in some areas and mostly notably for 'tackling anti-social behaviour'. Over half (51%) wanted spending increased on this major cost area.

The collective views on all respondents are illustrated in the graph below:

Figure 4.1: Preferred spend for 2016/17 on major cost areas (%)



Base: All respondents

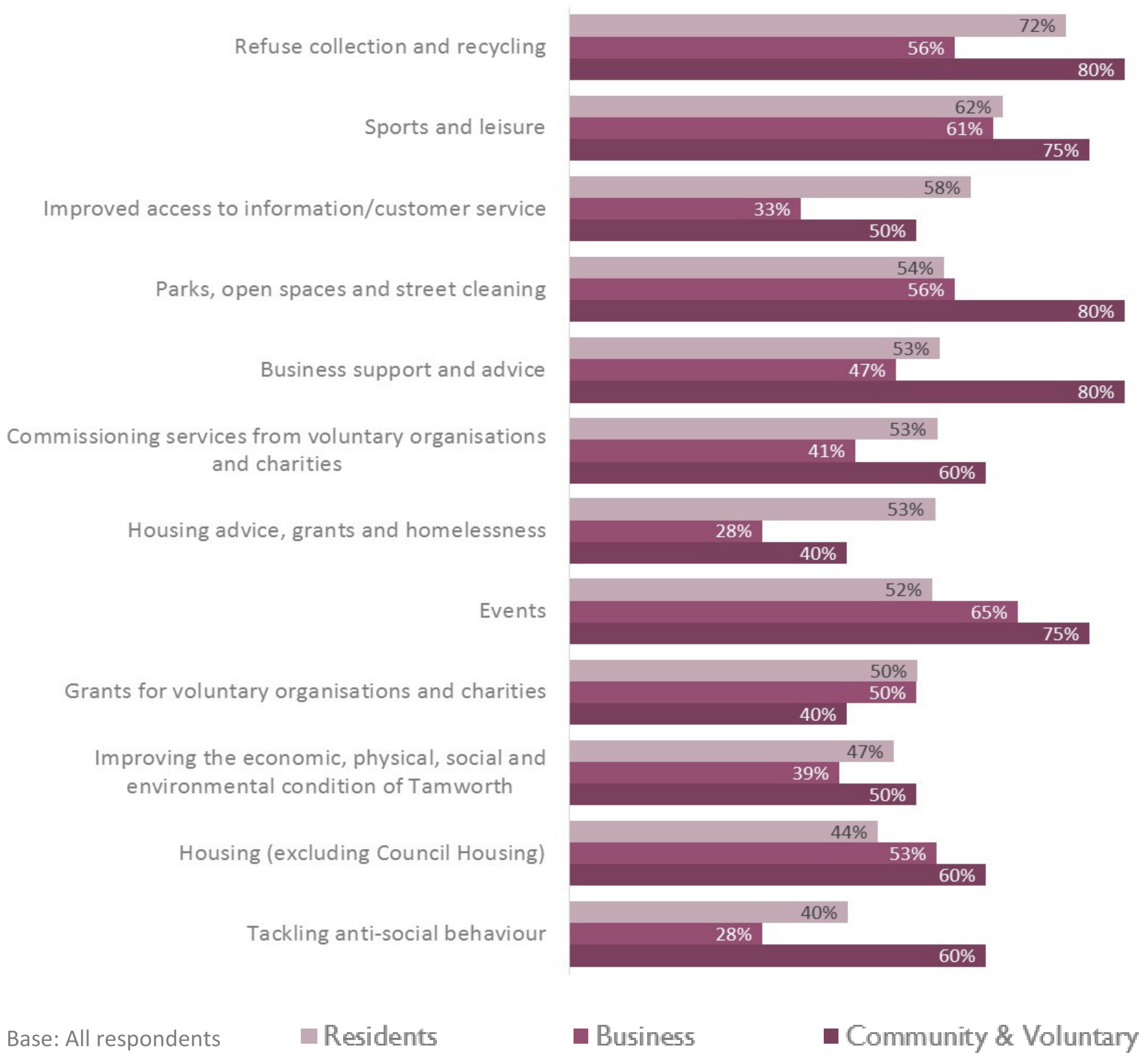
4.1 Maintain levels of spending[11]

There was similarity but also some differences in views by respondent group. Residents views generally mirrored those of the overall results (as they were the largest group). However, all groups had some distinctive ideas about which services should retain the same amount of spend.

⇒ Of the three groups, community and voluntary groups were most likely to want to retain current levels of spending on services. This was the case in 9 out of the 12 major cost areas.

⇒ Businesses were least likely to say the same and this was the case in 8 out of the 12 major cost areas.

Figure 4.2: Maintaining spend for 2016/17 on major cost areas by respondent group (%)



Base: All respondents

[11] When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the business respondent group and the community and voluntary groups responses are considerably smaller than the residents response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

4.2 Reduce levels of spending[12]

There were clear differences in views by respondent group for reduced spending.

⇒ Community and voluntary groups were most likely to say that spending should not be reduced. This was the case in 10 out of the 12 cost centres. They were however most likely to feel that spending could be reduced on both 'housing' and 'tackling anti-social behaviour'.

⇒ Businesses were more likely than any other group to feel that spending could be reduced on 'improved access to information/customer services' and 'housing advice, grants and homelessness'.

Figure 4.3: Reducing spend for 2016/17 on major cost areas by respondent group (%)

Base: All respondents

When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the business respondent group and the community and voluntary organisation responses are considerably smaller than the residents response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group type.

[12] When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the business respondent group and the community and voluntary groups responses are considerably smaller than the residents response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

4.3 Increase levels of spending[13]

There were similarities but also differences in views by respondent group.

⇒ Residents and businesses views were generally more closely aligned. There were however some exceptions to this. Most notably, just 8% of residents felt spending should be increased in 'sports and leisure services'.

⇒ Community and voluntary groups were more likely than any of the other groups to advocate increased spend. This was the case in 7 out of the 12 major cost areas.

Figure 4.4: Increasing spend for 2016/17 on major cost areas by respondent group (%)

Base: All respondents

Businesses and community and voluntary organisations prioritised 'commissioning services from voluntary organisations and charities' higher than residents did. The former groups both ranked this cost area as 5 out of 12 and the latter 9 out of 12. Businesses also gave lower priority to 'events' than residents and community and voluntary organisations did.

[13] When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the business respondent group and the community and voluntary groups responses are considerably smaller than the residents response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

4.4 Comments on spend

The general consensus amongst respondents was the Council had *"managed it's budgets fairly well over the last 10 years".* This was *"during times of austerity"* and respondents acknowledged the *"challenges"* and *"difficulties"* this had placed upon the Council.

Respondents did however feel that Tamworth could make some improvements to it's spend. Broadly speaking these included making efficiencies, focusing on core service provision and supporting the development of volunteering.

A relatively small proportion of respondents chose to comment on this question and therefore the views shared may not necessarily be reflective of all respondents. Those comments that were shared are summarised below;

Making efficiencies

Respondent commenting felt that the Council could aim to achieve *"better value for money"* and *"get smarter in the way that money is spent*". This could include *"making savings in customer service and back office functions".*

Focus on core provision

There was a recognition that focusing on core service provision should be an aim. Respondents however who commented on this, did have different interpretations of what this would mean in practice.

For example; *"sadly, the provision of sports and leisure, and events are luxury service items rather than core essentials and should be first for scrutiny"* and *"the sport and leisure activities I believe are important as they can contribute a great deal to the health and well being of Tamworth citizens".*

Volunteering

Some individual respondents were willing to offer their own time as volunteers, for example *"some of the costs above will be in administration, which could be done by my [baby boomers] generation on a voluntary basis".*

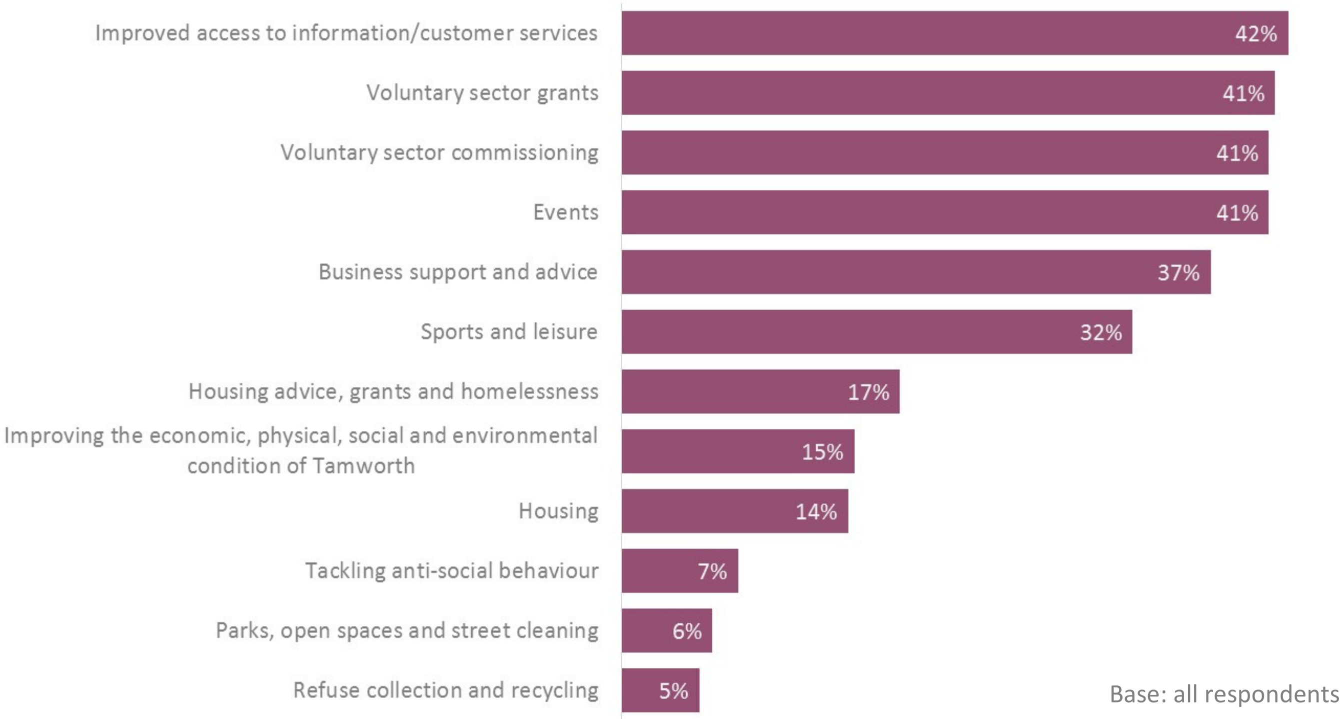
Voluntary and community groups also stressed that they needed help with *"donors and sponsorship"* to enable them to *"improve services and provide accessible premises to their clients".*

4.5 Savings and reducing costs[14]

Respondents were provided with a list of services and asked to indicate up to three which could be prioritised for savings or reduced costs.

It was most common for respondents to indicate that they would like to see savings or reduced costs in the following areas; 'improved access to information/customer services', 'voluntary sector grants', 'voluntary sector commissioning and events'. Respondents were least likely to want savings made to 'refuse and recycling services', 'parks, open spaces, street cleaning' and 'tackling anti-social behaviour'.

Figure 4.5: Which THREE services should the Council look at if they had to make savings or reduce costs? (%)



All three respondent groups mirrored the overall top priority for savings or reduced costs. For residents and businesses, it was their first priority for savings and for community and voluntary groups it was their joint second priority.

All three groups also included 'voluntary sector grants' in their top five priorities for savings. However, both residents and businesses gave this higher priority than community and voluntary groups.

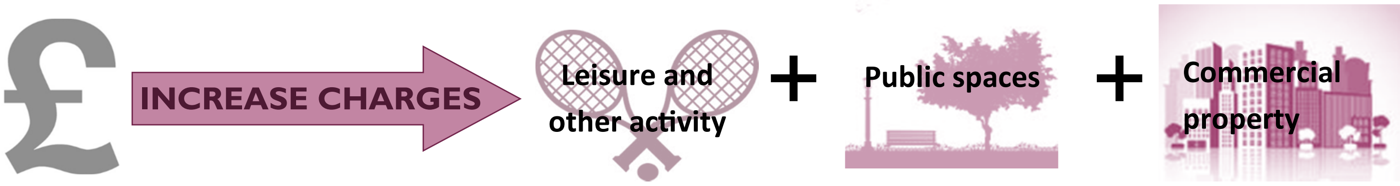
4.6 Comments on savings

Some respondents were concerned that *"reducing costs would also mean reducing services",* others did not feel *"well enough informed to know what the impact would be".* Some respondents *"reluctantly"* made selections that could *"fund themselves"* or be *"privately funded or supported".*
One community and voluntary group felt priorities for savings could be minimised or avoided by using voluntary groups who could *"help make the money go further"*. Another stressed that *"developers should be taken to task if they do not give a fair deal"* and *"penalty clauses should be clamped on sub-contractors who don't finish jobs".*

[14] When drawing conclusions from these responses, it is important to remember that the business respondent group and the community and voluntary groups responses are considerably smaller than the residents response group, therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

4.7 Which TWO income areas do you think the Council could/should increase and decrease charges for?

Increase charges: It was most common for respondents to stress the need to increase public charges for 'leisure and other activities' (61%), 'public spaces' (51%) or 'commercial property' (46%).



However, respondents comments reflected a genuine reluctance for increases in charges to any of the identified areas of spend because of the impact on vulnerable people as well as residents and businesses in general. For example;

"I don't think charges should be increased in any of the above as they will either effect the poor by cutting leisure activities and public spaces, or the quality of live by cutting waste management or squeeze commercial enterprises down".

Respondents were particularly concerned about the impact of current 'car parking' charges on the town centre and were most adverse to increased charges for these.

"Parking is already very high and dramatically effecting foot fall in the town centre with a knock-on effect on shops" and if car parking keeps going up, no one will shop in town. *"Car parking charges are making Tamworth a 'ghost' town".*

Decrease charges: Respondents were most likely to say that they would like to see decreased charges for 'car parking'. Three quarters of respondents overall (76%) indicated that they would like to see these decreased. 'Car parking' and 'rents/rates' featured prominently in respondents comments: For example, decreased charges for 'car parking' would *"encourage more visitors to the town, more people to shop/ eat/visit the town, therefore increasing economic growth to retailers"* and *"rent and rates are too high for shops in the town to attract new occupants. Just look at the number of empty shops which are bringing in no revenue".*

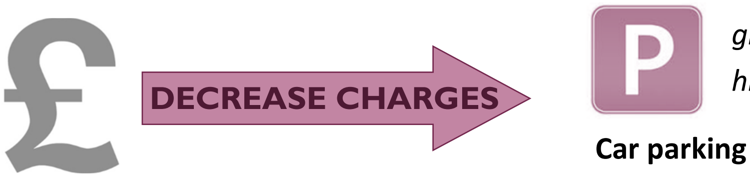


Figure 4.6: Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council should increase charges for (%)

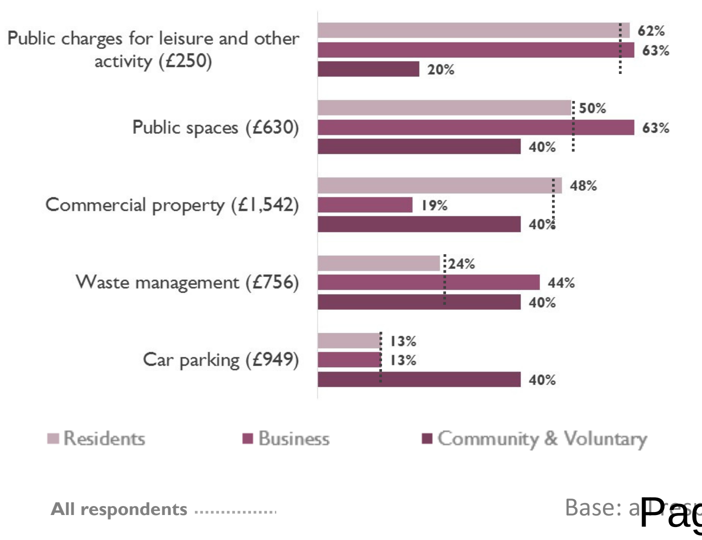
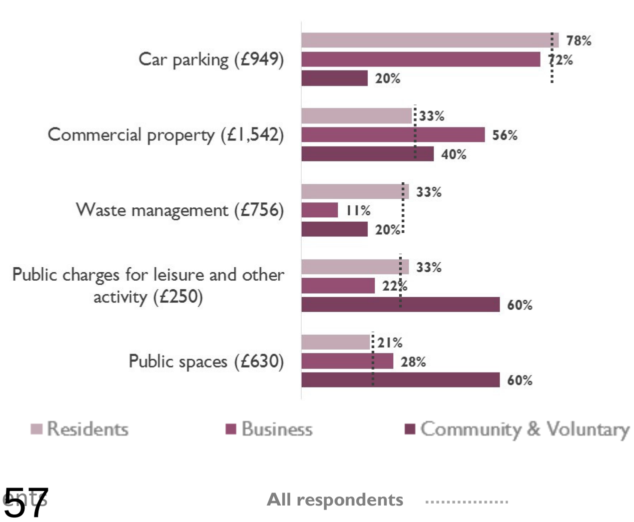


Figure 4.7: Which TWO of the below income areas do you think the Council should decrease charges for (%)



Base: all respondents

5. MAKING TAMWORTH A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE

The following questions were posed to those respondents who were participating in the consultation as a local resident.

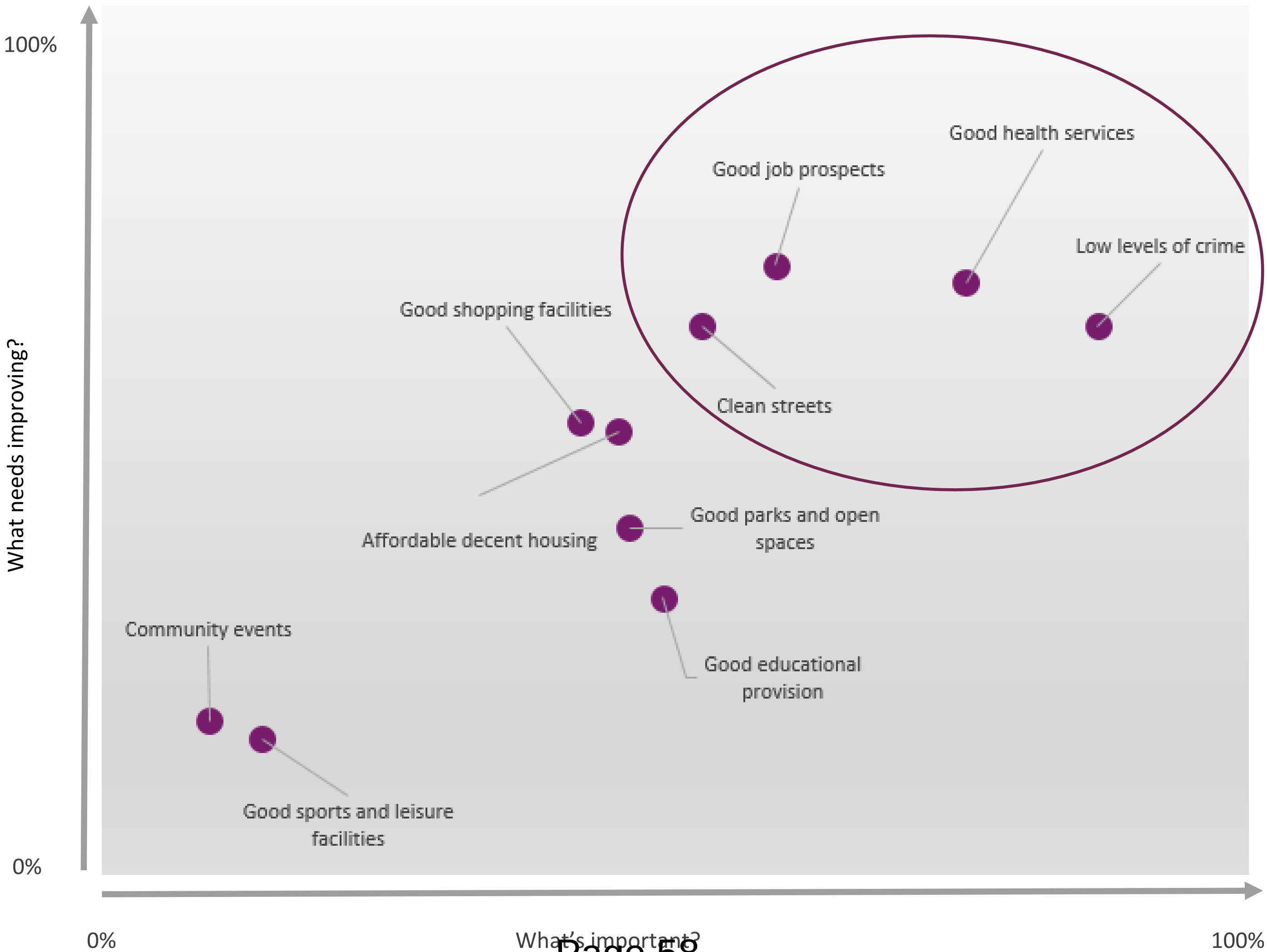
5.1 What makes somewhere a good place to live AND what needs improving most to make Tamworth a better place to live?

The graph below depicts both 'what's important' and 'what needs improving most to make Tamworth a better place to live'.

It is clear to see that 'low levels of crime', 'good health services', 'good job prospects' and 'clean streets' were considered to be those aspects which were most likely to make somewhere a good place to live. The first three of these were also highlighted in last years consultation as being most important in making somewhere a good place to live. This year, slightly more prominence has been placed on 'clean streets' being important in making somewhere a good place to live.

The same four elements were also considered to be the most important in making Tamworth a better place to live. The order of priority was however different with respondents feeling that 'job prospects' was the one aspect which needed improving the most in Tamworth. This was followed by 'good health services', 'clean streets' and 'low levels of crime'.

Figure 5.1: 'What makes somewhere a good place to live' AND 'what needs improving most to make Tamworth a better



Base: all residents

5.2 What would make Tamworth a better place to live

Residents of Tamworth were invited to suggest improvements which they felt would make Tamworth a better place to live. Respondents were keen to comment providing suggestions across a range of themes. A summary of respondents comments, in order of their identified priority for improvement, have been outlined below.

Good job prospects

Whilst 'good job prospects' was a high priority for improvement (it ranked 1 out of 10), it was not a common focal point of respondents comments. Those that did remark on it stressed the need for professional and higher paid jobs. Responses included *"we need more professional jobs provided by hospitals, courts and education"* and *"if there is a significant increase in higher paid jobs it will have a positive effect".*

Good health services

'Good health services' were a high priority for improvement (ranking 2 out of 10) and they were also a focal point for respondents comments. *"Better health care for the elderly"* was requested and also *"easier access to healthcare in general for the growing population".* For example*; "Tamworth is a growing area and we have less hospital availability than ever before, but you still want to build houses".* Some respondents felt that current access could be improved. This is evident in comments such as *"access to a doctor is difficult"* and *"it can take a week or more sometimes for you to be able to see your GP".*

Clean streets

'Clean streets' were a high priority for improvement (ranking 3 out of 10) and a common focus for comments. Respondents felt that *"street cleanliness was a big issue throughout the town."* Residents wanted to see *"less litter around, especially in the castle grounds"*. Respondents comments suggested that this was of fundamental importance for the image of Tamworth and also necessary for encouraging businesses to locate; *"If Tamworth were really clean, surely business, people and providers would be encouraged to come here".* Some residents also felt that people should be encouraged to *"take pride in their area"* and schools and colleges should be encouraged to *"educate people to be proud of their town".*

Low level of crime

'Low level of crime' ranked 4 out of 10. However, it was not a focal point for comments. Those that did comment expressed a desire to see *"more police officers on the streets" and "anti social behaviour being dealt with in a firm way"*. These were viewed as *"essential to making Tamworth a better place to live",* by those that were commenting.

Good shopping facilities

'Good shopping facilities' were a medium priority for improvement, ranking 5 out of 10. They were also frequently mentioned in residents comments. Respondents felt that improvements to the town centre and support for businesses were vital for encouraging shoppers. Comments included;

- *"Encourage more specialised shops, pop up shops and upmarket food outlets"* and *"encourage more local stores who are allowed to compete with big businesses".*
- *"Improve transport links to Ventura for out of town shopping".*
- *"Consider reducing the rents on commercial premises to encourage businesses to open in the town centre".*

Affordable decent housing

This was a medium priority for improvement and a relatively popular subject for discussion amongst residents. Respondents commented on the need for 'affordable decent housing' but also expressed concerns regarding the pressures this would create on *"space", "services"* and *"the transport network".*

Comments included;

- *"Enabling Tamworth residents to access more affordable decent housing must be the priority".*
- *"My Daughter would love to buy her own house but I can't see any hope even though there are 1000's of houses about to be build in/around Tamworth over the next few years - not in the Council's control as profit driven developers are in charge".*
- *"Stop squashing houses in gaps around other buildings".*
- *"Put pressure on the appropriate highways authorities to improve and create a road system to cope with the increased housing development due and taking place".*
- *"Tamworth is a growing area and we have less hospital availability than ever before, but you still want to build houses".*

Good parks and open spaces

'Good parks and open spaces' were a relatively low priority for improvement, ranking 7 out of 10. They were however discussed frequently in residents comments. Residents showed their appreciation for current facilities and displayed their disappointment where facilities were being lost, where access had been restricted or where expectations had not been met. Some residents felt Tamworth needed more green spaces and that suggested that these could be managed to enable improved access. Residents comments are summarised below;

- *"Tamworth is lovely for it's countryside and open spaces (at the moment!)".*
- *"Sadly the main open space has been sold off"* and *"unfortunately the decision to sell off the golf course has already begun to contribute to a deteriorating quality of life in Tamworth"* and *"loss of one of the things Tamworth needs - open green spaces".*
- *"Tamworth needs to review and complete its cycle path network. When I moved into my current house I was told the estates cycle path would be connected to the town's network 'soon'. 16 years later: still waiting. I rarely cycle due to the dangerous roads".*
- *"I think you should cut back LESS of the grass verges in the summer, so that the wild grasses seed and feed butterflies and insects".*

Good education provision

This ranked low (8 out of 10) in respondents overall priorities for improvement and it was not a focal point for residents comments. Those that did comment felt that students should be able to access higher level education in the town and schools/colleges needed to attract good, reliable staff. Comments included;

- *"We need the ability to study for degree level education within Tamworth. This will improve the prospects and aspirations of many residents".*
- *"Good teachers in our colleges who stay a full year and not leave half way through unless they are no good".*

Community events

This ranked low (9 out of 10) in respondents priorities for improvement and only one respondent commented to say they would like to see *"more promotion of the good events and places to see in Tamworth".*

Good sports and leisure facilities

'Good sports and leisure facilities' ranked lowest (10 out of 10) in residents priorities for improvement. These were also not a focal point for residents comments. Those that did comment, did so on healthier lifestyles and the need to better market the leisure attractions which Tamworth has to offer.

- *"Get people out of their cars and using the great open spaces and cycle ways we have around town".*
- *"Make better use of the bicycle paths in the town and consider improving and expanding their usability. Consider building a new national standard BMX track".*
- *"We also have a marketable castle and the attraction of Drayton Manor Park. Surely more should be made of this to attract visitors and tourists?"*

Additional comments

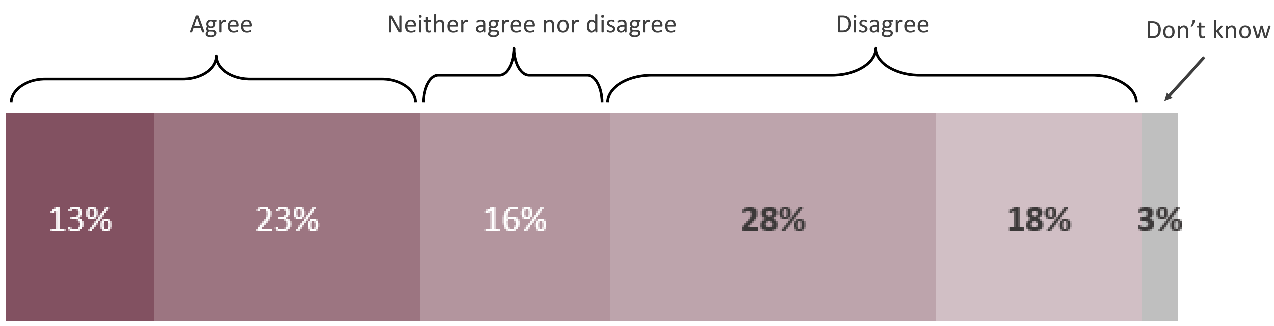
Additional comments on other priorities for improvement were mainly focused on 'roads and highways'. These included the need to both improve the quality of roads and to develop the network to ensure it could cope with future pressures. 'Affordable public transport' and 'access to public transport' were additional concerns.

- *"Tamworth has expanded so much and especially at Amington/Glascote with further housing expansion in this area planned. However, two main roads Amington/Tamworth Road and Glascote Road B5000 - very, very congested—congestion linked to development".*
- *"Put pressure on the appropriate highways authorities to improve and create a road system to cope with the increased housing development due and taking place".*
- *"The roads around town centre need looking at—big holes".*
- *"Public transport in Tamworth needs to be revised. Arriva are removing vital bus services which means certain areas are without a service".*

5.3 Can you influence decisions which affect your local area?

Whilst views on this question were diverse, a slightly larger proportion of respondents disagreed that they could influence decisions which affected their local area. The second largest proportion of respondents agreed that they could influence decisions which affected their local area.

Figure 5.2: % who agree/disagree that they can influence decisions which affect their local area



Base: all residents

5.4 Would you like to be more involved in the decisions which affect your local area?

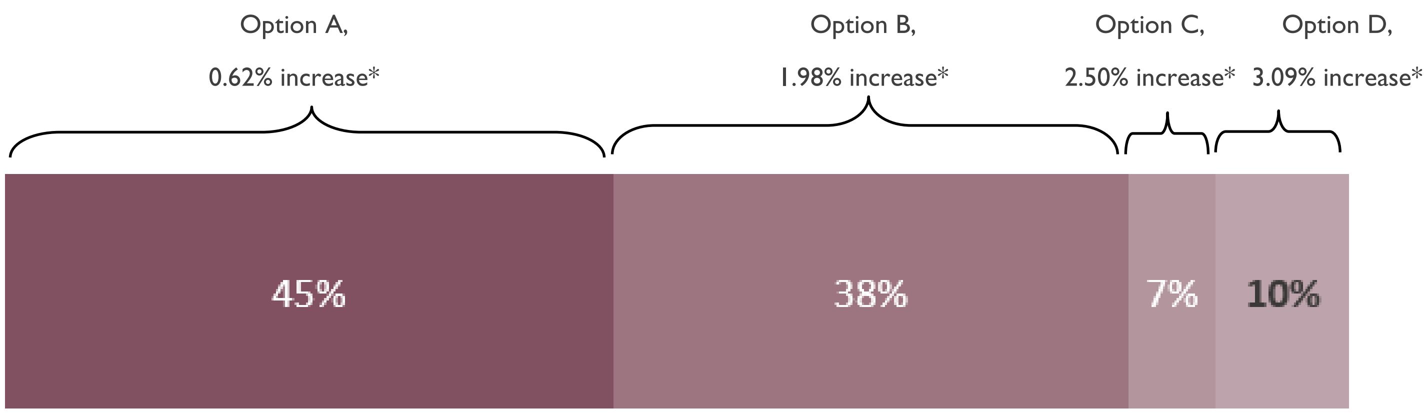
Respondents were unanimously in support of being involved in decisions which affected their local area. 44% said 'yes, they would like to be involved' and 49% would like to be involved, 'depending on the issue'.

5.5 What would you consider to be an acceptable Council Tax increase for the 2016/17 budget?

The largest proportion of respondents would prefer the lowest level of increase offered with nearly half of all respondents (45%) selecting option A as their preferred choice. Option B, the second lowest level of increase was also the second most popular option for increases. Minimal support was evident for both options C and D.

Option B, a 1.98% increase on a band D property is most similar to the average level of increase witnessed for all authorities across the West Midlands (1.5%) according to CIPFA's (The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) latest annual council tax survey.

Figure 5.3: What would you consider to be an acceptable Council Tax increase for the 2016/17 budget?



Base: all residents

*Increases shown are based on a Band D property

6. MAKING TAMWORTH BETTER FOR BUSINESS

Respondents who completed the questionnaire from the perspective of a local business were asked to provide their opinions and comment on a number of business related questions in order to gather a picture of how Tamworth can be made better for businesses.

A total of 19 businesses responded to the survey (that's one more business than last year and five more than two years ago). This section explores the questions businesses were asked and the responses that they gave[15].

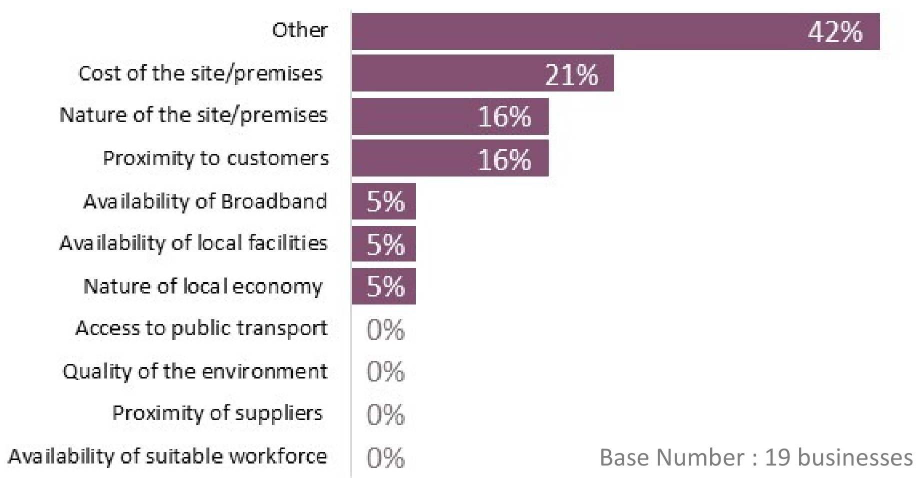
6.1 Business type and location

Of the businesses that responded to the consultation, location in 'a town centre site' (32%, 6 businesses) or 'industrial estate' (32%, 6 businesses) was most common. 21% (4 businesses) were sited 'out of town', 11% (2 businesses) 'at home' and 5% (1 business) in a 'local neighbourhood area'.

The majority of businesses were independent with no other branches (79%, 15 businesses). 5% (1 business) were a head office and 5% (1 business) a branch or subsidiary of a larger group. 11% (2 businesses) described themselves as another type of business and qualified that they were a 'church' or 'social club'.

42% of respondents expressed 'other' reasons for their company base. Reasons given were diverse and included *"having always lived and worked in Tamworth".* Others cited *"the proximity to the rest of the UK", "the availability of units"* and *"size/ parking available with units".* The cost of the site, proximity to customers and nature of the site premises were important to a smaller proportion of respondents.

Figure 6.1: What are the main reasons why your company is based here?



Availability of workforce, proximity to suppliers, quality of the environment and access to public transport were not identified as an issue by any of the business respondents.

6.2 Future business needs

Businesses were asked to indicate whether their current premises were likely to be suitable for their future needs. Whilst the majority did think that they were (79%, 15 businesses), 21% (or 4 businesses) did not feel this was the case for them. These included 'town centre', 'out of town' and 'businesses located on industrial estates'. The majority of businesses (68%, 13 businesses) intended to stay in the same location, whilst just under a third (32% or 6 businesses) were considering expanding. Those considering expanding were currently based in a variety of locations which included 'town centres', 'industrial estates' and 'out of town' locations.

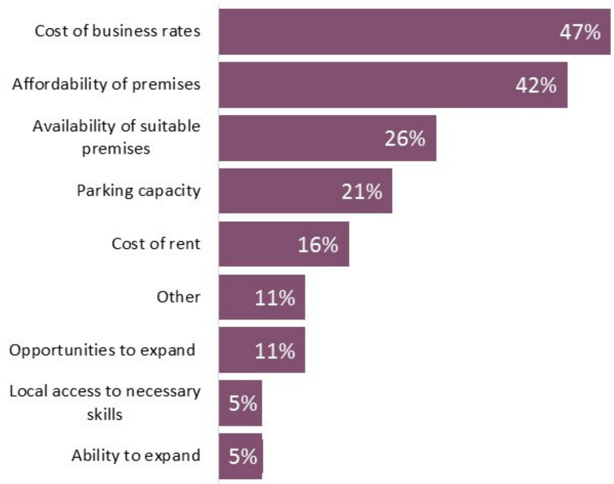
[15] Business responses have not been statistically analysed by type as the number of responses does not allow this. When drawing conclusions from business responses, it is important to remember that business group responses are relatively small and therefore results may not be representative of their overall group.

6.3 Barriers to business expansion

As identified in the vision and priorities, the Council is keen for local businesses to grow and therefore needs to be aware of what barriers need to be broken down in order for this to happen. Businesses were asked to identify what they felt were the main barriers to business expansion.

The 'cost of business rates' was viewed as the main barrier to expansion. Nearly half of all respondents selected this as an option and this was also the main barrier to expansion in the previous two years consultation results. 'Affordability of premises' was the second most common barrier to expansion. 'Other' identified barriers to business expansion included *"availability of broadband and fibre"*, being able to *"recruit suitable staff"* and *"a lack of confidence in the economy"* caused by negative post Brexit reporting.

Figure 6.2: What are the barriers to business expansion?

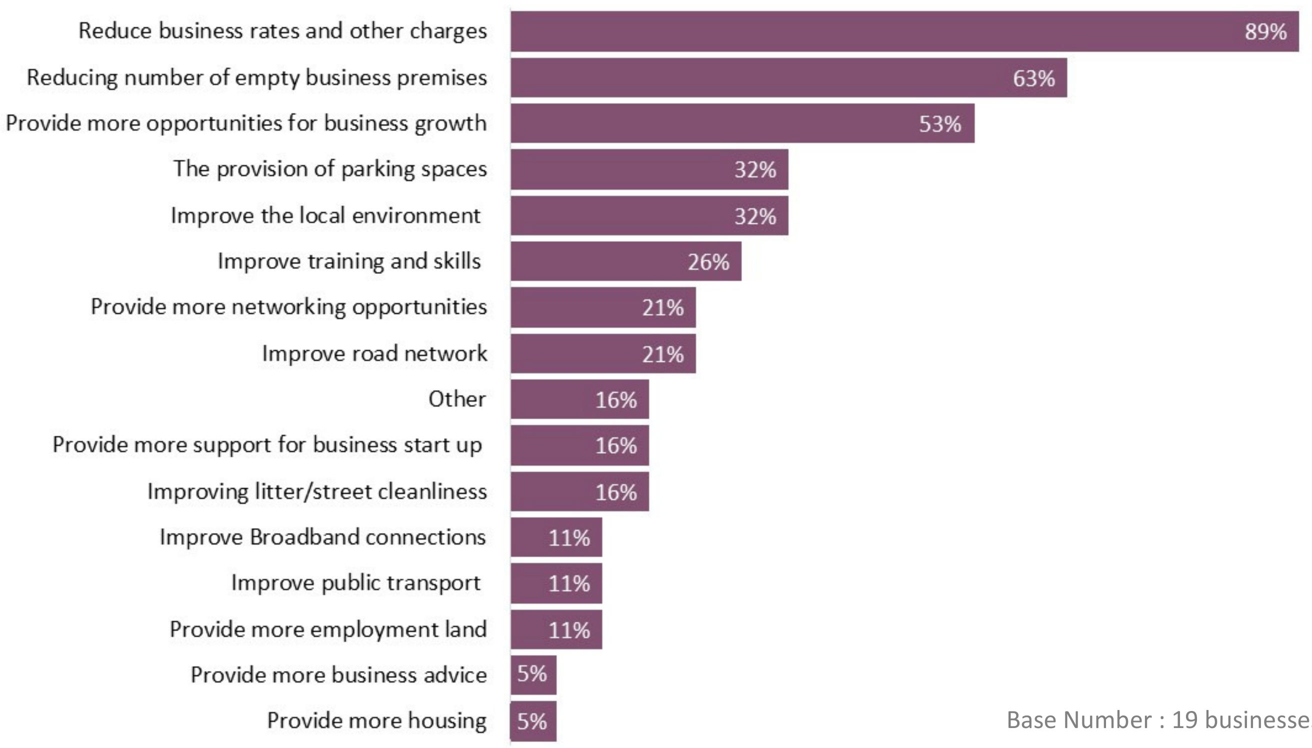


Base Number : 19 businesses

6.4 How can Tamworth be improved to assist business and the economy?

Respondents were invited to indicate up to five priorities which could assist businesses and the economy and help to improve Tamworth. Respondents were able to select their priorities from a list of 15 potential priorities and their responses are illustrated in the figure below. The majority felt that 'reducing business rates and other charges' would assist business and the economy. This has now been the most popular priority for the last three years.

Figure 6.3: How can Tamworth be improved to assist business and the economy?



Base Number : 19 businesses

Three businesses provided additional comments on how Tamworth could be improved. These were very much individual commentaries from businesses and as such cannot be considered to be representative of businesses overall. They do however provide useful feedback on issues;

⇒ *“Improve quality business meeting locations, cafes, bars in the town centre”.*

⇒ *“There aren't big enough premises in town, and the out of town locations are primarily aimed at big business (Ventura park) or are not promoted by the local authority as retail destinations. More signage to out of town retail areas is required”.*

⇒ *“To expand our services we need extra input of volunteers and cash”.*

7. Community and Voluntary services organisations

Those respondents who completed the questionnaire from the perspective of a community or voluntary organisation were asked to provide their opinions and comment on a number of questions posed to gather a picture of the impacts of public sector cuts and how the organisations and their clients have been impacted by the economic downturn. In total, five Community and Voluntary Organisations participated in the survey[16].

7.1 Type of organisation

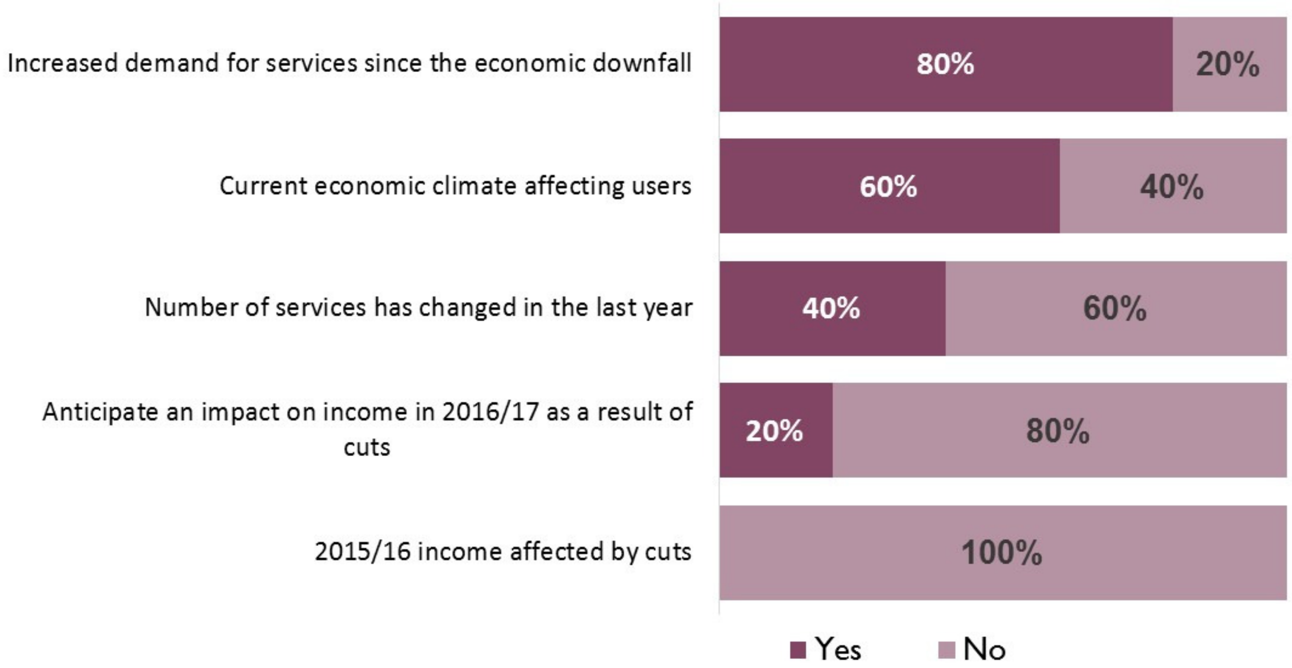
Over half of those community and voluntary organisations participating described themselves as a 'voluntary group' (60% or 3 organisations), the other two responses were from a 'registered charity' (20% or 1 organisation) and a 'community group' (20% or 1 organisation). No responses were received from 'community interest companies' or 'companies limited by guarantee'.

7.2 The impact of budget cuts and the economic downturn on the services provided by Community and Voluntary Organisations

Organisations were invited to answer 'yes' or 'no' to a range of questions about the impact of the budget cuts and the economic downturn. It was most common for respondents to say there had been an 'increased demand for services since the economic downfall' or that the 'current economic climate was affecting service users'.

No respondents said that their income for 2015/16 had been affected by the cuts. The views shared by all organisations are illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 7.1: Community and Voluntary Organisations responses to a range of questions about the impact of budget cuts and the economic downturn (%)



Base Number : 5 organisations

[16] When drawing conclusions from community and voluntary services organisations, it is important to remember that the base number of responses is small and therefore results may not be representative of the sector overall.

Organisations were encouraged to explain how service users had been impacted by the economic downturn and where respondents identified an increase in demand for services, they were asked to explain how this had affected them. Their responses to both questions have been summarised below.

7.3 There has been an increased demand in services since the economic downfall

Four out of the five responding organisations did feel there had been an increased demand for services with different organisations being affected in different ways. The individual impacts experienced are outlined below;

⇒ *"Funding has been reduced from voluntary sources (on which we depend)".*

⇒ *"Companies are looking for support to help increase footfall".*

⇒ *"Increased volunteer activity".*

7.4 The current economic downturn is affecting service users

Three of the five respondents did feel that the current economic climate was affecting service users. Reasons given for this included;

⇒ *"Confidence has been eroded due to national uncertainty. Universal Credit is directly affecting our disabled users who now receive less money. Young parents with large families (three or more children) are starting to struggle and this may increase foodbank use locally".*

⇒ *"The high street [Tamworth] is still in decline which means that some of the small independents are still struggling and with the increase in footfall of Ventura the town is still in decline."*

⇒ *"The number of people seeking support who are suffering from financial hardship as well as medical conditions has worsened recently. The costs of hospital visits are also an increasing burden".*

8. Resident respondent profile

Are you male or female?

Gender 18+	Survey responses		Tamworth MYE 2015
	No's	%	%
Female	101	45%	52%
Male	121	54%	48%
Prefer not to say	4	2%	N/A

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

	Survey responses		Tamworth 2011 census comparison
	No's	%	%
Yes	76	34%	18%
No	135	60%	82%
Prefer not to say	13	6%	N/A

What type of disability do you have?

	Survey responses	
	No's	%
Communications	2	3%
Hearing	9	12%
Learning	1	1%
Mental Health	8	11%
Mobility	49	64%
Physical	37	49%
Visual	3	4%
Other	11	14%

What is your age?

	Survey		Tamworth MYE 2015
	No's	%	%
18-24	1	0.4%	10%
25-34	7	3.1%	17%
35-44	12	5.4%	17%
45-54	35	15.7%	18%
55-64	69	30.9%	16%
65-74	68	30.5%	13%
75+	27	12.1%	9%
Prefer not to say	4	1.8%	N/A

What is your ethnicity?

	Survey responses		Tamworth 2011 census comparison
	No's	%	%
Asian/Asian British	0	0%	0.8%
Black/Black British	0	0%	0.51%
Chinese	0	0%	0.2%
Mixed Heritage	0	0%	1.0%
White British	206	93%	95%
White-Other	11	5%	2.3%
Other	1	0.50%	0.1%
Prefer not to say	4	2%	N/A

Ward

Survey responses							
Ward	No's	%	Population Estimates mid 2012	Ward	No's	%	Population Estimates mid 2012
Amington	34	17%	10%	Mercian	12	6%	9%
Belgrave	20	10%	10%	Spital	15	8%	9%
Bolehall	22	11%	10%	Stonydelph	19	10%	10%
Castle	25	13%	10%	Trinity	18	9%	10%
Glascote	16	8%	10%	Wilnecote	14	7%	12%