



**CITIZENS' PANEL  
RESULTS**

**AUGUST 2004**

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# Citizens' Panel Results – August 2004

## 1. Introduction

The Council has a Citizens' Panel, which contains a representative sample of people living in the District of Stratford-on-Avon. By surveying this Panel, it is possible to obtain views and opinions representative of local residents.

## 2. Methodology

An overhaul of the Panel database meant that all residents who had been part of the Panel since its start in 1999 and joined up to May 2002 were deleted. The panel became more robust as a result. We also took the opportunity to update panel members profile details to allow better interrogation of the data.

1,054 questionnaires were mailed in August 2004, with 705 returned in the timeframe allowed. This represents a response rate of 67.5%.

## 3. Summary of Results

### Elections 2004

- ◆ Seven out of ten respondents voted in the European and District Council elections in June 2004.
- ◆ Having two ballot boxes was confusing for 9% of residents
- ◆ People who voted gave their main reason for doing so as "I think it is my duty to vote".
- ◆ Six out of ten residents believe the way people vote in local elections is the main thing that decides how things are run in the district. However, this is contradicted by the statement that best describes respondents' main attitude to voting in the European and Local elections as "I don't believe it will make any difference to local taxes and services".
- ◆ Of the voting methods used by SDC in the last four years, more than half of those surveyed (52%) prefer the paper and pencil method at polling stations, followed by 21% who prefer the electronic kiosk method.
- ◆ When asked what changes should be made to increase voter turnout, 44% still want to be able to vote using the paper and pencil method, 36% would like the opportunity to vote by post and 32% said voting should be possible via the Internet.
- ◆ 65% of respondents claim to know the name of their district councillor.

### SDC Website

- ◆ Just under seven out of ten of those surveyed (69%) have access to the Internet at home or at work.
- ◆ 73% of those surveyed are aware that SDC has a website, of which a third have accessed it in the past twelve months. The areas of the website most accessed are for tourism, visitor and leisure information; information on refuse collection and recycling; to find contact details; and check on planning applications.
- ◆ 93% of those aware of the SDC website view it as a good source of information about the Council.

## **Communication and Consultation**

- ◆ The preferred method of contact to SDC is via the telephone (80%).
- ◆ Almost two-thirds of Citizens Panel members read all or most of "Your Review" (65%).
- ◆ Whereas 15% of residents would like to receive more printed information from SDC at present, 5% would like to receive less. The majority are happy with the current level provided.
- ◆ 73% of panellists feel either "very or fairly" informed about the services and benefits SDC provides.
- ◆ A third of residents agree that they have the opportunities to have a say in how SDC develops its policies and services.

## **Licensing**

- ◆ Eight of ten respondents believe that licensees should be responsible for the actions of its customers within the vicinity of their premises and 97% think Council licensed premises be subject to an inspection. The majority feel these inspections should be six monthly.
- ◆ Three quarters of those responding feel a visit from an enforcement officer should take place after every complaint is made against any premises.

## 4. Results in Detail

### 4.1 Elections 2004

71% of residents voted in the European and Local elections in June 2004. Significantly, the older the resident the more likely they were to vote. Whereas just over half of those aged less than 45 voted, as many as 92% of those aged 75+ cast their vote. A wide cross-section of polling stations were included in the results, which also included 12% of respondents using the postal vote system. Directions to and instructions within the polling stations were seen as clear, with a few minor exceptions.

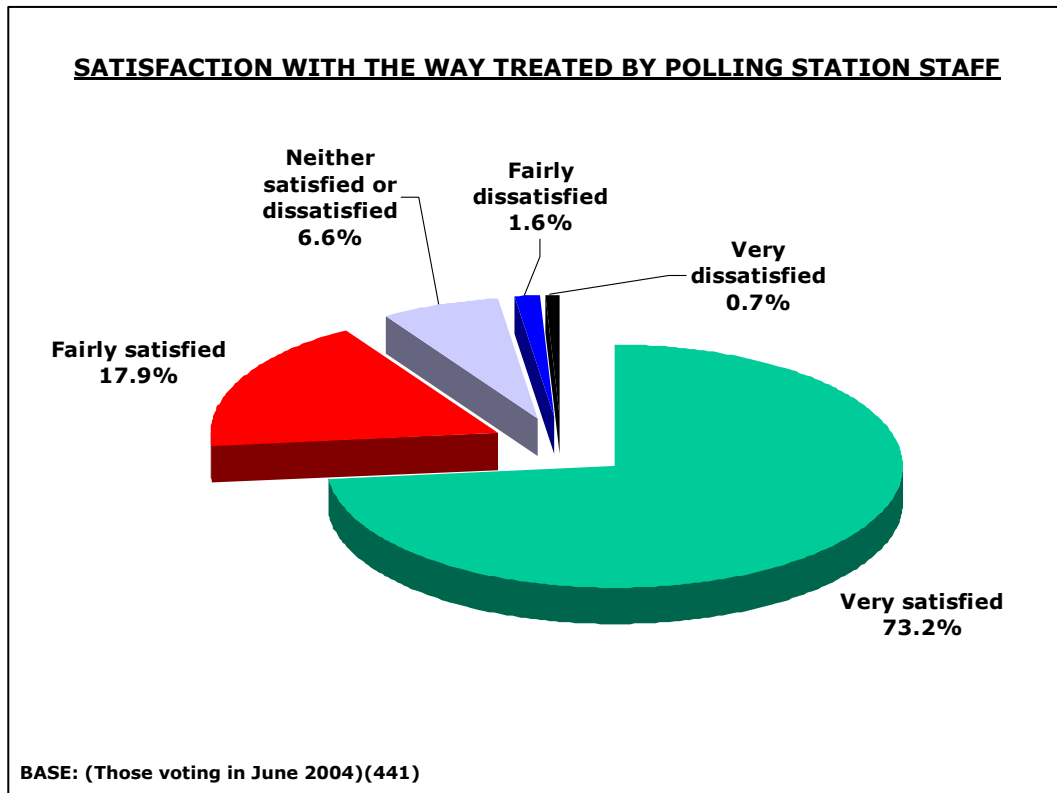
Table 1: Signage at Polling Stations

	Very clear	Clear	Not very clear	Cannot remember
<b>Signage to the polling station</b>	211 48.0%	185 42.0%	23 5.2%	21 4.8%
<b>Instruction / signage as to where you had to vote</b>	194 46.3%	190 45.3%	29 6.9%	6 1.4%

Just under 9% of those voting in the elections found having two ballot boxes at the polling station to be confusing. Also, 46% of voters were approached by a person asking for their elector number / address before entering the polling station to vote. Significantly more residents below the age of 45 were approached for their number / address before entering the polling station.

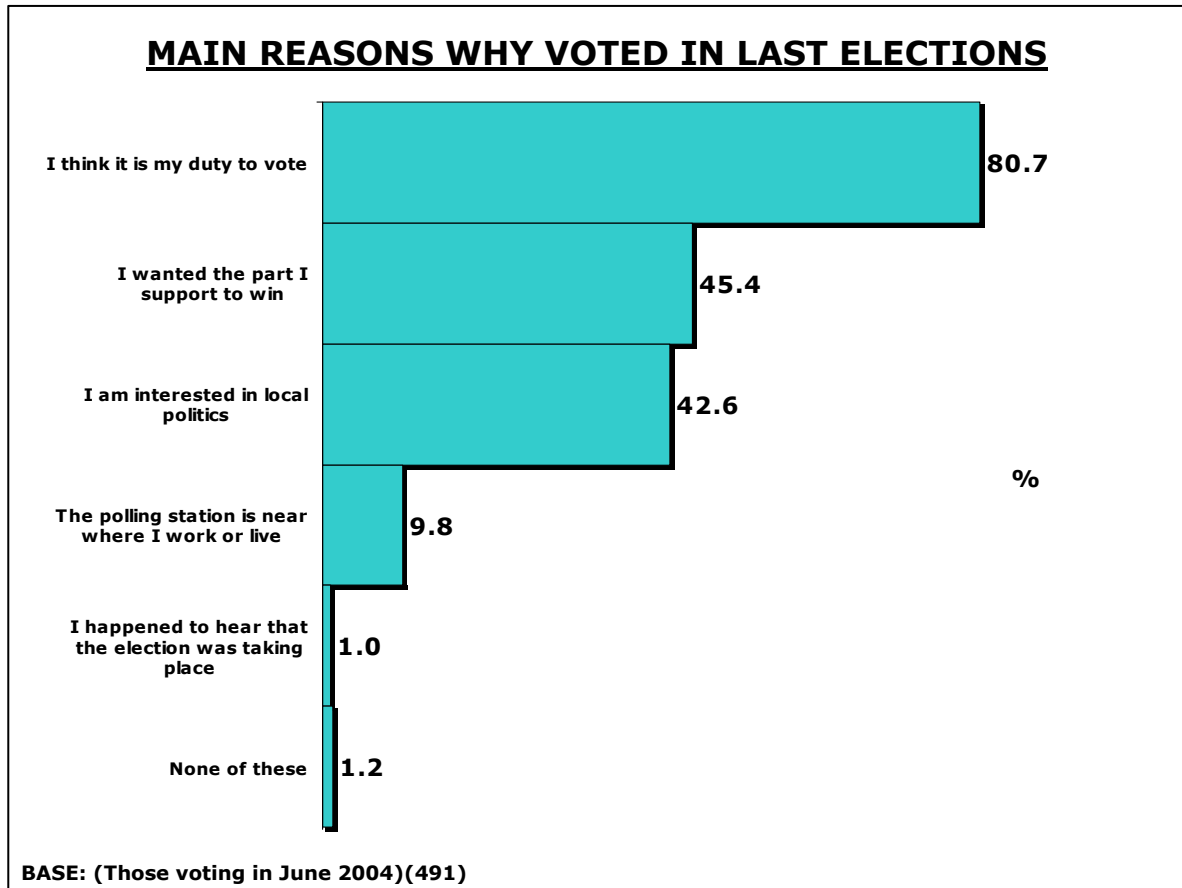
Overall satisfaction with the way voters were treated by polling station staff was high - 91% were "very" or "fairly" satisfied. Eleven voters were dissatisfied, all the reasons being different, i.e. procedure issues, layout queries and problems with polling station staff.

Figure 1



The main reason for voting at the last election for respondents (81%) was they felt it was their duty to vote.

Figure 2



The following table shows the attitudes to voting of all panel members. Almost six out of ten agree that the way people vote in local elections is the main thing that decides how things are run in the district. However, almost a third of respondents felt they had no say in what the Council does. Interestingly, 17% felt that local elections are so complicated they don't really know who to vote for.

Table 2: Attitudes to Voting

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No view
<b>Way people vote in local elections is the main thing that decides how things are run in the district</b>	84 12.5%	312 46.4%	130 19.3%	117 17.4%	26 3.9%	3 0.4%
<b>No point in voting in local elections because in the end it makes no difference who gets in</b>	29 4.4%	89 13.6%	63 9.6%	321 49.1%	145 22.2%	7 1.1%
<b>Local elections are sometimes so complicated that I don't really know how to vote for</b>	19 2.9%	88 13.6%	93 14.4%	301 46.5%	138 21.3%	9 1.4%
<b>People like me have no say in what the Council does</b>	53 8.1%	158 24.0%	103 15.7%	260 39.6%	78 11.9%	5 0.8%
<b>Voting is the only way people like me can have a say in how the Council runs things</b>	78 11.9%	304 46.2%	101 15.3%	141 21.4%	27 4.1%	7 1.1%

Table 3 shows comments which respondents were asked to tick if they agreed with separately for European and Local Council elections. The “no reply” column shows the number of people who did not tick any of the two boxes against the comment.

For both election types, the prominent attitude to voting is “I don’t believe it will make any difference to local taxes and services”. One in five residents feel that none of the parties standing represent the policies they would like to see. Significantly more residents believe that voting is not very important for European elections (17%) compared with local ones (10%).

Table 3: Attitudes to Specific Elections

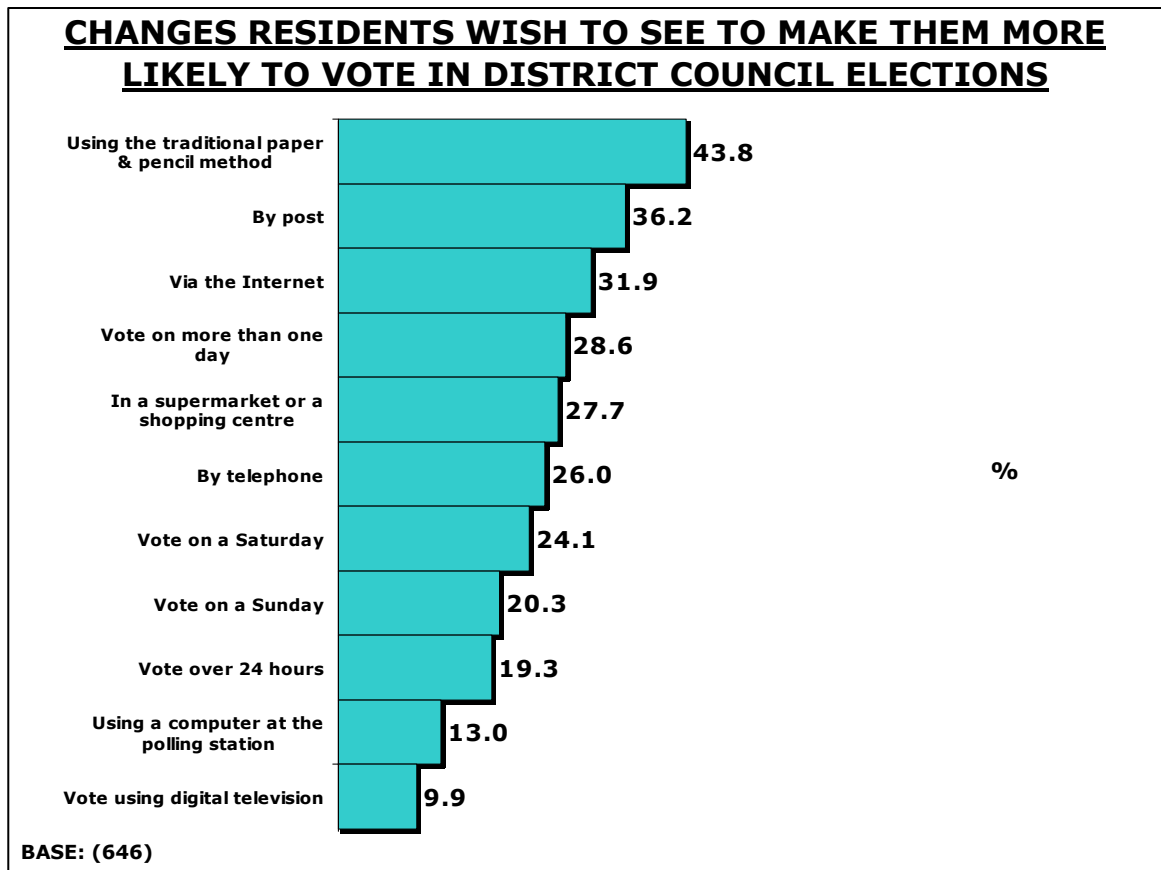
	No Reply	European Elections	Local Elections
<b>I don’t think that voting is very important</b>	564 80.0%	119 16.9%	68 9.6%
<b>I don’t believe it will make any difference to local taxes and services</b>	336 47.7%	312 44.3%	194 27.5%
<b>None of the parties standing represent the policies that I would like to see</b>	510 72.3%	145 20.6%	143 20.3%
<b>The party I would vote for have no real chance in this area</b>	534 75.7%	104 14.8%	135 19.1%
<b>I can’t get to the polling station because it’s too inconvenient</b>	677 96.0%	20 2.8%	25 3.5%
<b>I am too busy to get along and vote</b>	658 93.3%	42 6.0%	42 6.0%
<b>The opening hours of the polling station are not convenient</b>	683 96.9%	19 2.7%	17 2.4%
<b>I don’t know when the European/Local elections are held</b>	662 93.9%	39 5.5%	26 3.7%

Asked which of the voting methods they preferred that have been used by SDC in the past four years, over half of respondents (52%) preferred the paper and pencil method at the polling station. The next preferred method was using an electronic kiosk at the polling station (21%), followed by 14% wanting to vote by post and 13% voting via the Internet. Voting via the Internet is the most popular amongst residents with a household income of more than £40,000 per annum and voting by post is favoured most by the over 75s. The traditional method of paper and pencil is popular amongst older residents.

Figure 3 shows what residents think of the different ways being explored to increase voter turnout in District Council elections. Unsurprisingly, the main method is to maintain the traditional paper and pencil method at polling stations (44%). Over a third think voting via post should be kept and just less than a third indicated voting via the Internet is an option to maintain. Voting via digital television and being able to vote using a computer at the polling station were changes thought less likely to work.

Significantly, there were differences when comparing gender. Female respondents were keener to see voting by telephone (33%), on a Saturday (30%) or in a supermarket or shopping centre (31%). Almost half of all male respondents preferred the traditional paper and pencil method at the polling station (47%).

Figure 3



65% of respondents claimed they knew the name of their local district councillor. Significantly, 71% of male respondents, compared with 59% of female residents knew the name. Other significant results from the survey show you are more likely to know the name of your district councillor if;

- Belong to an older age group
- Own their home outright
- Have lived in Stratford district for more than 20 years
- Retired from work
- Live in postcode areas beginning with B49, B80 and CV35

#### **4.2 Stratford-on-Avon District Council Website**

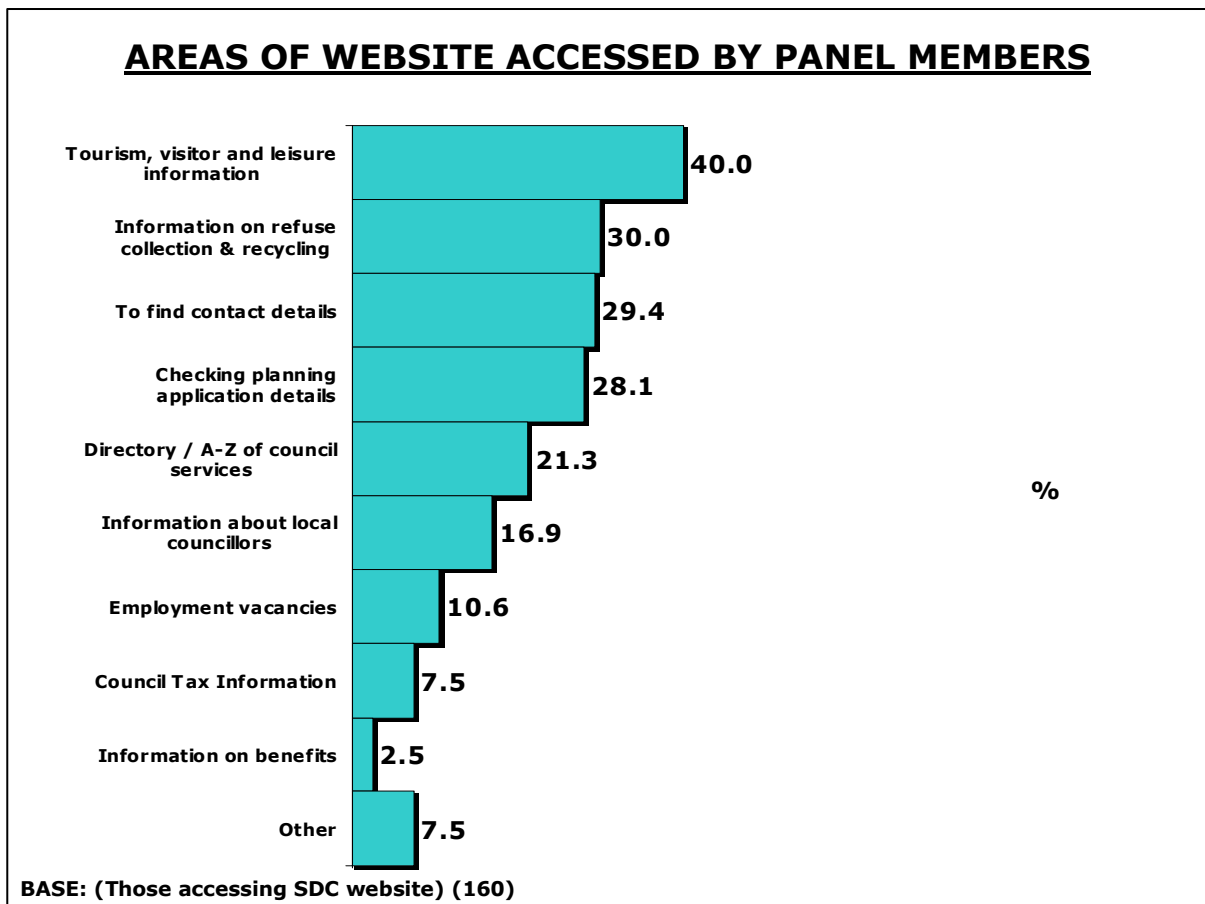
Asked if they had access to the Internet at home or at work, 69% responded in a positive manner, with 73% aware that SDC has its own website.

Nine out of ten respondents, in the 35-54 age group, have access to the Internet at home. Significantly 86% of panel members with a mortgage and 85% those who have lived in the area between five and ten years have access.

Almost a third of panel members (32%) have accessed the website in the past twelve months. Those aged 25-54 were more likely to access the SDC website. Of those accessing the website, 40% look for tourism, visitor and leisure information; 30% look for information on refuse collection and recycling and 29% to find contact details.



Figure 4



93% of those residents who have accessed the SDC website found it to be a good source of information about the Council. The main reasons for not accessing the site, although aware of it were there was no need, and they have no computer or access to the Internet.

Residents were asked to indicate their preferred ways of contacting SDC in the future. Eight out of ten wished to continue contacting the Council by telephone and just under half wish to visit the Councils' offices or write a letter. The use of mobile telephone texting and using interactive kiosks in the future were dismissed as means of contact. Further research with young people may provide a different answer.

Table 4: Preferred way of contacting SDC in the future

<b>By telephoning</b>	555 80.7%
<b>By personally visiting the Council in Stratford or at one of its area offices</b>	332 48.3%
<b>By writing a letter</b>	320 46.5%
<b>By speaking to your local district councillor</b>	280 40.7%
<b>By e-mailing the Council via computer or through a digital television</b>	245 35.6%
<b>By visiting the Council website interactively via your computer</b>	200 29.1%
<b>By texting the Council by mobile telephone</b>	27 3.9%
<b>By visiting our website using an interactive kiosk</b>	18 2.6%
<b>Other</b>	9 1.3%

### **4.3 Communication and Consultation**

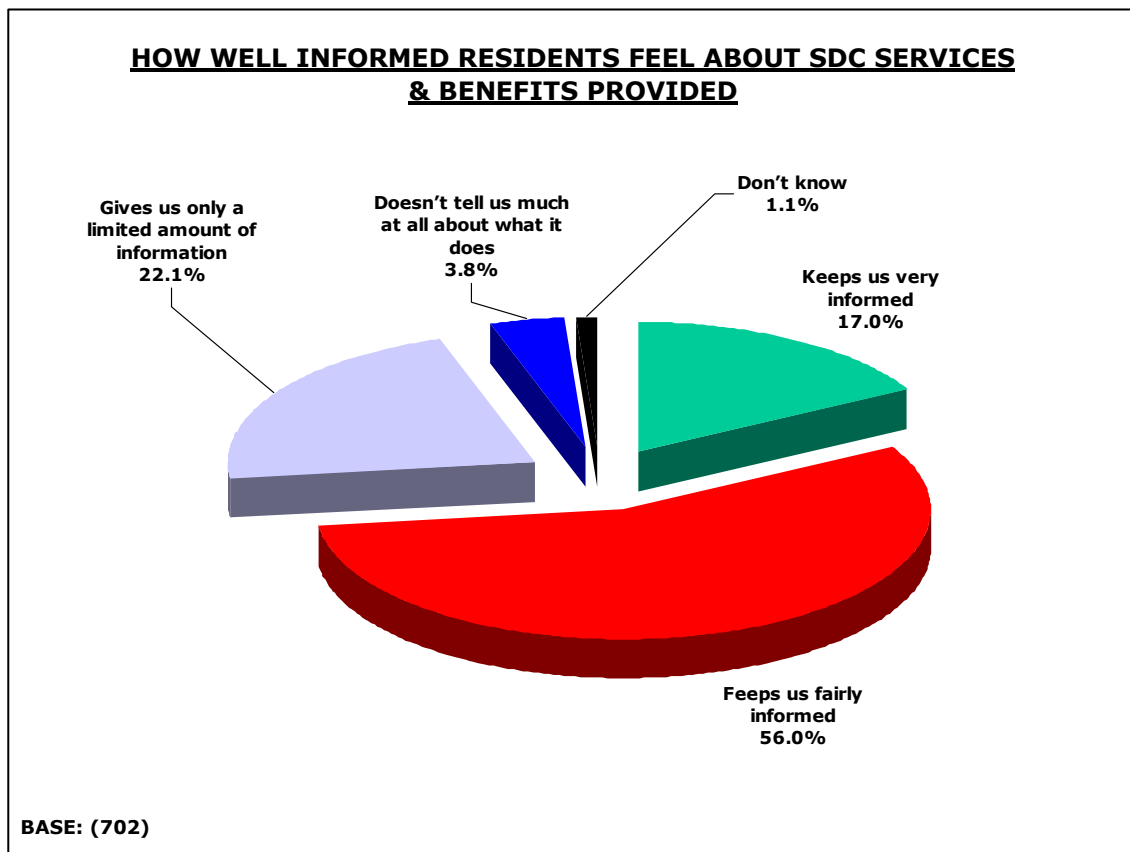
Stratford District Council provides all residents with "Your Review" three times a year, with information about the services and news about the Council. We asked those surveyed had they received a copy, from which 95% responded in the affirmative. 2% claimed not to receive the publication – examination of the postcodes revealed no obvious geographical disparity in distribution.

Almost half of those surveyed (46%) read all or nearly all of "Your Review", with a further 29% reading most of it. 13% read a few articles and 11% just glance at it. Less than 2% of residents do not look at it all. Older residents were more likely to read all of the Council newspaper. Those buying a home on a mortgage and those in full-time employment were less likely to read it

Asked about how much information they would prefer to receive, the majority of residents (64%) wish to receive the same amount of printed information as presently. Older residents would prefer to receive more information than at present.

Asked how well informed they feel about SDC's services and benefits provided, 56% of panel members felt fairly informed and 17% felt they were kept very informed. Those aged 45-54 and people living in postcode areas B49, B50 and CV47 were less likely to feel informed.

Figure 5



Residents were asked for their views on the issue of communication and consultation in general. There was a consistent message from the public's response to whether they felt they had opportunities to have a say in the development policies and services and to become involved in SDC's work. Around three out of ten were satisfied that they did, with a quarter dissatisfied. More were dissatisfied with the way the views of local residents influence the actions of SDC. Residents who owned their homes generally felt they could have their say.

Table 5: Satisfaction with various aspects of communication and consultation

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
<b>Opportunities to have a say in how SDC's policies &amp; services are developed</b>	29 4.3%	1925 28.2%	279 41.0%	138 20.3%	42 6.2%
<b>Way views of local residents influence the actions of SDC</b>	14 2.1%	171 25.3%	238 35.2%	180 26.6%	73 10.8%
<b>Way SDC provides opportunities for local residents to become involved in its work</b>	30 4.5%	172 25.7%	298 44.5%	123 18.4%	46 6.9%

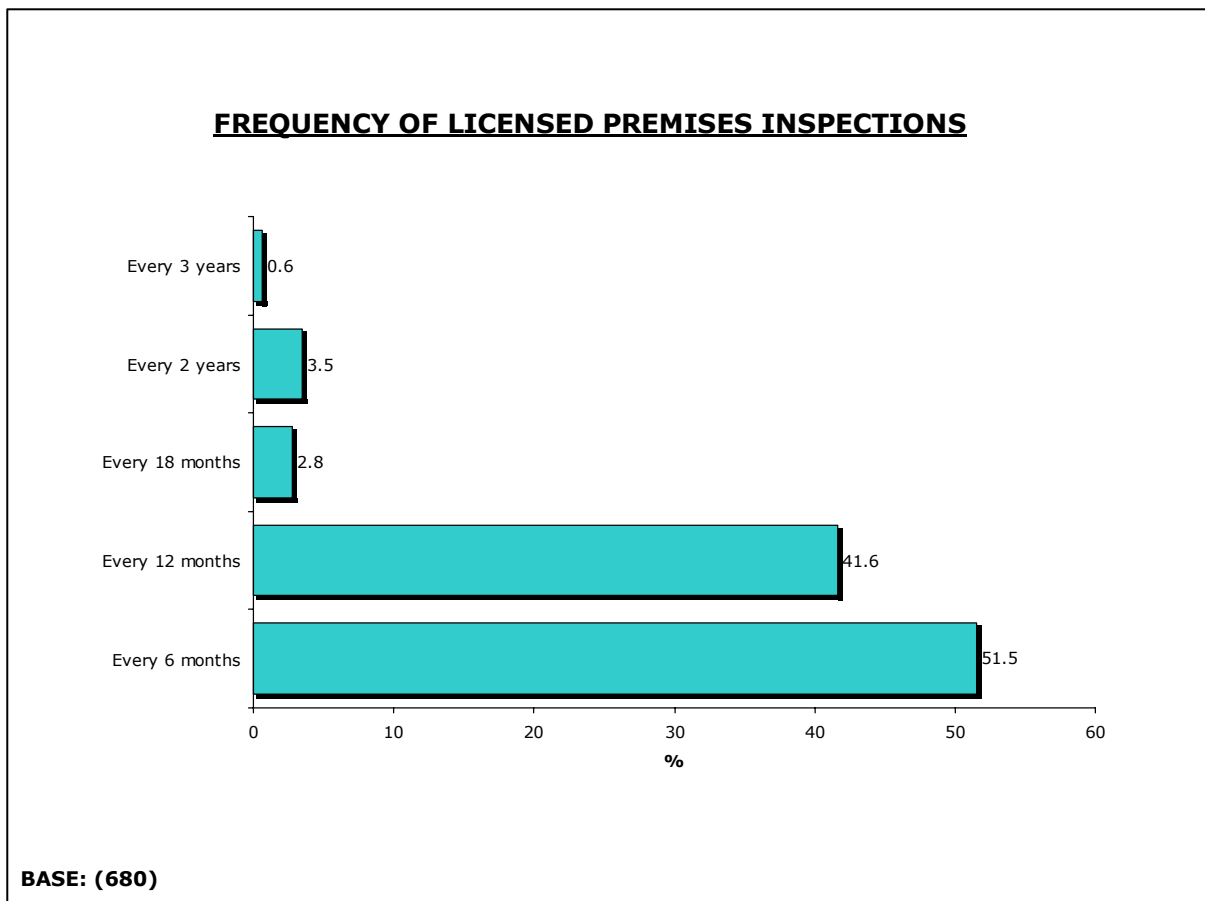
#### 4.4 Licensing

With SDC taking over the magistrate's role of licensing premises to sell alcohol, views were sought to help the development of the policies and preparations.

Eight out of ten of those surveyed recognised that licensees should be responsible for the actions of its customers, within the vicinity of their premises. Older people were more likely to agree with this.

An overwhelming 97% of residents felt the Council licensed premises be subject to an inspection to obtain compliance with license conditions, especially safety reasons. More than half of those surveyed (52%) believed the inspection should be carried out every six months.

Figure 6



SDC will be required under the new legislation to hold a review of the premises when a complaint is lodged. Three quarters of those surveyed agreed that every complaint should have a visit from an enforcement officer. Those aged 35-44 felt this was less important.

SDC Planning control the siting of licensed premises. 19% believe there are too many licensed premises where they live, with 76% saying there was the right number in their area. The younger the respondent, the more likely they thought there were not enough licensed premises in their area.

Questions on behalf of WaterVoice Central were included at the end of the survey. These results belong to WaterVoice and are not included in this report.

#### **4.5 Profile Information**

This information will be used in the analysis of the Panel for the next two years.

<b>POSTCODE</b>	<b>%</b>
B49	7.8
B50	4.3
B80	4.9
B94	3.0
B95	5.5
CV33	1.9
CV35	13.8
CV36	6.1
CV37	37.3
CV47	10.4
GL56	0.7
OX15	1.6
OX17	1.2
WR11	1.4
<b>BASE:</b>	<b>(693)</b>

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	47.7
Female	52.3
<b>BASE:</b>	<b>(698)</b>

<b>AGE</b>	<b>%</b>
16-24	1.0
25-34	6.3
35-44	17.0
45-54	18.5
55-64	27.1
65-74	19.6
75+	10.5
<b>BASE:</b>	<b>(698)</b>

<b>NOS OF ADULTS AGED 18 OR OVER LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD</b>	<b>%</b>
1	20.5
2	66.0
3	10.0
4	3.4
More than 4	0.1
<b>BASE:</b>	<b>(673)</b>

<b>NOS OF CHILDREN AGED 0-4 LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD</b>		<b>%</b>
1		82.8
2		17.2
3		0.0
BASE:		(91)

<b>NOS OF CHILDREN AGED 5-10 LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD</b>		<b>%</b>
1		77.9
2		20.9
3		1.2
BASE:		(90)

<b>NOS OF CHILDREN AGED 11-15 LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD</b>		<b>%</b>
1		71.8
2		27.1
3		1.2
BASE:		(89)

<b>NOS OF CHILDREN AGED 16-17 LIVING IN HOUSEHOLD</b>		<b>%</b>
1		94.6
2		5.4
3		0.0
BASE:		(41)

<b>ACCOMMODATION TYPE</b>	<b>%</b>
Owned outright	45.9
Buying on mortgage	41.3
Rent from Housing Association/Trust	7.3
Rented from private landlord	4.2
Other	1.3
BASE:	(695)

<b>LENGTH OF TIME LIVED IN SDC AREA</b>	<b>%</b>
1 year or less	0.6
Between 1 & 2 years	2.9
Between 2 & 5 years	10.6
Between 5 & 10 years	13.0
Between 10 & 20 years	22.4
Over 20 years	50.6
BASE:	(701)

<b>ACTIVITY BEST DESCRIBING WHAT DOING AT PRESENT</b>	<b>%</b>
Employee in full-time job (30 hours+ per week)	30.7
Employee in part-time job (Under 30 hours per week)	13.5
Self employed full or part-time	12.2
On a government supported training programme	0.0
Full-time education at school, college or university	0.6
Unemployed and available for work	1.1
Permanently sick/disabled	2.6
Wholly retired from work	33.0
Looking after the home	5.6
Doing something else	0.6
<b>BASE:</b>	<b>(701)</b>

<b>TOTAL ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME FROM ALL SOURCES BEFORE TAX &amp; ANY OTHER DEDUCTIONS</b>	<b>%</b>
Under £10,000	13.6
£10,000 to £15,000	12.9
£15,001 to £20,000	10.3
£20,001 to £25,000	9.2
£25,001 to £30,000	7.4
£30,001 to £35,000	7.4
£35,001 to £40,000	6.4
Over £40,000	32.8
<b>BASE:</b>	<b>(595)</b>

<b>WHETHER HAVE ANY LONG TERM ILLNESS, HEALTH PROBLEMS OR DISABILITY WHICH LIMITS DAILY ACITIVITIES OR WORK DONE</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	19.6
No	80.4
<b>BASE:</b>	<b>(694)</b>

<b>ORIGIN OF BIRTH</b>	<b>%</b>
White	99.43
Mixed	0.14
Indian	0.14
Caribbean	0.14
Other Black	0.14
<b>BASE:</b>	<b>(700)</b>