Business Survey 2026

Final Report

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Stratford-on-Avon District Council
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1.0 Introduction

Stratford-on-Avon District Council is committed to working with businesses through its Community Engagement Plan. One of the priorities in the Strategy is to engage with businesses, so that we can better understand the state of business in the district and the needs of the business community.

A business survey was designed for the sector to help to influence and inform the development and delivery of emerging strategies, including the South Warwickshire Local Plan, and the actions for the Economic Development Strategy.

The survey also looks at how we administer the business rates system and how we can help businesses in the future.

The SDC Business Survey has been a constant since 2002 and in this case the report covers comparisons going back ten years to 2016. There are some comparisons with 2013 for certain questions.

2.0 Methodology

A mailing of questionnaires went out to 3,529 businesses on the Business Rates address database at the beginning of March 2026, with a reminder sent out mid-April to those who had not responded with a deadline of May 6th.

The survey was also promoted, via various channels, including social media and messaging via business groups, to obtain feedback from those businesses not on the Business Rates register.

455 were completed, including 90 who took up the opportunity to complete the questionnaire online. 266 questionnaires were returned to SDC by the Royal Mail not delivered, i.e., not known at this address, gone away, no longer a business, not accessible etc. A true response rate is not possible, as the survey was made available to all and not just those on the business rates register sample.

The report follows the order of the questionnaire. Charts and tables are used throughout the report to assist the interpretation of the results. In some cases, anomalies appear due to "rounding".

The comparison results by company location, status of company and number of full-time employees are only included if they are statistically significant. If a comment on a particular result has not been made, it can be assumed that there is no strong relationship between the two questions, i.e., rating of Stratford District as a place to do business by status of company. The significance is calculated by comparing the mean of a category with the overall mean using a "z-test". This establishes the level of significance between the two results. For this report, only results showing a significant relationship between the two have been included *(there is evidence of a relationship significant at the 5% level or lower).*

Where relevant, comparisons with similar questions in the 2016, 2018 and 2023 Business Surveys have been included to find trends. The term "base" in the tables and charts refer to the number of responses to a particular question.

3.0 Executive Summary

The survey shows a business community that remains broadly stable and committed to Stratford-on-Avon District. Respondents were mainly small, long-established independent businesses, many employing between one and five staff and expecting to remain in their current premises. Overall perceptions of the district as a place to do business have improved since 2023, with 63% saying that the district is good or very good as a place to do business. Businesses continue to value their customer base, connectivity and wider environment.

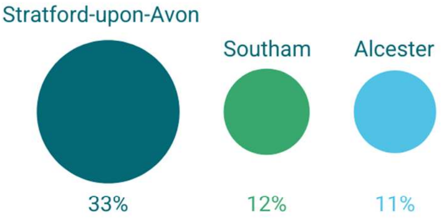
At the same time, businesses are facing growing pressures. Rising costs are now the most significant challenge, alongside business rates, labour costs, staffing pressures and parking. Most businesses consider their current premises suitable and expect little change in floorspace, but confidence in the availability and affordability of suitable premises for relocation or expansion has declined. Where relocation is considered, many businesses would prefer to remain within the district if possible.

Businesses continue to seek lower business rates and charges, alongside better transport, parking, affordable premises and practical business support. Demand for support is strongest in areas such as access to finance, growth planning, skills and training, property and planning, and recruitment. Feedback also points to a need for clearer communication and more responsive support around business rates, particularly in relation to awareness of available reliefs, eligibility and the fairness of the process.

Business Survey 2026 Key Results

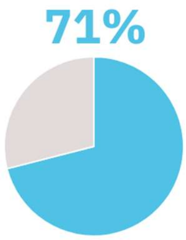
63% rated the district 'good' or 'very good' as a place to do business

Top 3 locations of businesses

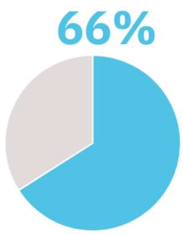


Businesses from all over the District responded; 20% businesses were located outside of the main towns and villages

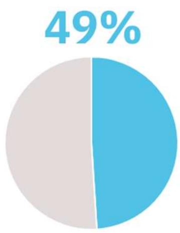
Business status



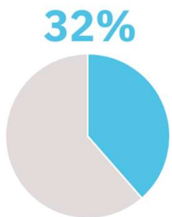
have been in business 11yrs+



employees never work from home



cover less than 250m2 floorspace+



think there are suitable premises in the district for relocation

39% owners live locally/in owners' hometown

37% nature of the site/premises

33% business is historic/been there for years

59% said rising costs was one of their main problems

89% have suitable premises for current/future needs

40% said NNDR were one of their main problems

4.0 Results in Detail

4.1 Profile of Business

4.1.1 Location

A third of responses came from businesses based in Stratford-upon-Avon, which has been typical of surveys over the past ten years. Those located elsewhere were quite evenly split between those on the edge/close to a town or village (10%) and those in a rural location or elsewhere in the district (11%). If respondents chose either of these options, they were asked to specify their closest settlement, the results of which can be read in Table 2 below.

Table 1: Location of Business

TOWN/ VILLAGE	Count	% 2026	% 2023	% 2018	% 2016
Stratford-upon-Avon	**147**	**33%**	**33%**	**35%**	**33%**
Alcester	**48**	**11%**	**10%**	**11%**	**11%**
Southam	**52**	**12%**	**10%**	**10%**	**8%**
Henley-in-Arden	**36**	**8%**	**6%**	**6%**	**5%**
Shipston-on-Stour	**19**	**4%**	**5%**	**7%**	**6%**
Studley	**14**	**3%**	**5%**	**5%**	**6%**
Bidford-on-Avon	**17**	**4%**	**4%**	**4%**	**6%**
Wellesbourne	**8**	**2%**	**4%**	**2%**	**3%**
Kineton	**8**	**2%**	**<1%**	**2%**	**2%**
Elsewhere	**94**	**21%**	**22%**	**19%**	**20%**

*Table 2: "Settlement on edge of town or village or Rural location/Elsewhere in the District." mentions **(3** or more responses where location indicated)*

Location	Nos of Responses
Wootton Wawen	6
Earlswood	4
Southam	4
Tanworth in Arden	4
Tysoe	4
Bishops Itchington	3
Harbury	3
Long Itchington	3
Oxhill	3
Stockton	3
Other	52
Base:	**(90)**

4.1.2 Status

Just under two-thirds of those surveyed were independent with no other branches (60%). "Others" numbered 19 responses.

Stratford-upon-Avon was unsurprisingly home to the highest proportions of head offices, branches/subsidiaries of larger groups and independent shops (52%, 50% and 32% respectively). Sole traders/partners/self-employed were also significantly more likely to be based in Stratford-upon-Avon than any other location, with just under a quarter (24%) being based there.

Table 3: Status of Company

Status	2016 %	2018 %	2023 %	2026 %
Independent with no other branches	76	76	63	60
Sole trader/partner/self-employed	-	-	16	20
Branch or subsidiary of a larger group	11	12	10	9
Head Office	7	5	7	6
Public Sector organisation	1	2	1	<1
Other	4	5	3	4
Base:	**(950)**	**(861)**	**(705)**	**(433)**

4.1.3 Main Business Activity

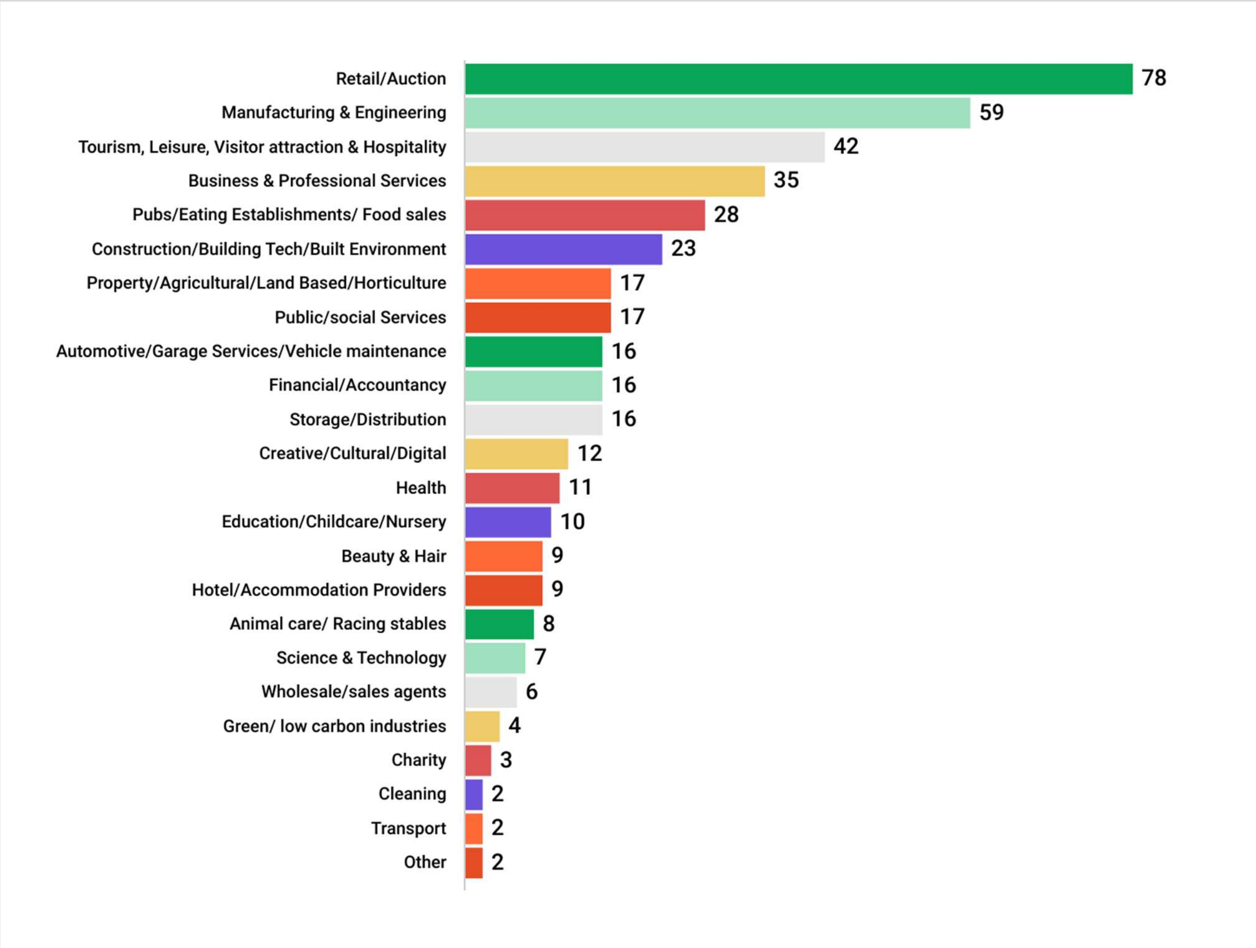
Retail was the most popular activity of businesses, accounting for 18% of those surveyed. This was followed by Manufacturing and Engineering (14%) and Tourism, Leisure, and Hospitality (10%).

Stratford-upon-Avon was home to almost all hotel and accommodation providers that responded (78%), almost half of all retail businesses (48%), and over a third of all tourism, hospitality and leisure providers (38%). It was also home to half the financial/accounting businesses and more than half the storage and distribution businesses (54%).

Southam had more manufacturing and engineering businesses than other areas of the district, with 25% located there.

Alcester was slightly more likely to be home to creative, cultural and digital businesses than other areas of the district, with 27% located there, as well as there being more science and technology located there (43%).

Figure 1: Main business activity at this location



4.1.4 Length of Trading

Almost three quarters of businesses who responded had been trading for at least 11 years: nearly half of those surveyed (49%) have been trading for more than 20 years, while a further 22% trading for between 11-20 years.

Table 4: Length of business trading

Length	**2023 %**	**2026%**
Up to 12 months	2	3
1 to 3 years	8	7
4 to 5 years	6	5
6 to 10 years	13	14
11 to 20 years	24	22
More than 20 years	47	49
Base:	**(711)**	**(450)**

4.1.5 Numbers Employed

176 businesses had full-time employees only, while 60 businesses employed only part-time employees.

Table 5: Breakdown of full-time employees

Year	Base	1-5 employed	6-20 employed	21-50 employed	Over 50 employed
2016	(804)	66%	26%	6%	3%
2018	(696)	67%	23%	7%	2%
2023	(618)	67%	24%	7%	3%
2026	(372)	69%	21%	8%	1%

Table 6: Breakdown of part-time employees

Year	Base	1-5 employed	6-20 employed	21-50 employed	Over 50 employed
2016	(520)	80%	15%	3%	2%
2018	(482)	76%	19%	3%	2%
2023	(379)	78%	16%	4%	1%
2026	(234)	76%	20%	3%	1%

4.1.6 Where staff live

Businesses were asked to estimate what proportion of their staff lived in the same town or village as the business, elsewhere in the district, or outside the district. As Table 7 shows, a slightly higher proportion of staff lived in the same town or village as the business than elsewhere.

Table 7: Where staff live

Location	2016 %	2018 %	2023 %	2026 %
In same town/village as the company	41	41	37	37
Elsewhere in Stratford District	26	27	29	27
Outside Stratford District	33	32	32	33
Base:	**(840)**	**(564)**	**(616)**	**(344)**

27% of businesses said that over three quarters of their staff lived in the same town or village as their business: 20% said that 100% their staff did so, with a further 7% saying that between 75-99% did. Almost the same amount (25%) said that **no** staff lived in the same town or village.

32% of businesses said that over half their staff lived outside the district: 20% of businesses said that 75% or more of their staff lived outside the district with a further 12% saying that between 50-75% lived outside the district.

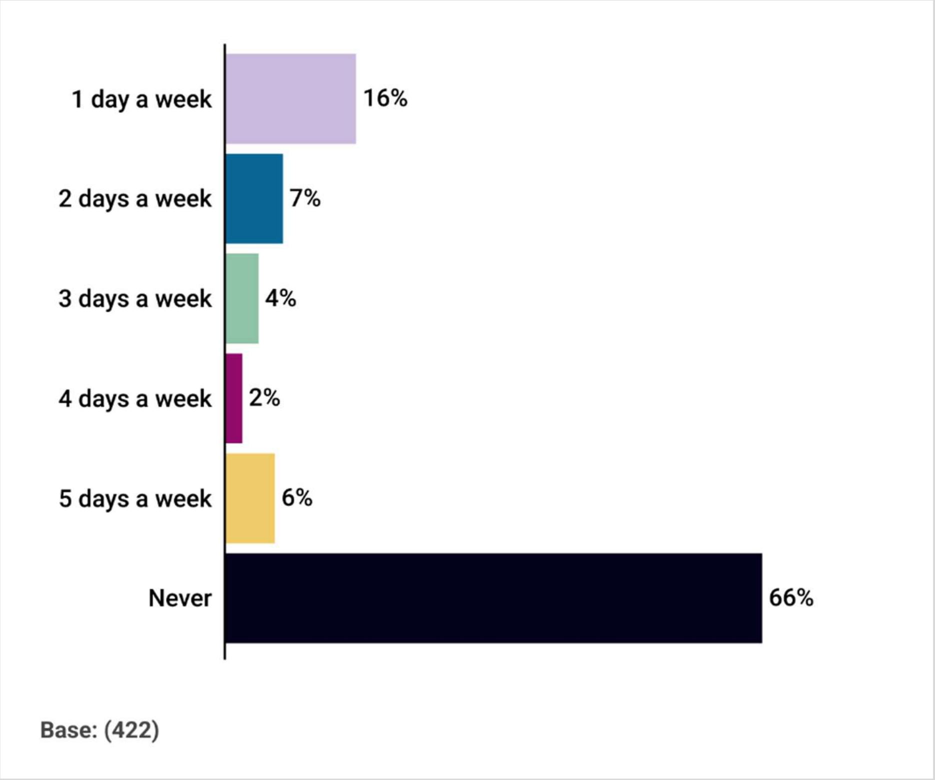
Alcester-based businesses said that 60% of staff on average lived outside the district. For Stratford-based businesses, this proportion was 28%.

4.1.7 Working from home

Businesses were then asked how many days, on average, their employees worked from home. 66% of staff never worked from home, up 3 percentage points on the previous survey.

Smaller businesses with between 1-5 full-time employees were far more likely to work from home 5 days a week, while larger businesses (6 employees or more) were more likely to have employees working one day a week from home.

Figure 2: How many days a week do you/your employees work from home?



4.2 Location of Business

4.2.1 Reasons for Location

Businesses were asked to choose the main reasons why their company was located where it was from a list of reasons provided.

The location being the owner's hometown or owners living locally was the most popular choice with 39% of respondents choosing it, up three percentage points on the previous survey.

27 (6%) of those surveyed gave other reasons why their company located to where it was.

Stratford-upon-Avon businesses were more likely than businesses in other locations to say that the nature of the local economy was a factor in the choice of location, while Alcester businesses were more likely to choose availability of suitable workforce and affordability of rent/rates. Henley-in-Arden businesses were more likely than businesses in other locations to choose quality of the environment and access to main road network.

29% of businesses with six or more full-time staff indicated that access to the main road network was a reason for location, compared with 12% for smaller businesses. The larger the business, the more likely that the business was in its location due to having been located there for years.

Table 8: Main reasons why company located where it is

Reasons	2016 %	2018 %	2023 %	2026 %
Owners' hometown/live locally	-	31	36	39
Nature of the site/premises	54	39	37	37
Historic/been here for years	-	36	33	33
Proximity to customers	28	21	25	24
Affordability of rents/rates	-	-	17	17
Quality of the environment	18	16	15	17
Access to main road network	15	13	16	16
Nature of local economy	14	11	11	9
Availability of suitable workforce	9	5	9	8
Availability of local facilities	4	3	6	5
Availability of broadband	6	3	4	3
Availability of public transport	-	-	3	3
Proximity of suppliers	3	3	2	3
Availability of local housing	2	1	1	1
Incubator services/support	-	-	<1	<1
Other	16	10	6	6
Base:	**(901)**	**(861)**	**(711)**	**(440)**

4.2.2 Size of Site

Floor space covered by businesses responding to the survey has remained relatively consistent over the years, with just under 50% of businesses taking up less than 250m^2.

Stratford-upon-Avon was home to almost 50% of businesses with 500-1,000m^2 floor space, and just under a third of those taking up more than 1,000m^2.

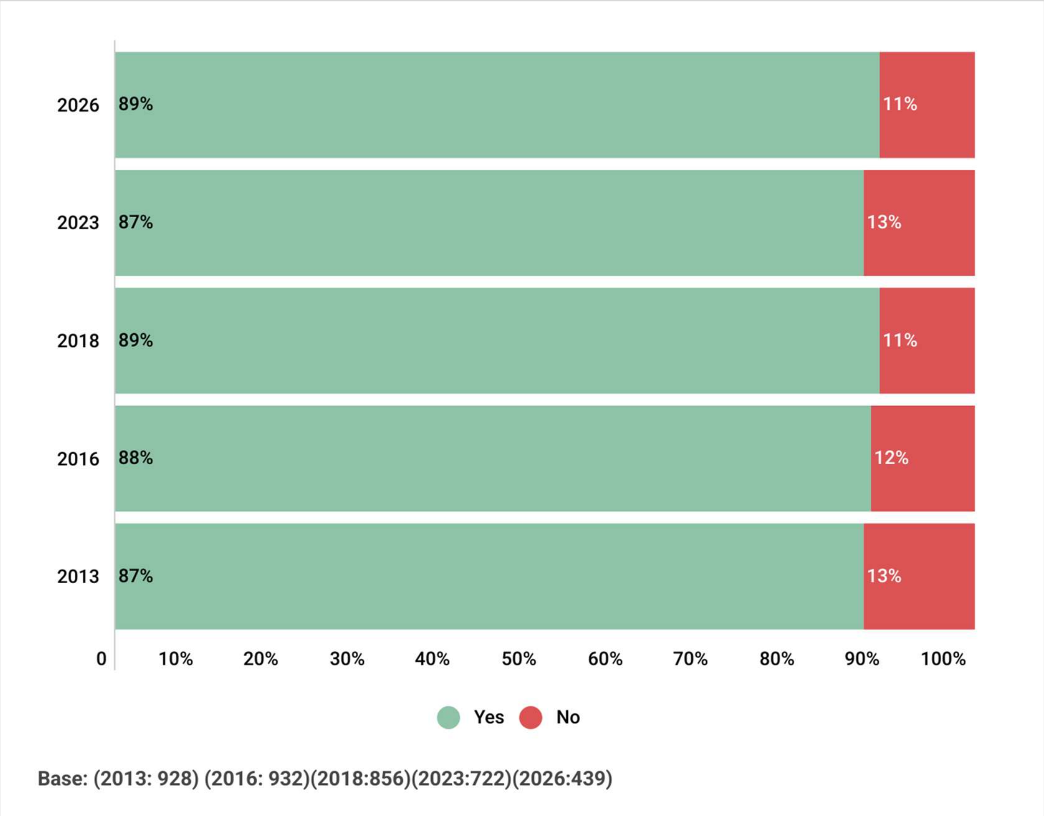
Table 9: Total floor space on site

Total Floor Space	2016 %	2018 %	2023 %	2026 %
Less than 250 m^2	49	46	45	49
250 – 500 m^2	18	18	16	19
500 – 1,000 m^2	13	13	13	11
1,000 – 5,000 m^2	14	16	20	16
More than 5,000 m^2	6	7	7	6
Base:	**(848)**	**(771)**	**(651)**	**(399)**

4.2.3 Intentions for Future

Almost nine out of ten businesses (89%) felt their premises were suitable for their current or future likely needs, two points higher than 2023. Three out of the five businesses with over 50 employees said that their premises were **not** suitable for current or future needs.

Figure 3: Is your premises suitable for current or likely future needs?



74% of those surveyed felt their floor space may see no significant change in the next 10 years: 2 percentage points up on the previous survey (Table 10).

14 respondents thought that their floor space requirement would more than double over the next 10 years, twelve of which had between 1-5 full-time employees. However, smaller businesses were also more likely than larger ones to say that their requirements would see no significant change.

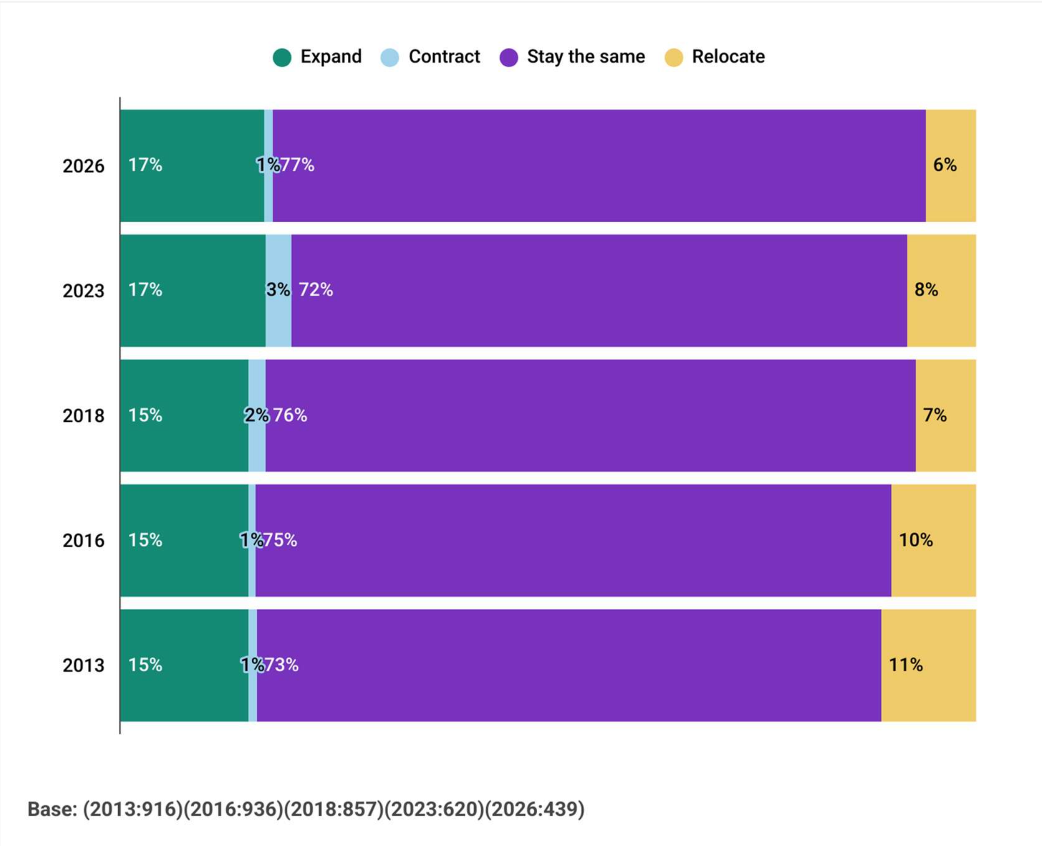
Of the six responses that said that floor space requirement was likely to decrease by 50-100%, two businesses were in manufacturing and engineering, and two were in retail, with a further business in the creative, cultural and digital sector.

Table 10: Amount that company's floor space requirement may change in the next 10 years.

Floor Space Requirements	2016 %	2018 %	2023 %	2026 %
Increase by more than 100%	6	6	5	4
Increase by 50% - 100%	6	5	5	7
Increase by 10% - 50%	11	11	13	10
No significant change	74	75	72	74
Decrease by 10% - 50%	2	3	4	3
Decrease by 50% - 100%	1	2	2	<1
Base: (excluding don't know)	**(815)**	**(737)**	**(594)**	**(442)**

Businesses were asked for their intentions about their current location. Just over three quarters (77%) felt they were likely to stay at the current location with no change to overall floor space.

Figure 4: What are your intentions with regard to your current business location?



4.2.4 Problems Faced at Location

Respondents were asked to indicate up to three main problems faced by their company at their location from a given list of problems.

59% of businesses indicated rising costs as one of their main problems, an increase of five points on 2023 and up 19 percentage points over the past ten years.

Other problems also on the rise are other areas of cost to businesses, namely Business Rates (up from 29% to 40% identifying this as an issue) and rising labour costs (up from 13% in 2023 to 22%).

Table 11: Main problems faced by company

Main problems	2016 %	2018 %	2023 %	2026 %
Rising costs	40	43	54	59
Business rates	-	31	29	40
Availability of parking for staff/visitors	-	27	23	22
High labour costs	5	11	13	22
Staff recruitment/retention	17	21	24	19
Shortage of skilled staff	14	20	23	18
Cost of suitable premises	16	12	11	18
Road/traffic congestion	24	23	18	17
Market demand/competition	20	20	13	15
Legislation/red tape	13	15	12	14
Broadband/mobile phone coverage	-	25	18	13
Public transport options	-	-	15	13
Planning constraints	11	11	9	9
Lack of suitable premises	10	10	7	8
Impact of Brexit	-	17	11	7
Need for improved marketing	8	7	8	7
Investment constraints	3	4	4	4
Infrastructure problems	9	7	3	3
Currency exchange rate	3	5	3	1
Access to appropriate advice	1	1	2	1
Other	19	8	7	5
Base:	**(829)**	**(818)**	**(662)**	**(409)**

22 'other' reasons were given as problems faced by the company.

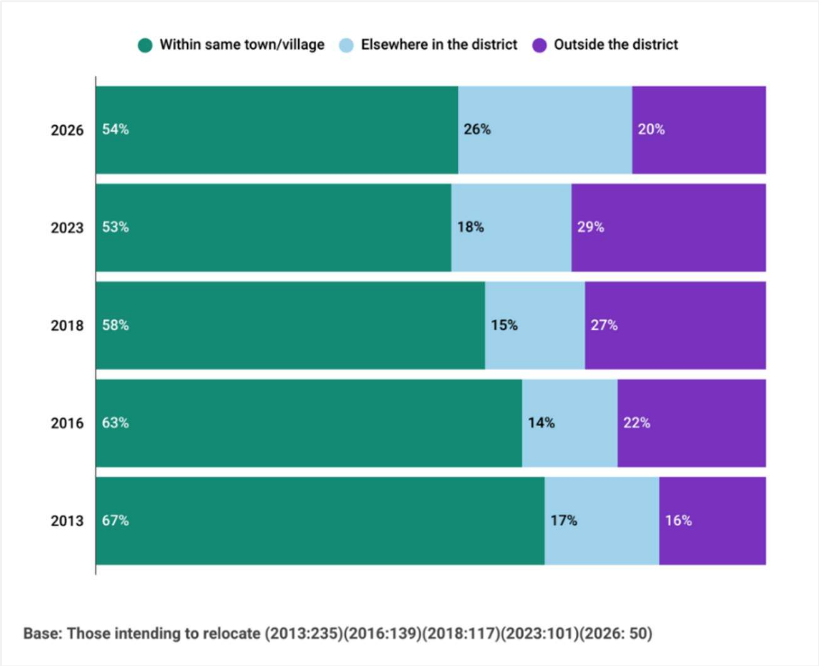
4.2.5 Relocation

Businesses were asked if the company intends to relocate where they wish to move to. 239 businesses responded, 189 of which said that they did not know.

The proportion of businesses saying that they would look to relocate elsewhere in the district rose eight percentage points to 26%, while the proportion looking outside the district fell by a similar margin to 20%. Those who responded they would look to relocate outside the district were asked to specify where. 22 responses were received.

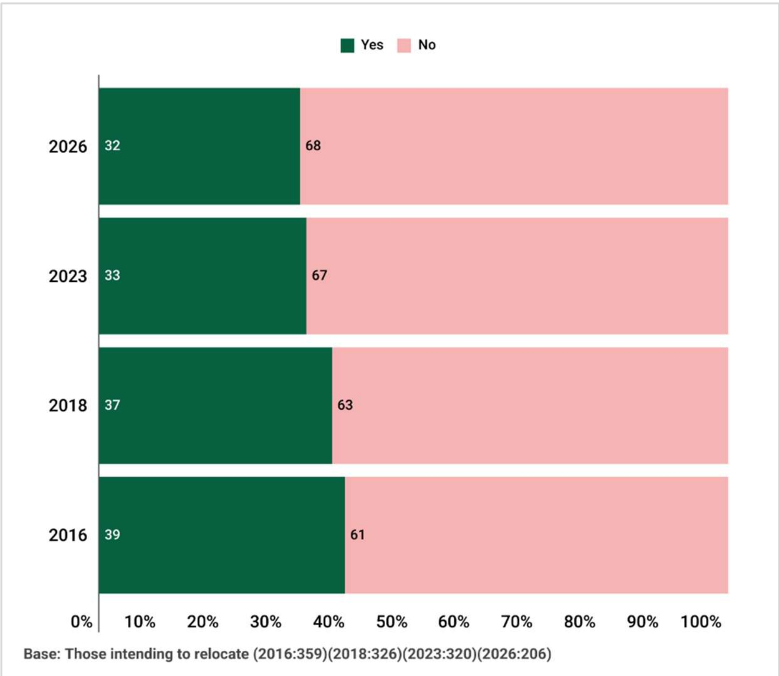
Businesses based in Stratford-upon-Avon were more likely to relocate within the town or elsewhere in the district than move out of the district; Studley businesses were more likely to relocate outside the district.

Figure 5: Where would your business relocate to?



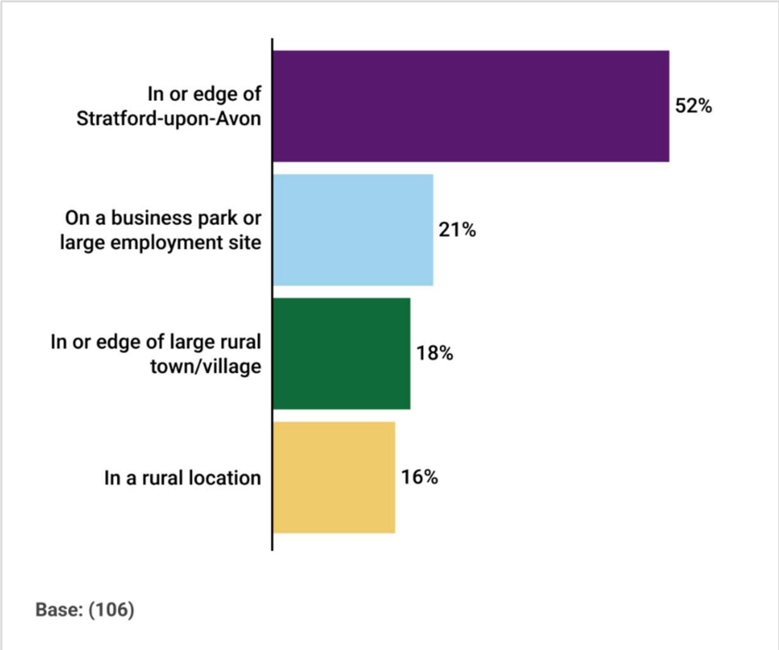
The percentage of respondents who thought that there were suitable premises in the district for relocation has dropped consistently over ten years, from 39% in 2016 to 32% in 2026.

Figure 6: Is suitable premises available within the district if you wish to relocate?



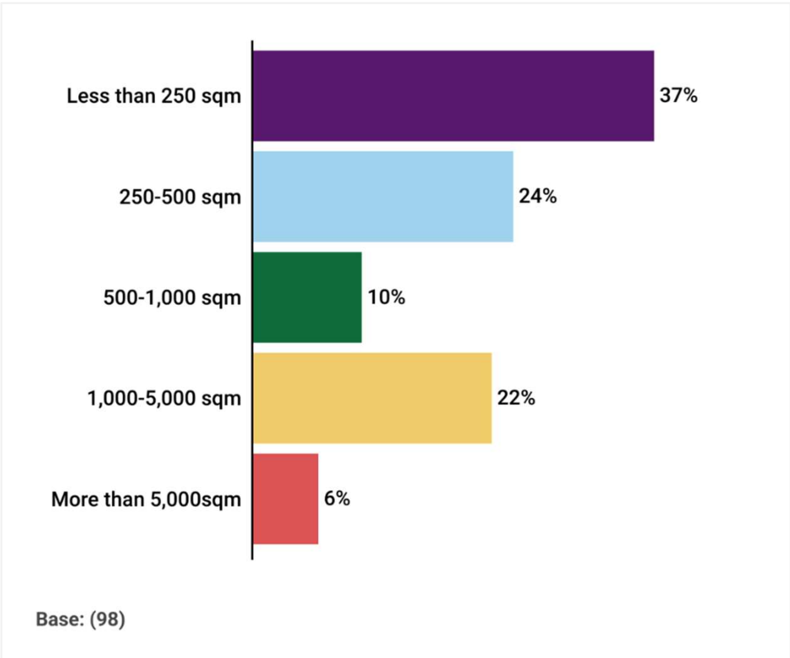
If businesses felt there were no suitable sites or premises available, over half (52%) would look in or at the edge of Stratford-upon-Avon, although these were predominantly businesses already located in Stratford. Those who said 'In a rural location' were asked to specify where; 18 responses were received.

Figure 7: If no suitable business premises exist, where would you want them to be provided in the district?



Over a third of businesses would be looking for premises of less than 250m^2.

Figure 8: What size premises are you looking for?



4.3 Stratford as an Area for Business

4.3.1 How area can be improved for business.

Respondents were asked to choose how the area can be improved to assist businesses and the economy from a list provided.

Reducing business rates and other charges remained number one choice; while almost all other choices fell in the proportion of businesses selecting them, two thirds of respondents now see reducing business rates and other charges as key to improve things for their business.

There was a particular reduction in the proportion of businesses saying that improving the road network, increasing the amount of parking or reducing parking rates would improve things, as well as a decrease in those saying improving broadband would help.

Table 12: How area can be improved to assist business and the economy

Improvements	2016 %	2018 %	2023 %	2026 %
Reduce business rates & other charges	68	49	54	64
Improve the road network	43	42	39	32
Improve public transport	31	29	35	29
Improve broadband connections	43	41	28	19
More available parking spaces	-	37	28	27
Provide more affordable business units	-	-	28	24
Reduce parking charges	37	27	26	19
Provide more business support & advice	13	22	16	17
Improve local environment	13	11	14	12
Provide more housing	12	11	12	7
Improve training & skills	10	10	11	11
Provide more employment land	11	11	8	7
Provide more business advice	8	7	7	6
Sufficient energy supply	-	-	7	6
Improved logistics/freight infrastructure	-	-	4	3
More scale-up space	-	-	2	5
Other	9	8	8	6
Base:	**(856)**	**(797)**	**(650)**	**(397)**

25 ‘other’ improvements were suggested.

4.3.2 Rating of Area for Business

Businesses were asked to rate the District as a place to do business. 63% rated the area as very good or good, which was 6 percentage points higher than 2023, back to levels seen previously.

Business based in Shipston-on-Stour were more likely to consider it average than businesses in other areas (47% vs 32% on average).

Figure 9: How do you rate Stratford-on-Avon District as a place to do business?

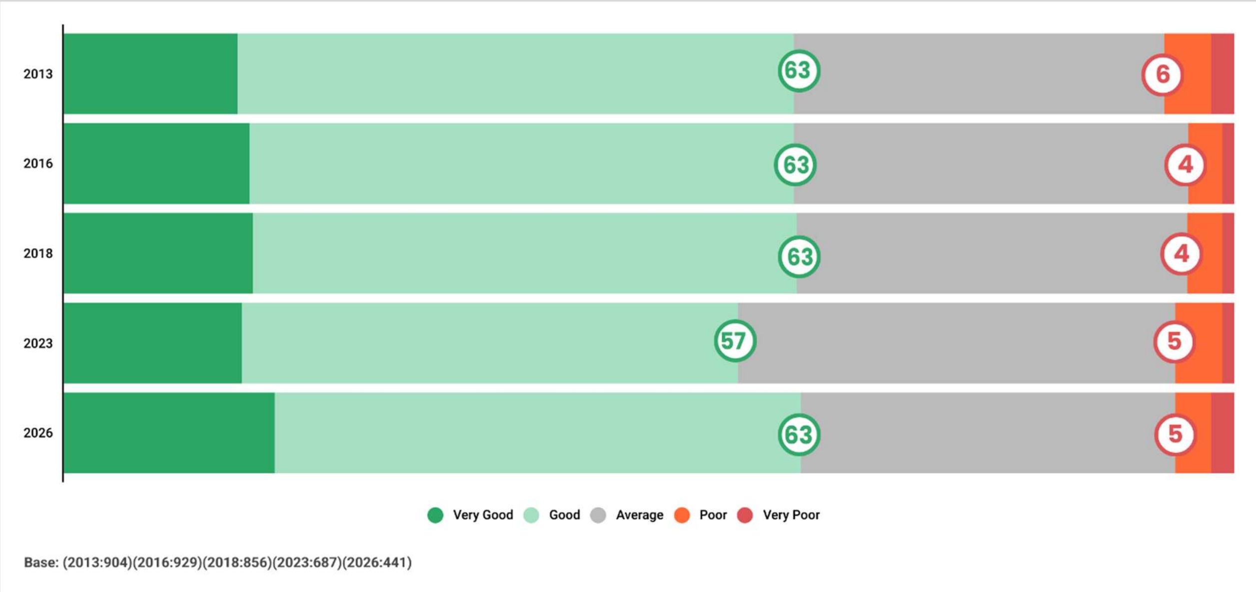


Table 13: Rating of Stratford District as a place to do business

Rating	2013	2016 %	2018 %	2023 %	2026 %
Very Good	15	16	16	15	18
Good	48	47	47	42	45
Average	32	33	32	37	32
Poor	4	4	3	4	3
Very Poor	2	1	1	1	2
Base:	**(904)**	**(929)**	**(856)**	**(687)**	**(441)**

Businesses were asked why they rated Stratford district as a place to do business. There were 170 responses. The reasons given are summarised in the table below.

Just under a quarter of comments from businesses who rated the district as average, poor or very poor (24%) said that high rates and other costs had a negative impact on how good it was to exist as a business in the district. 16% of responses felt that there had been a deterioration of town centres in the district, particularly Stratford-upon-Avon, in respect of the built environment and in the number of independent shops which were seen as a major draw for potential customers; they perceived this had led to a loss of footfall.

In the comments from those businesses rating Stratford-on-Avon as either good or very good, the most mentioned positive (17% of all comments) was the district's central location within the UK, at the heart of a good transport network.

Table 14: Why they rated Stratford District as average, poor or very poor

Reasons for rating - negative	No of Responses	%
Rates/rents/costs too high	16	24
Deteriorating town centres/not enough to draw people	11	16
Lack of support for business/investment	10	15
Transport/ roads	9	13
Parking	6	9
Planning	6	9
Fewer customers/lack of demand	6	9
Too Stratford-centric	5	7
Premises issues	2	3
Infrastructure	2	3
Miscellaneous	2	3
Base:	**67**	

Table 15: Why they rated Stratford District as average, good or very good

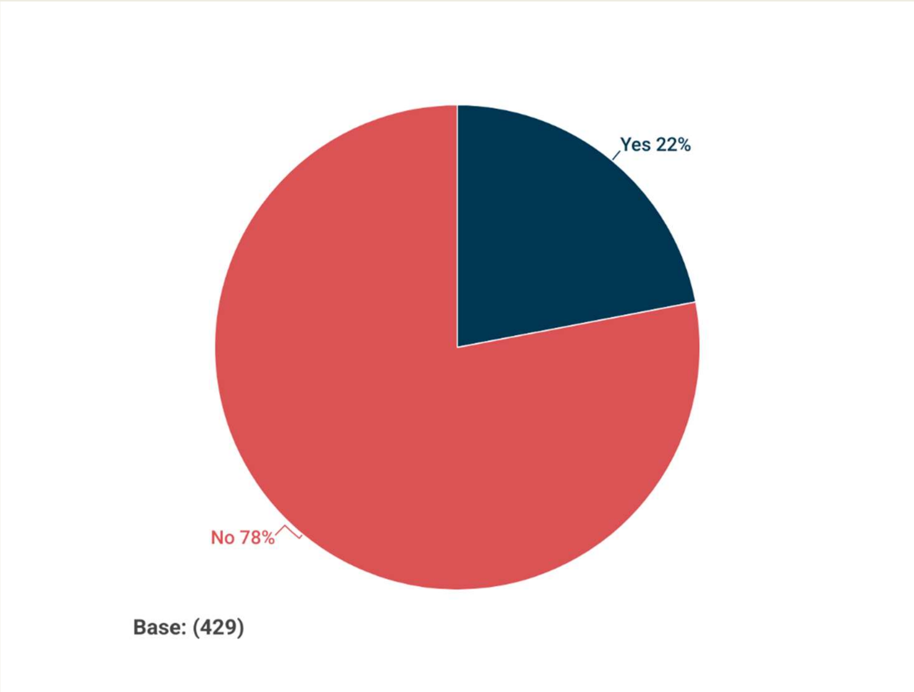
Reasons for rating - positive	No of Responses	%
Good customers	29	28
Connectivity of location	26	25
Pleasant/physical environment/nice place	13	13
Problems with transport/roads/parking	13	13
General positive comments	11	11
Attractive to tourists	9	9
Council is supportive	5	5
Proximity to other businesses/suppliers	4	4
Rates high/costs increasing	4	4
Town centre deteriorating	3	3
Can recruit staff	2	2
Poor support from SDC/planning issues	2	2
Miscellaneous	15	15
Base:	**103**	

4.4 Business Support

4.4.1 Support

Businesses were asked if they were looking for support to overcome any challenges or barriers which they may be facing, almost a quarter (22%) said that they were.

Figure 10: Requiring Support



They were then asked to choose from a number of possible areas which they were looking for support in. Of these, Access to finance was most popular (63% responses), followed by Growth Plans (36%) and Skills & Training (36%).

Table 16: Form of support welcomed

Area of support	No of Responses	%
Access to finance	55	63
Growth Plans	32	36
Skills & Training	32	36
Property & Planning	14	16
Recruitment	13	15
International Trade	9	10
Start-up Support	8	9
Other	12	14
Base: Those looking for support	**88**	

17% felt that they would benefit from discussing these issues with similar businesses in a peer-to-peer or networking event, while 18% said that they would like to speak to someone for support

4.5 Business Rates

4.5.1 Contacting the Council

Businesses were asked if they pay business rates (NNDR). 269 (63%) did.

Businesses who paid rates were then asked if they had contacted the Council in the last 12 months about business rates. Just under a quarter (23%, 60 businesses) had done so.

Respondents who had contacted the Council about business rates in the last 12 months were asked if they did so by telephone: 66% had done so.

Table 17: When you contacted the Council in the last 12 months about NNDR, did you telephone?

Contacted by telephone	2016 %	2018 %	2023 %	2026%
Yes	75	70	64	66
No	25	30	36	34
Base: (Those contacting the Council in the last 12 months about NNDR)	**(189)**	**(174)**	**(97)**	**(60)**

Those who had telephoned SDC in the last 12 months about business rates were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a range of statements.

"The telephone call I made to the Council was answered quickly".

50% of those surveyed agreed with the above statement, while 24% disagreed. This is an improvement on the results from 2023, although not quite back to levels seen in surveys prior to 2023.

Figure 10: The telephone call was answered quickly...

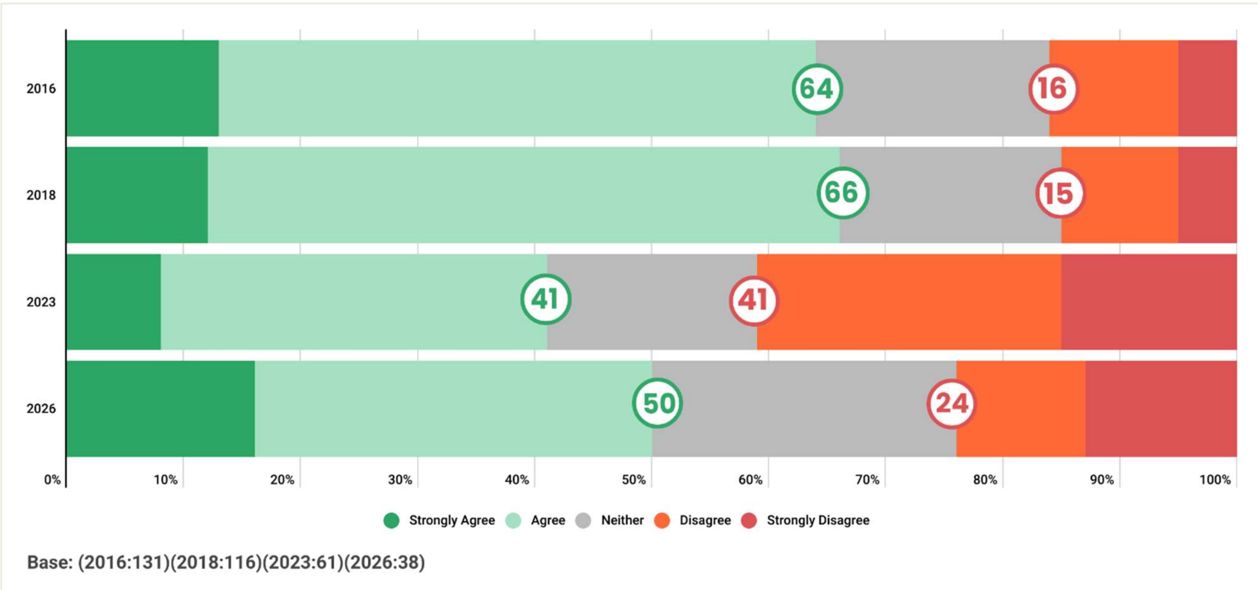


Table 18: The telephone call was answered quickly…

Rating	2016 %	2018 %	2023 %	2026 %
Strongly Agree	13	12	8	16
Agree	51	54	33	34
Neither Agree nor Disagree	20	19	18	26
Disagree	11	10	26	11
Strongly Disagree	5	5	15	13
Base: (Those telephoning)	**(131)**	**(116)**	**(61)**	**(38)**

"Once the call to the Council had been answered, my query was dealt with swiftly".

46% of businesses agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement while 28% disagreed.

Figure 11: My query was dealt with swiftly...

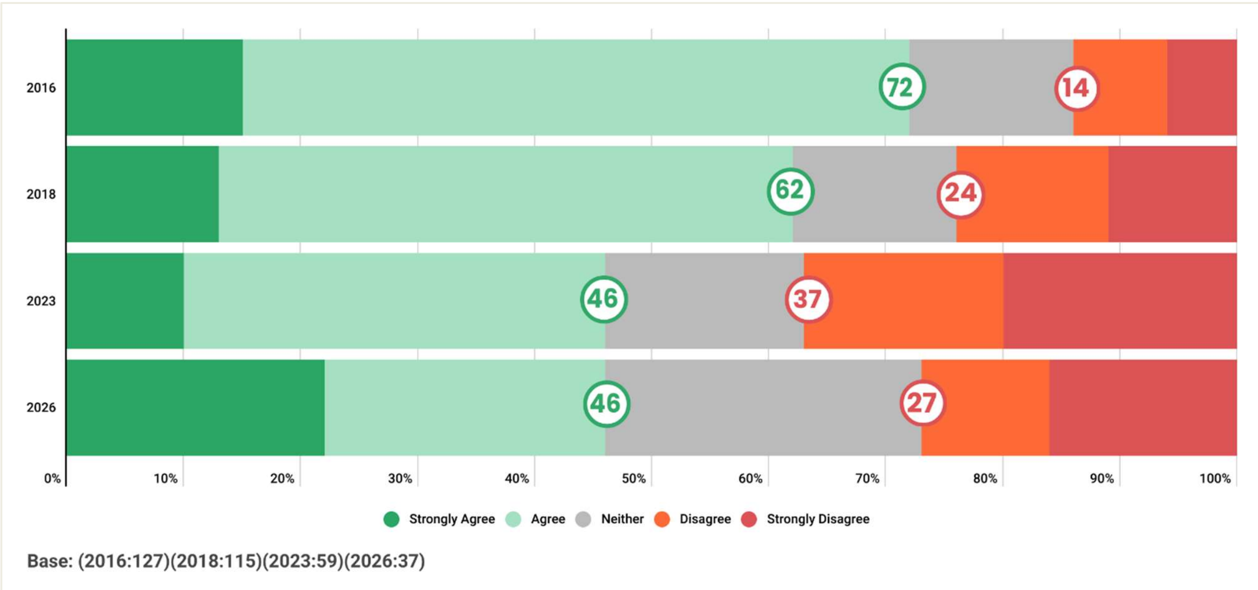


Table 19: My query was dealt with quickly…

Rating	2016 %	2018 %	2023 %	2026 %
Strongly Agree	15	13	10	22
Agree	57	49	35	24
Neither Agree nor Disagree	14	14	17	27
Disagree	8	13	17	11
Strongly Disagree	6	11	20	16
Base: (Those telephoning)	**(127)**	**(115)**	**(59)**	**(37)**

"Overall, I am satisfied with the telephone service provided by the Council".

50% were satisfied with the telephone service provided by the Council, up ten points against last year, but still lower than previous surveys.

Figure 13: Overall I am satisfied with the telephone service provided by the Council...

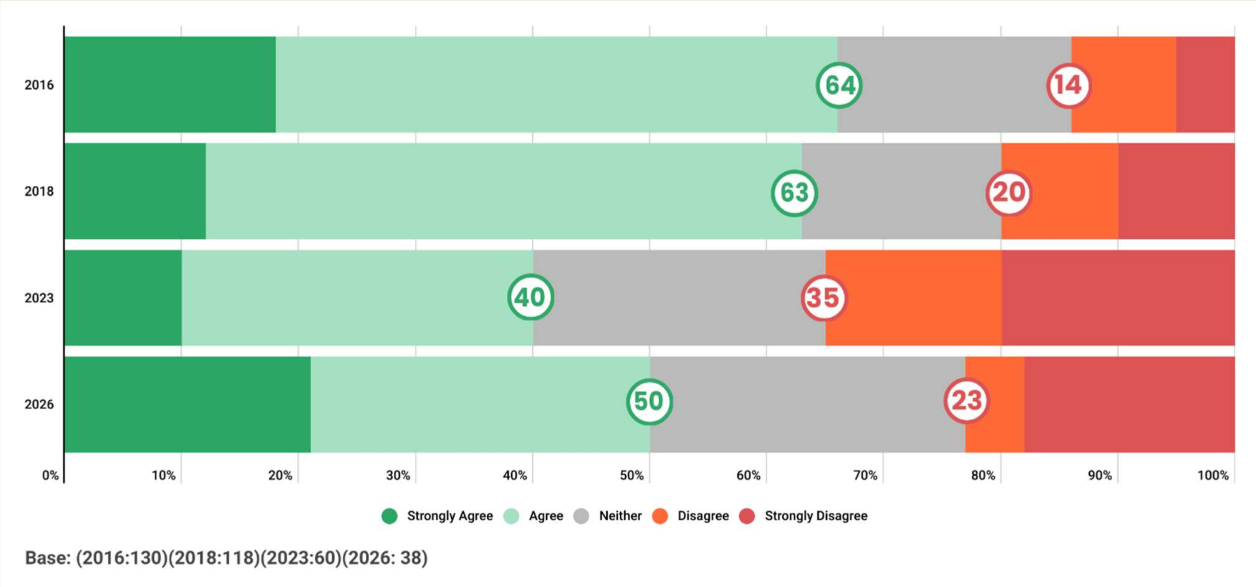


Table 20: Overall I am satisfied with the telephone service provided

Rating	**2016 %**	**2018 %**	**2023 %**	**2026 %**
Strongly Agree	18	12	10	21
Agree	48	51	30	29
Neither Agree nor Disagree	20	17	25	26
Disagree	9	10	15	5
Strongly Disagree	5	10	20	18
Base: (Those telephoning)	**(130)**	**(118)**	**(60)**	**(38)**

4.5.2 Awareness of rate reliefs

A very high proportion (92%) of those surveyed were aware of the Small Business Rate Relief; just over a quarter were aware of the Retail, Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure relief. Awareness of other rate reliefs currently available to them was much lower.

Table 21: Awareness of the rate reliefs currently available to businesses

Rate Relief Type	**2016 %**	**2018 %**	**2023 %**	**2026 %**
Small Business Rate Relief	97	96	93	92
Retail, tourism, hospitality, leisure Rate Relief	-	-	19	26
Discretionary Rate Relief	7	13	10	9
Discretionary Rural Rate Relief	4	5	5	1
Mandatory Rate Relief	4	8	4	4
Mandatory Rural Rate Relief	4	4	4	0
Hardship Rate Relief	4	5	3	1
Pub Relief	-	4	3	5
Local discretionary discount scheme	-	6	2	1
Section 44a Partly Occupied Relief	3	4	1	3
Base:	**(731)**	**(681)**	**(364)**	**(194)**

4.5.3 Applying for rate reliefs

81% of businesses confirmed they had applied for the Small Business Rate Relief, while 23% said that they had applied for Retail, Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure relief. Few had applied for other rate reliefs.

Table 22: Whether applied for any of the rate reliefs currently available to businesses.

Rate Relief Type	**2016 %**	**2018 %**	**2023 %**	**2026 %**
Small Business Rate Relief	95	94	86	81
Retail, tourism, hospitality, leisure Rate Relief	-	-	19	23
Discretionary Rate Relief	2	3	4	7
Mandatory Rate Relief	1	1	2	2
Pub Relief	-	-	1	2
Section 44a Partly Occupied Relief	2	1	0	2
Local discretionary discount scheme	-	-	0	1
Hardship Rate Relief	2	1	1	1
Mandatory Rural Rate Relief	1	2	1	0
Discretionary Rural Rate Relief	1	1	1	0
Base:	**(536)**	**(556)**	**(252)**	**(133)**

4.5.4 Comments about the NNDR process through the Council

50 comments were supplied about the NNDR process through the Council, and these are listed in Appendix J, and summarised in the table below.

The comments suggest that businesses are facing a difficult period of financial pressure from rising costs, one of which is NNDR, with a number feeling that both the valuation and assessment for rates system, and the system of reliefs available, are unclear and difficult to navigate. Against this backdrop, nearly a fifth of respondents (18%) stated that they would like more advice on what reliefs may be available to them. An almost equal number expressed concern at the reliability of their rateable value, suggesting that, for example, quality of premises had not been taken into account.

Table 23: Comments about the NNDR process

NNDR	**No of Responses**	**%**
Would like to know more about what's available	9	18
Errors/issues with how NNDR has been calculated	8	16
Rates have been increased	5	10
Not available to my business	4	8
Not aware of any available reliefs or support	4	8
Communication is poor	4	8
Rates are too high	4	8
Already receiving reliefs	4	8
Worried about potential rise in rates/loss of SBRR	3	6
Dealings with SDC have been good/OK	2	4
Dealings with SDC have been poor	2	4
Lack of support	2	4
Miscellaneous	5	10
Base:	**50**	