Research Report

Luton Citizens' Panel Survey – June 2012

Prepared for: Luton Borough Council

bmg research

Luton Citizens' Panel Survey – June 2012

Prepared for: Luton Borough Council

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Table of Contents

1 Executive summary 1
1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Local plans 1
1.3 Community safety 1
1.4 Community debate 1
1.5 Audit and investigation 3
1.6 Youth provision 3
2 Introduction 4
2.1 Method 4
2.2 Report content 4
3 Local Plans 7
3.1 Main issues in planning for the future 7
3.2 Key local improvements 11
4 Community safety 14
4.1 Perceptions of safety 14
4.2 Problems in the local area 16
5 Community debate 18
5.1 Street lighting 18
5.2 Street cleansing 21
5.3 Grass cutting – verges 24
5.4 Refuse collection 27
5.5 The local library 31
5.6 Charges for services 36
5.7 Community spirit and getting involved 37
6 Audit and investigation 39
7 Youth provision 41
Appendix 1 – Profile of respondents 45
Appendix 2 – Questionnaire 46

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Index of Deprivation by Super Output area 5

Figure 2 : Q1 The main issues in planning for the future over the next 20 years (all respondents) 8

Figure 3: Q2 Reasons for respondents' priorities – unprompted (all respondents) 10

Figure 4: Q3 What five things would respondents say need improving most/see more of in terms of the development and growth in the local area (all respondents) 12

Figure 5: Q4/Q5 Perceptions of safety when outside in the local area after dark/during the day (all respondents providing a valid response) 14

Figure 6: Q6 Reasons for feeling unsafe after dark or during the day – unprompted (where feel unsafe) 15

Figure 7: Q7 How much of a problem specific issues are in the local area (all respondents providing a valid response) 16

Figure 8: Q8 Satisfaction with the existing street lighting service in the local area (all respondents providing a valid response) 19

Figure 9: Q9 Rating of the impact of specific proposals concerning street lighting (all respondents providing a valid response) 20

Figure 10: Q11 Agreement with steps to reduce the impact of street lighting proposals (all respondents providing a valid response) 21

Figure 11: Q12 Satisfaction with the existing street cleansing service in the local area (all respondents providing a valid response) 22

Figure 12: Q13 Rating of the impact of specific proposals concerning street cleansing (all respondents providing a valid response) 23

Figure 13: Q15 Agreement with steps to reduce the impact of street cleansing proposals (all respondents providing a valid response) 24

Figure 14: Q16 Satisfaction with the existing grass cutting service in the local area (all respondents providing a valid response) 25

Figure 15: Q17 Rating of the impact of specific proposals concerning grass cutting (all respondents providing a valid response) 26

Figure 16: Q19 Agreement with steps to reduce the impact of grass cutting proposals (all respondents providing a valid response) 27

Figure 17: Q20 Satisfaction with the existing refuse collection service in the local area (all respondents providing a valid response) 28

Figure 18: Q21 Impact of specific proposals concerning refuse collection (all respondents providing a valid response) 29

Figure 19: Q23 Agreement with steps to reduce the impact of refuse co respondents providing a valid response) 30

Figure 20: Q24 Which local library is most likely to be used by respondents (all respondents) 31

igure 21: Q25 Frequency of the local library (all respondents) 32

Figure 22: Q26 Reasons for using the local library (all respondents) 33

Figure 23: Q27 Rating of the impact of the local library closing (all respondents providing a valid response) 34

Figure 24: Q29 What respondents would do instead, if they local library was to close (where considered a fairly or very big impact) 35

Figure 25: Q30 Services respondents would be willing to start paying for or pay more for to protect local services – unprompted (all respondents) 36

Figure 26: Q31 Whether respondents help in the local community with specific activities on a regular basis (all respondents) 37

Figure 27: Q32 Whether respondents would be interested in finding out more about specific activities (all respondents) 38

Figure 28: Q34 Agreement with statements about the Council's audit and investigation activities (all respondents providing a valid response) 39

Figure 29: Q35 Whether respondents have children or grandchildren between the ages of 11-19 years that live in Luton (all respondents) 41

Figure 30: Q36 The top three issues faced by young people aged 11-19 years in the local area (all respondents) 42

Figure 31: Q37 One thing that the Council should prioritise to tackle the issues faced by young people - unprompted (all respondents) 43

Figure 32: Q38 Suggestions of how the community could be involved (all respondents) 44

1 Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

This survey was undertaken among members of the Luton Citizens' Panel. 966 current Panel members were mailed a survey questionnaire in June 2012, with a reminder mailing going out in July. In total, 412 questionnaires were returned, providing a response rate of 43%. A sample of 412 respondents yields a standard error of +/-4.8% (at the 95% confidence level).

This report contains a written summary of the survey questions concerning local plans, community safety, council spending & local services, audit and investigation and youth provision.

1.2 Local plans

The main perceived issues in planning for the future over the next 20 years are protecting things that residents like (56%), deciding where development should go (45%), how to get a job locally (43%), how to find an affordable home (43%), public transport (38%), activities/uses for new developments (33%), car parking (33%) and finding available land (32%).

In terms of development and growth in the local area, the most popular suggestion for improvement is job opportunities (41%). This is followed by affordable housing (32%), traffic congestion (29%), activities for teenagers (28%), clean streets (25%), crime (24%) and health services (23%).

1.3 Community safety

More than eight in ten respondents (84% rating very or fairly safe) feel safe during the day, however this falls to 38% at night. Among those feeling unsafe, people hanging around in groups/gangs (33%) is the main spontaneous reason given.

The biggest problems in the local area are rubbish/litter lying around (40% rating this a very big/fairly big problem), and people using/dealing drugs (43%). Teenagers hanging around (39%) and burglary (40%) were also cited as big problems by at least one in four residents.

1.4 Community debate

Satisfaction with the current provision of services is generally very high:

- Refuse collection (94% rating very or fairly satisfied);
- Street lighting (89%);
- Grass cutting – verges (81%);
- Street cleansing services (77%).

However, the impact of most of the proposals to reduce costs would be sorely felt by many residents. The list below details all the possible proposals, in order of impact on residents:

- Street lighting: Turning the street lights off all together in your area (87% rating a fairly big/very big impact);
- Refuse collection: Stopping some discretionary services such as garden waste (71%);
- Refuse collection: Reducing the refuse collection to once a fortnight instead of once a week (63%);
- Grass cutting - verges: Significantly reducing the frequency that shrub beds and other features such as roundabout displays are maintained, to as little as once a year (61%);
- Grass cutting-verges: Reducing the frequency of mowing of verges from 17 times a year to as low as 6 times a year (58%);
- Street cleansing: Reducing the frequency of cleansing operations (57%);
- Street cleansing: Reducing response times to service requests (54%);
- Grass cutting-verges: Reducing the maintenance of the roadside trees to the extent that the council would only undertake work where there was a statutory requirement or a financial risk to the council (54%);
- Refuse collection: Introducing a charge for the collection of bulky household waste and/or clinical collections (54%);
- Street lighting: Turning lights off for periods in the middle of the night (50%);
- Street cleansing: Cutting some discretionary services altogether such as deep cleaning of streets (49%);
- Libraries: If the local library was to close (36%);
- Street lighting: Reducing the brightness of street lights at certain times when roads are less busy (32%).

Agreement with steps to reduce the impact of the proposals varies, although it is recognised that something must be done to counter-balance the impact of service reductions. Each suggested step is listed below, ranked by level of agreement:

- Street lighting: Ensure any changes could be speedily reversed should it prove necessary (85% agree);
- Street lighting: Consult closely with emergency services before implementing changes (83%);
- Street cleansing: Increase enforcement action to prevent littering (82%);
- Street cleansing: Work with community groups (69%);
- Street cleansing: Increase education about the environment and work to encourage Civic Pride (67%);
- Grass cutting - verges: Introducing 'urban meadows' (areas of wildflowers and grasses) (67%);
- Grass cutting-verges: Arrange grass cutting to take place alongside street cleaning operations (66%);

- Refuse collection: Ensure we have measures in place to help large families (64%);
- Libraries: travel to another library (51% suggested this as a solution to closure);
- Grass cutting-verges: Mowing the grass on main highways more frequently than side roads (48%);
- Refuse collection: Ensure charges are fair and cover the cost of the service (46%);
- Libraries: stop using the library service (43% suggested this).

When asked to name services that residents would be willing to start paying for or pay more for to protect local services, most struggled to name any services at all, with 23% saying 'nothing' and 54% saying 'don't know'. The most popular is bulky/large household waste collections (4%).

There is much evidence of community spirit among residents, with the vast majority (96%) saying they undertake one or more of the listed activities at least once a week. The most popular activities are recycling everything possible (85%), helping out neighbours (58%) and picking up litter (41%).

A half of respondents (50%) would also like to be more involved in local decision making, mainly by influencing decisions that affect the local neighbourhood (34%), being involved in the community debate/how the council spends its budget (25%) and being involved in shaping local public services (24%).

1.5 Audit and investigation

More than a half of residents agree with each of the statements about the council's audit and investigation activities, particularly that the courts should impose harsher sentences for benefit fraud (87% agree strongly/agree), concern about the level of benefit fraud (80%) and being confident in reporting fraud to the council (67%).

1.6 Youth provision

The top three issues faced by young people aged 11-19 are a lack of job opportunities (59%), boredom (46%) and poor parenting (39%). Other issues mentioned by at least a third of residents include crime/anti-social behaviour (36%) and a lack of role models (34%).

Just under three quarters of residents (73%) agree with at least one of the listed suggestions of how the community could be involved. They feel that the council should continue youth work in the local area (52%), voluntary groups should use council youth centres (44%), voluntary groups should deliver activities (38%) and the council should recruit volunteers (37%).

2 Introduction

2.1 Method

This survey was undertaken among members of the Luton Citizens' Panel. 966 current Panel members were mailed a survey questionnaire on 20th June 2012, with a cut off date of 6th July. Those who had not returned a completed questionnaire by the cut off date, were mailed a reminder on 9th July, with a cut off date of 23rd July. In total, 412 questionnaires were returned, providing a response rate of 43%.

A sample of 412 respondents yields a standard error of +/-4.8% (at the 95% confidence level), eg where the sample response is 50%, the true population figure will lie within the range 45.2% and 54.8%.

2.2 Report content

This report contains a written summary of the survey questions concerning:

- Local plans;
- Community safety;
- Council spending & local services;
- Audit and investigation;
- Youth provision.

Graphs and tables are used throughout the report to assist explanation and analysis. Although occasional anomalies appear due to 'rounding' differences, these are never more than +/-1%. These occur where, for example, rating scales have been added to calculate proportions of respondents who are satisfied at all (ie either very or fairly satisfied).

'Rating questions' have been reported on those who provided a valid response, ie taking out 'don't know', 'not applicable' and 'not provided' responses.

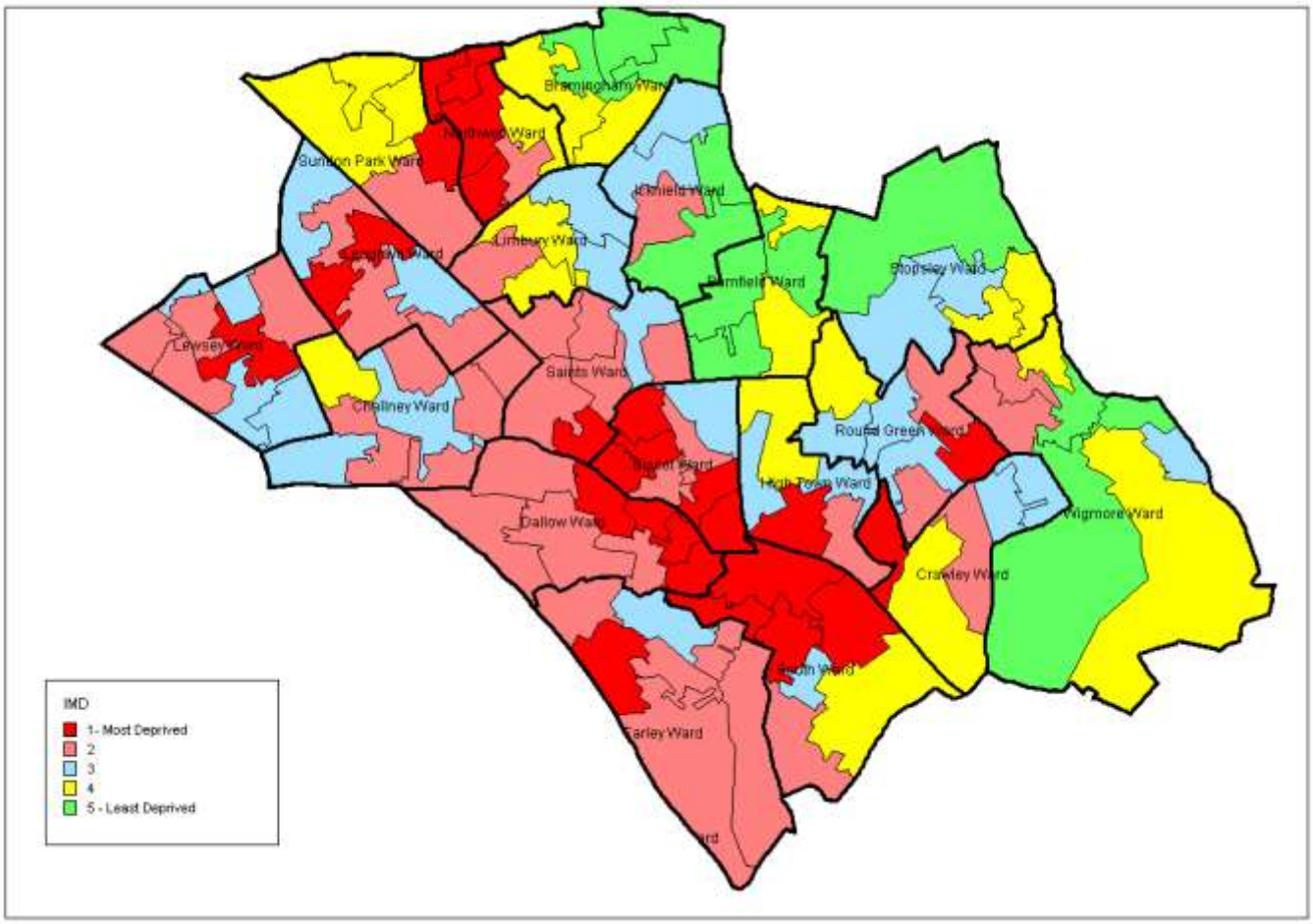
In addition to this written report, a separate data report has been produced, which shows the total results for each question and also the results cross-tabulated by the following respondent sub groups :

- Gender;
- Age;
- Children in household;
- Ethnicity;
- Disability;
- Employment status;
- Length in Luton;
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (5 groups);
- Area committee area;
- Housing tenure.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation is a measure of multiple deprivation at the small area level (Super Output Areas). The IMD contains seven Domains of deprivation: Income deprivation, Employment deprivation, Health deprivation and disability, Education, skills and training deprivation, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living environment deprivation and Crime. Each Domain contains a number of indicators. All the Super Output Areas in Luton are given a value, ranked from the most deprived to the least deprived areas and then divided into 5 groups. Several Super Output Areas fall into each ward in Luton, so some wards can be a mix of Indices.

The map below shows each of the Super Output areas in Luton, and each is colour coded according to which of the 5 IMD groups it falls fall into.

Figure 1: Index of Deprivation by Super Output area



The five Area committee areas were defined by ward, with the following wards included in each :

- North Luton = Bramingham, Icknield, Limbury, Northwell and Sundon Park;
- East Luton = Crawley, Round Green, Stopsley, Wigmore;
- South Luton = Dallow, Farley, South;
- West Luton = Challney, Leagrave, Lewsey;
- Central Luton = Barnfield, Biscot, High Town, Saints.

Data has been analysed by the above sub groups where appropriate to the question and also where sub groups show a statistically significant difference in response. It should be noted that similar respondents may comprise more than one sub group and therefore have related opinions, for example '65+ year olds' compared to 'retired people' or 'those not working due to unemployment or long term illness' compared to 'those renting from a housing association/council'.

The profile of respondents can be found in Appendix 1.

A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2.

3 Local Plans

3.1 Main issues in planning for the future

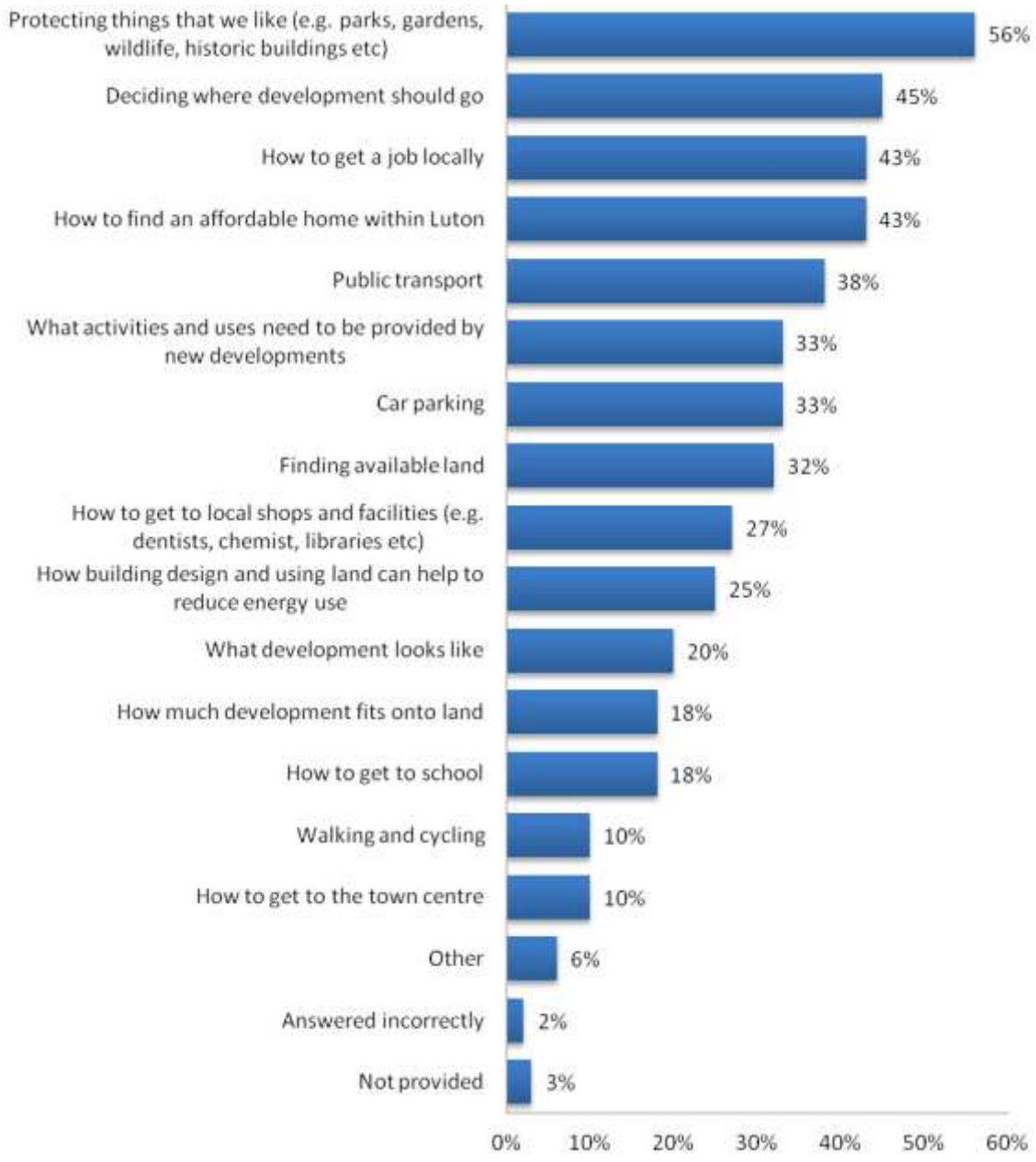
In order to provide relevant background information, respondents were explained that:

“There is evidence that the future population of the Borough will increase significantly over the next 20 years and as our children grow up they will need decent and affordable homes to live in. Projections suggest the next 20 years could see the number of households in Luton increase somewhere between 11,000 to 19,000 households.”

respondents were then asked what they consider to be the main issues in planning for the future over the next 20 years, and asked to choose up to 5 priorities from a list of 15, or suggest something different.

More than a half of respondents mentioned protecting things that they like such as parks, gardens, wildlife and historic buildings, whilst just under a half each mentioned deciding where developments should go, how to get a job locally and how to find an affordable home. At least a third also mentioned public transport, planning for new developments, car parking and finding available land. Activities that were considered least important were how to get to the town centre and walking and cycling.

Figure 2 : Q1 The main issues in planning for the future over the next 20 years (all respondents)



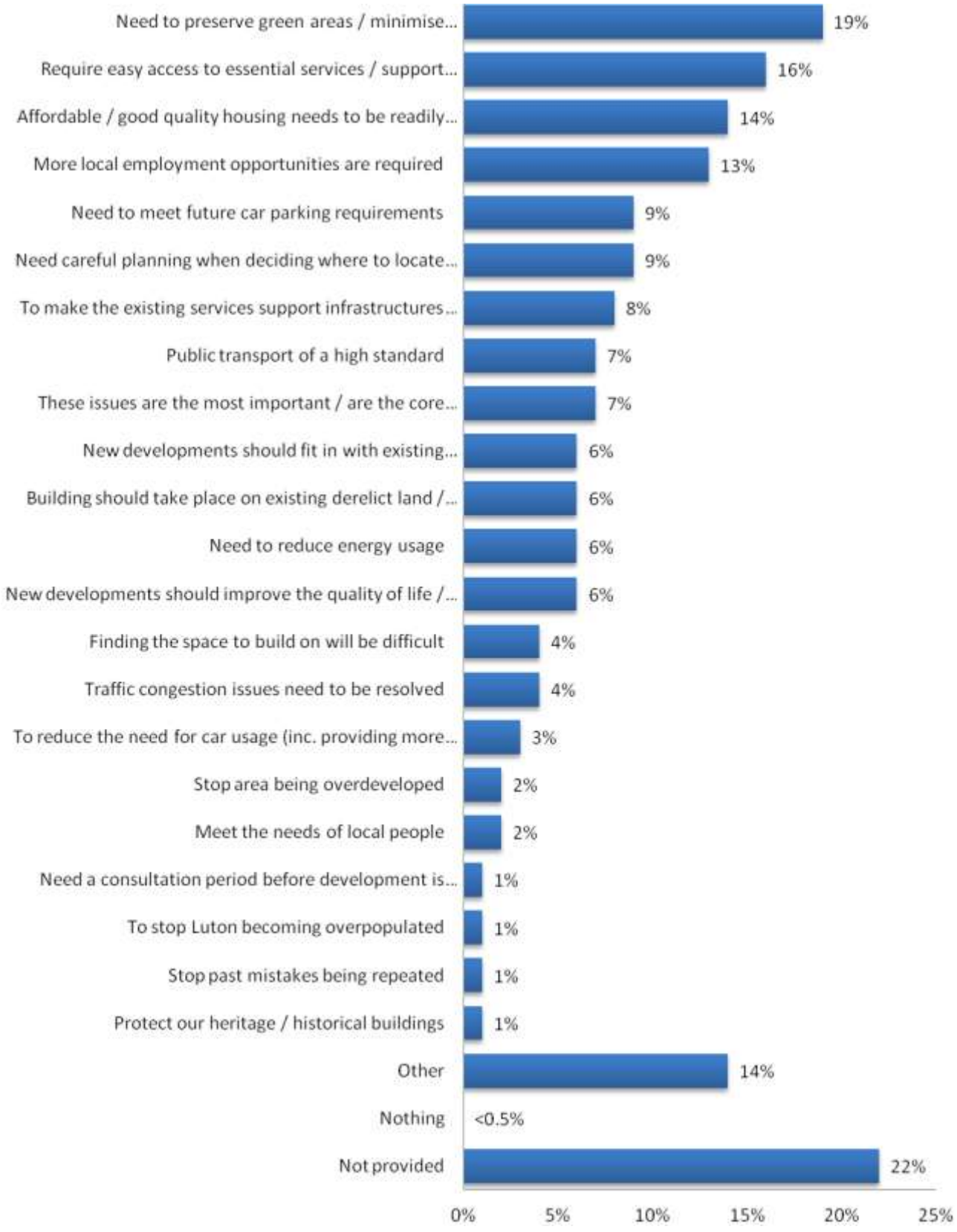
Base = 412

There were some differences by sub group:

- White respondents (59%) were more likely to mention protecting things than BME respondents (40%):
- Those with children (60%) were more likely to mention affordable homes than those with none (37%);
- Those living in the least deprived wards (54%) were more likely to mention deciding where development should go than those living in the most deprived wards (32%).

Respondents were also asked on a spontaneous basis, the reasons for choosing their priorities. Overall, the main reasons included the need to preserve green areas, the need for easy access to essential services, affordable housing and more local employment opportunities, with at least one in ten mentioning each of these. Other reasons included meeting future car parking needs, carefully planning local developments and making existing services support infrastructures (including schools, shops, health services.

Figure 3: Q2 Reasons for respondents' priorities – unprompted (all respondents)



Base = 412

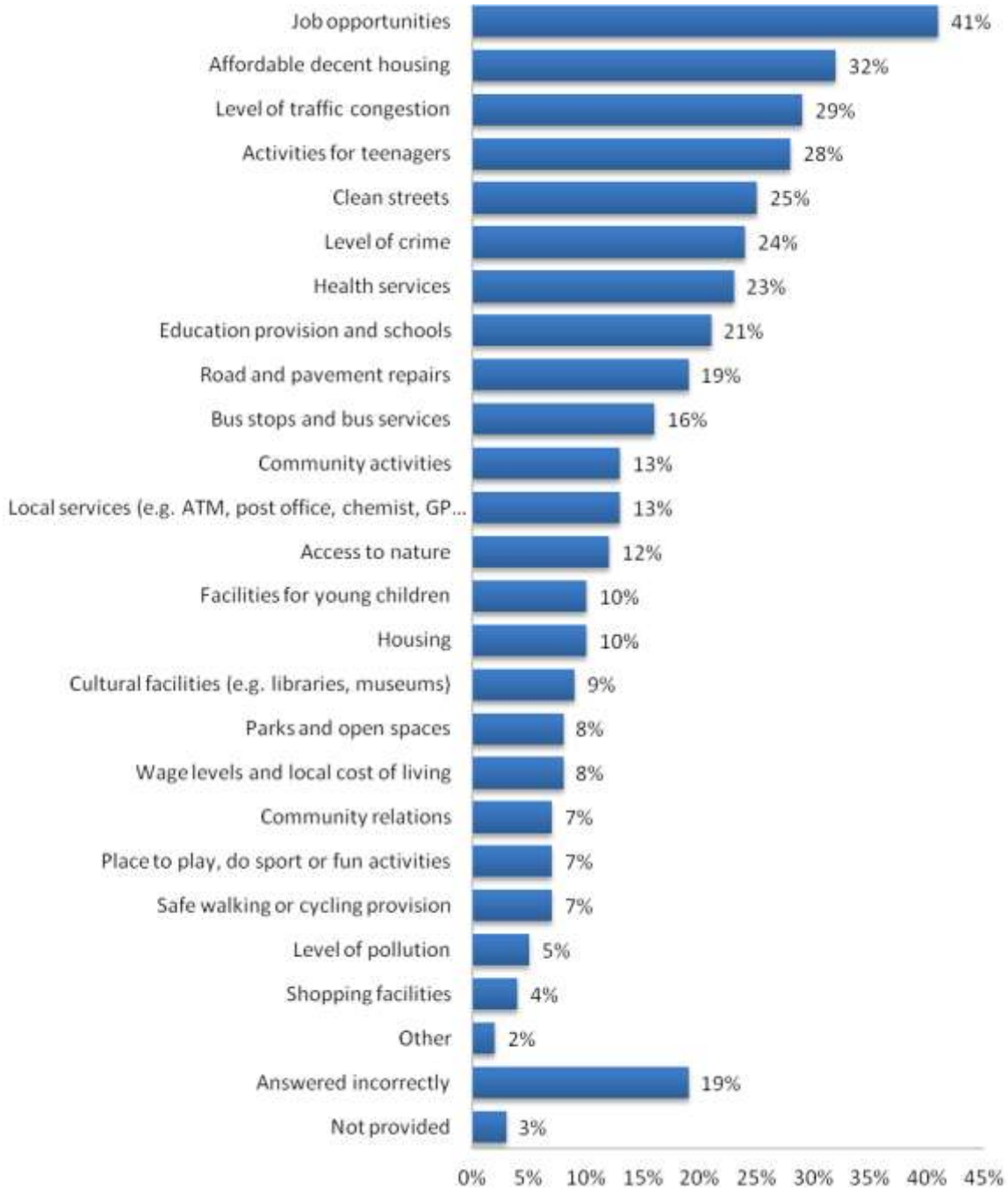
When looking at the reasons for choosing specific priorities, most of the comments relate specifically to the priority chosen. For example, those respondents setting protecting things that residents like as a priority did so because of the need to preserve green areas and the environment, those setting getting a job locally did so to ensure residents can work locally and those setting getting to the town centre, local shops or school, did so because accessibility was important.

3.2 Key local improvements

Residents were asked to think about the development and growth in their local area, and asked what 5 things (from a list) they felt needed improving most or would like to see more of.

The most popular improvement was job opportunities, with about four in ten respondents saying this. Sizeable proportions also mentioned affordable housing, the level of traffic congestion, activities for teenagers, clean streets, the level of crime, health services and education provision.

Figure 4: Q3 What five things would respondents say need improving most/see more of in terms of the development and growth in the local area (all respondents)



Base = 412

Those more likely to mention job opportunities were those with children (55%) and BME groups (53%). Those more likely to mention affordable housing were those living in North Luton (40%). Those more likely to mention traffic congestion were those living in Central Luton (49%) and those living in the least deprived wards (43%). Those more likely to mention activities for teenagers include those living in South Luton.

Those who mentioned local services as needing improvement specified the following services:

- GP clinics (4% of all respondents);
- Post offices (3%);
- Chemists (3%);
- Shopping facilities (1%);
- Dentists (1%);
- The police (<0.5%).

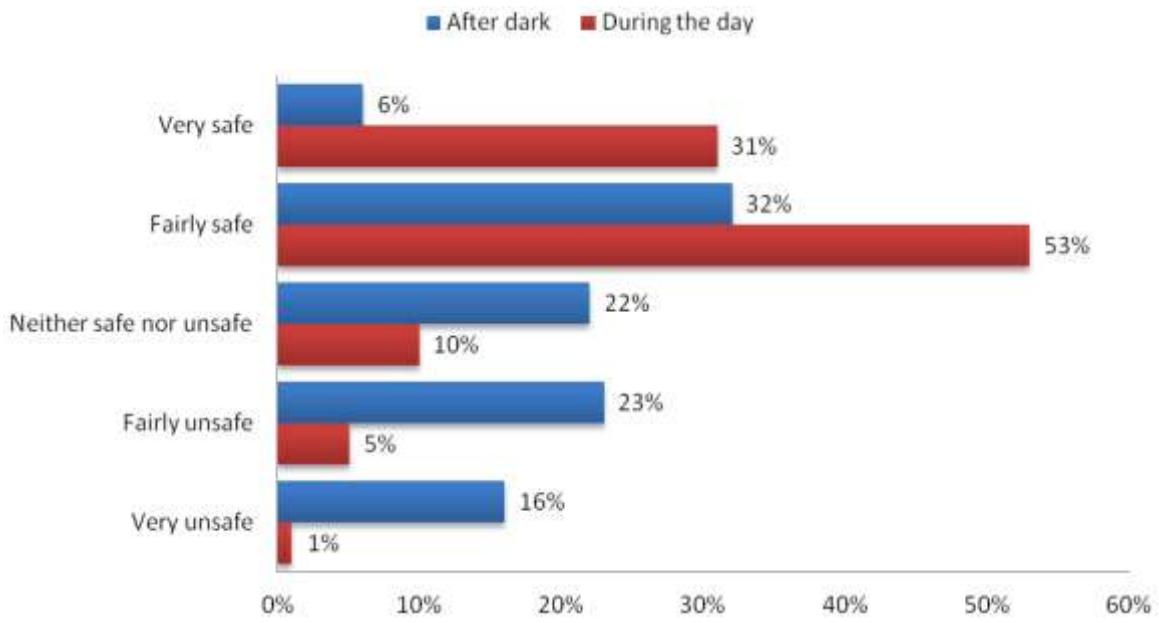
4 Community safety

4.1 Perceptions of safety

Respondents were asked how safe they felt in their local area after dark and during the day.

Not surprisingly perceptions of safety varied widely between day and night. More than eight in ten respondents (84% rating very or fairly safe) felt safe during the day, however this falls to 38% at night.

Figure 5: Q4/Q5 Perceptions of safety when outside in the local area after dark/during the day (all respondents providing a valid response)



Base = 382 (After dark), Base = 400 (During the day)

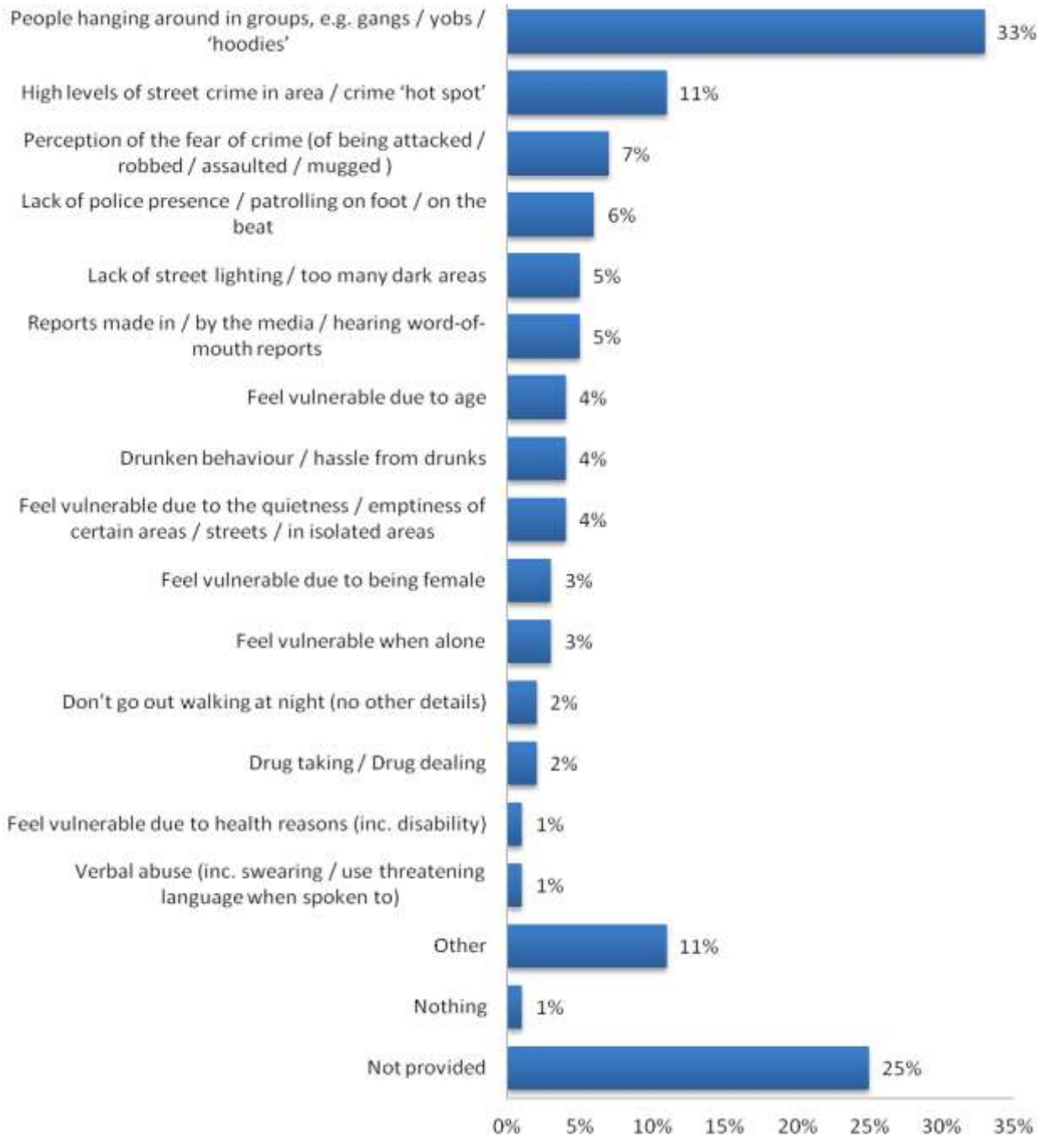
There were few differences across sub groups in terms of perceptions of safety during the day. However, white groups were more likely to feel safe (86%) than BME groups (73%).

In terms of perceptions of safety at night, those more likely to feel unsafe were:

- Those of Asian background (57%);
- Those living in the most deprived wards (50%);
- Females (48%);
- Retired respondents (47%);
- Those living in West Luton (46%) and Central Luton (46%).

Respondents who felt unsafe, were asked to explain why (on a spontaneous basis). The major cause of anxiety was people hanging around in groups/gangs, mentioned by a third of those who felt unsafe. Smaller proportions mentioned high levels of street crime, fear of crime, lack of police presence, lack of street lighting or hearing from the media/others about crime in general.

Figure 6: Q6 Reasons for feeling unsafe after dark or during the day – unprompted (where feel unsafe)



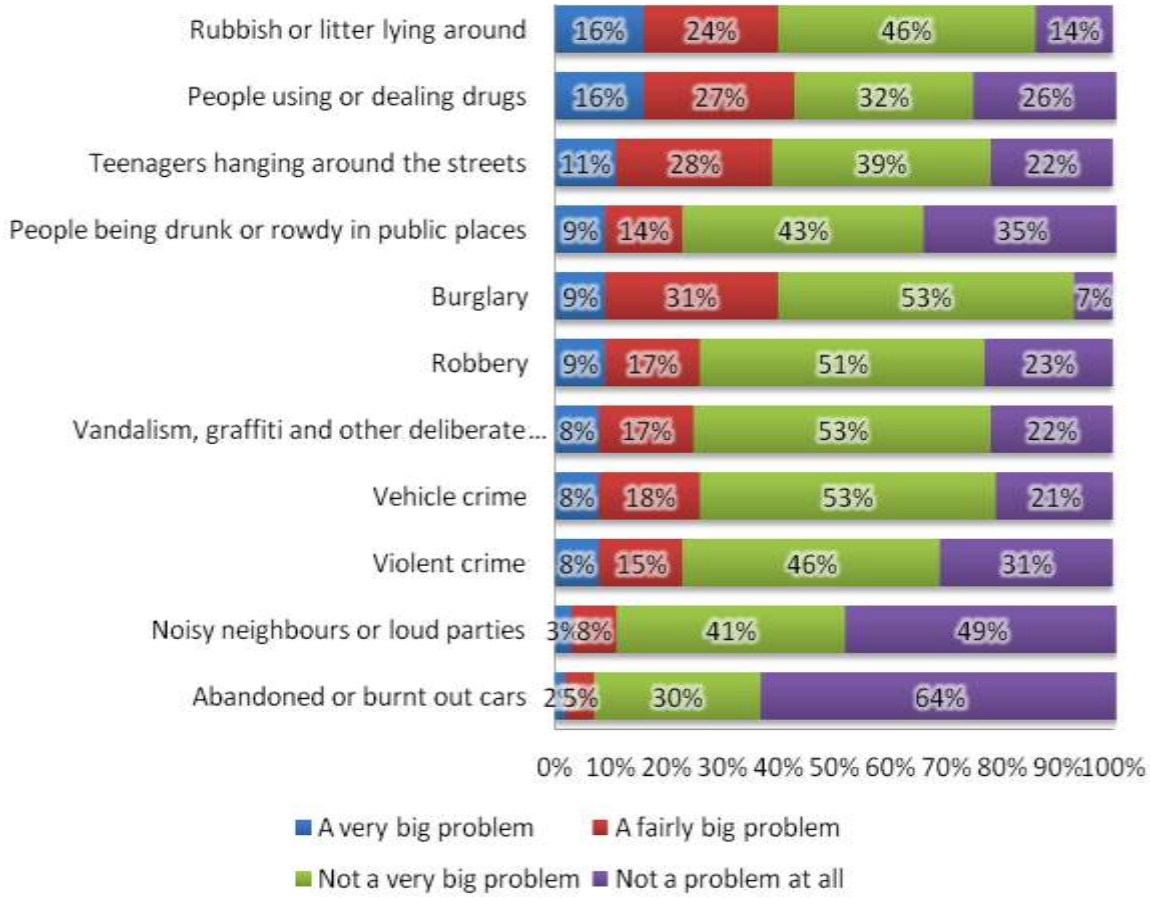
Base = 157

4.2 Problems in the local area

Respondents were asked how much of a problem specific activities were in the local area. They were asked to rate each using a 4 point scale from 'a very big problem' to 'not a problem at all'. The graph below shows the valid responses, ie taking out 'no opinion' and 'not provided'.

The biggest problems were rubbish/litter lying around and people using/dealing drugs, with one in six respondents mentioning these as 'a very big problem'. Teenagers hanging around the streets was also mentioned by at least one in ten as 'a very big problem'. Abandoned/burnt out cars and noisy neighbours/loud parties were perceived as the least problematic.

Figure 7: Q7 How much of a problem specific issues are in the local area (all respondents providing a valid response)



Base = Sample varies

Focussing on the biggest perceived problems, those more likely to mention rubbish or litter lying around being a big problem (very big/fairly big problem) were:

- Those living in South Luton (58%) and Central Luton (56%);

- Those living in the most deprived wards (55%).

Those more likely to mention people using/dealing drugs were:

- BME groups (61%);
- Those living in South Luton (61%) and Central Luton (57%);
- Those living in the most deprived wards (59%).

Those more likely to mention teenagers hanging around the streets were:

- Those living in South Luton (55%);
- Those living in the most deprived wards (54%);
- BME groups (53%).

5 Community debate

Panel members were explained that:

"The Government has made the biggest cuts to public sector funding seen in decades. Luton Borough Council, like all public authorities, faces enormous challenges to minimise the impact of these cuts. In the past two years we have saved £35 million through becoming more efficient. But we still have to save another £28 million over the next three years. By then, the Council will have to operate with about a third less income. The size of the budget cuts cannot be met by efficiencies alone and there will have to be cuts to services.

It is important that councillors, in making the difficult decisions which this will involve, understand how those decisions will affect residents and that citizens can provide ideas about what can be done to reduce the impacts. We stress no decisions have been made at this stage."

Panel members were then asked a series of questions covering different service areas and possible proposals for budget savings. Each of the service areas are reported separately below.

5.1 Street lighting

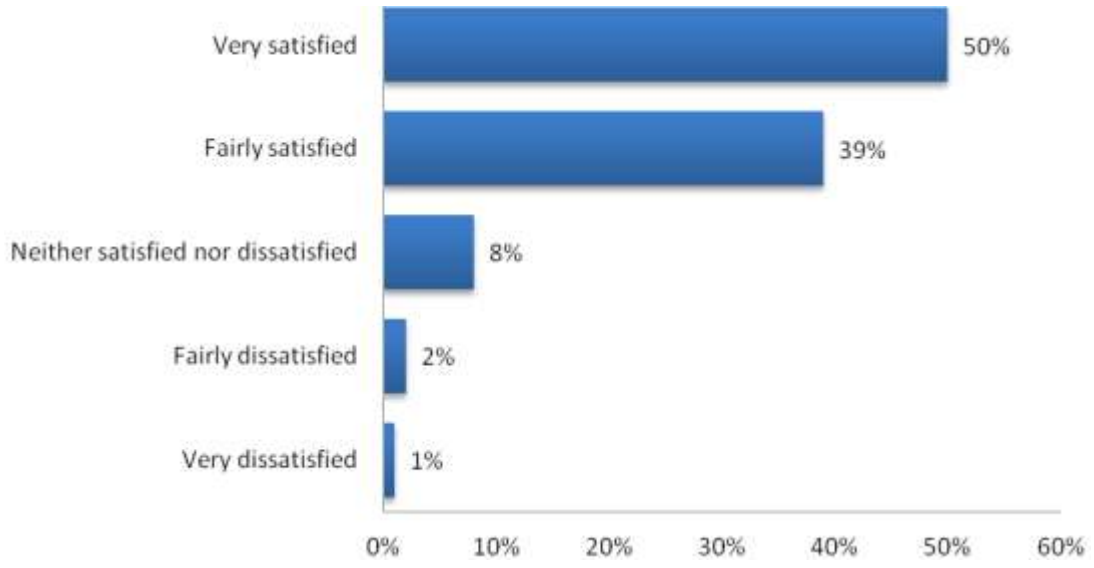
In terms of street lighting services, respondents were further explained that:

'The forecast is that energy costs to light our streets will increase by 25% over the next 5 years. With over 18,000 streetlights throughout the town, clearly we will need to significantly reduce the amount of energy we use."

They were then asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the existing street lighting service in their local area.

The vast majority of respondents were satisfied (89%) with the existing street lighting service, with a half rating 'very satisfied'.

Figure 8: Q8 Satisfaction with the existing street lighting service in the local area (all respondents providing a valid response)

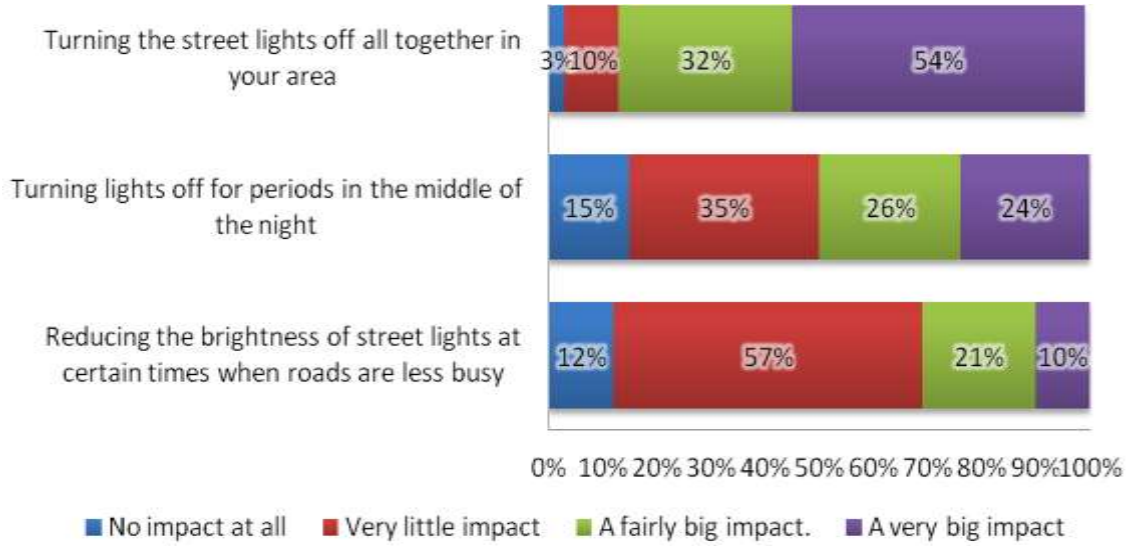


Base = 409

There were few differences by sub group, however those living in West Luton (7%) were slightly more likely to be dissatisfied than those in other areas; 3% in Central Luton, 2% in South Luton, 2% in North Luton and 0% in East Luton.

When asked what the impact of specific proposals to reduce costs would be on the respondent, turning the street lights off all together was perceived to have the biggest impact, with more than a half of respondents saying 'a very big impact'. About a quarter felt turning the lights off for periods of the night would have 'a very big impact', whilst one in ten felt that reducing the brightness would have a similar impact.

Figure 9: Q9 Rating of the impact of specific proposals concerning street lighting (all respondents providing a valid response)

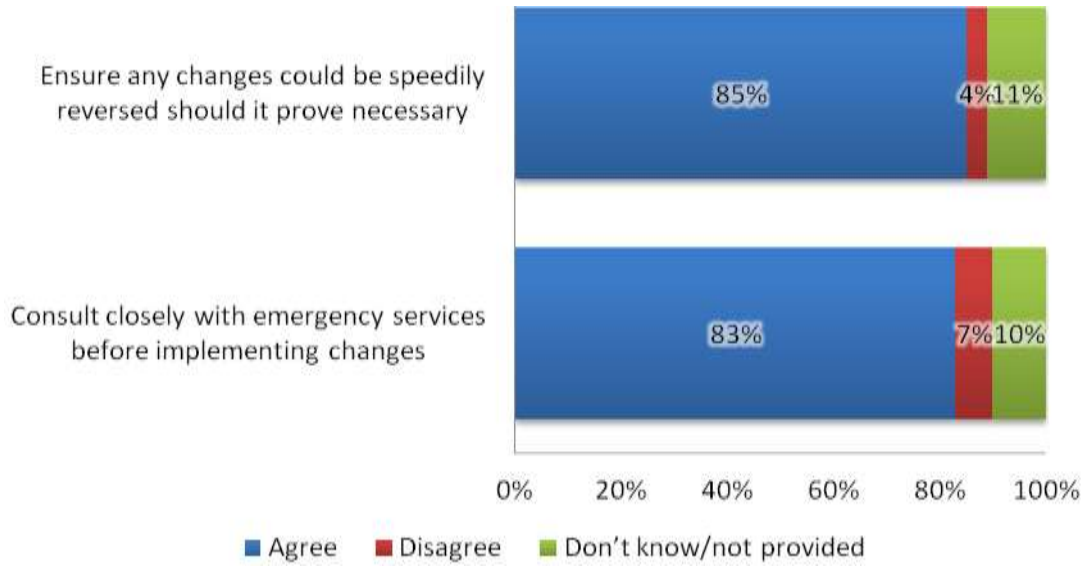


Base = Sample varies

Those living in West Luton (70%) were more likely than those living in other areas to feel turning the lights off altogether would have 'a very big impact'. BME groups (44%) were more likely than their counterparts to feel turning the lights off for periods would have 'a very big impact'.

Respondents tended to agree with both steps the council would take to reduce the impact of the possible street lighting proposals on residents; ensuring any changes could be speedily reversed and consulting closely with emergency services.

Figure 10: Q11 Agreement with steps to reduce the impact of street lighting proposals (all respondents providing a valid response)



Base = 412

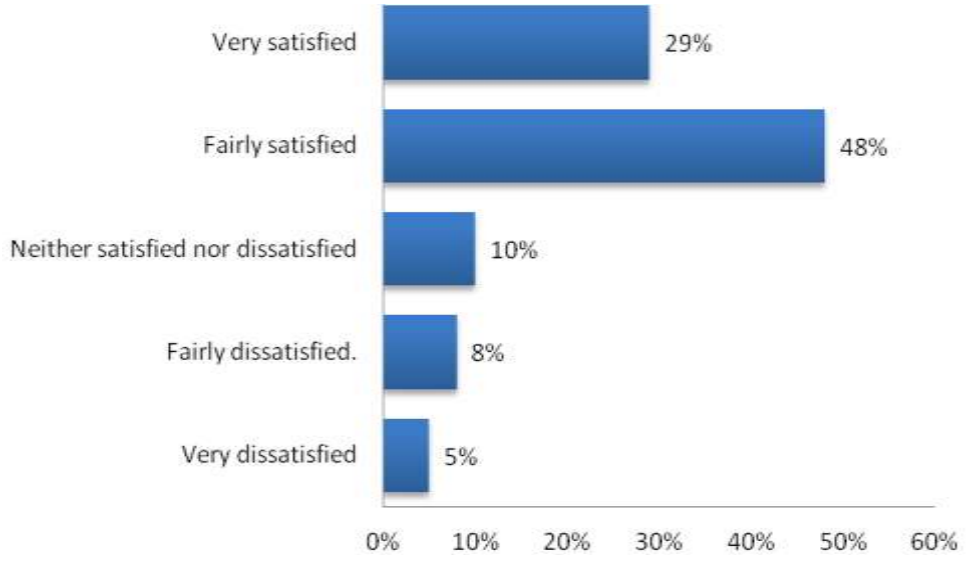
5.2 Street cleansing

Turning to street cleansing services, respondents were explained that:

"Routine mechanical and manual street sweeping is carried out on a fortnightly basis throughout the town with high usage areas cleaned daily. We also carry out a number of additional services that keep the borough clean. These include the removal of fly tipping within 1 day of being notified, graffiti removal within 2 days of being notified, an annual weed control programme and pressure washing & deep cleaning of streets. The cost of operations has been reduced over recent years but remains significant and in order to reduce this cost, options for reducing the overall budget have to be explored."

More than three quarters of respondents (77%) were satisfied with the existing street cleansing service in the local area, with three in ten 'very satisfied'.

Figure 11: Q12 Satisfaction with the existing street cleansing service in the local area (all respondents providing a valid response)

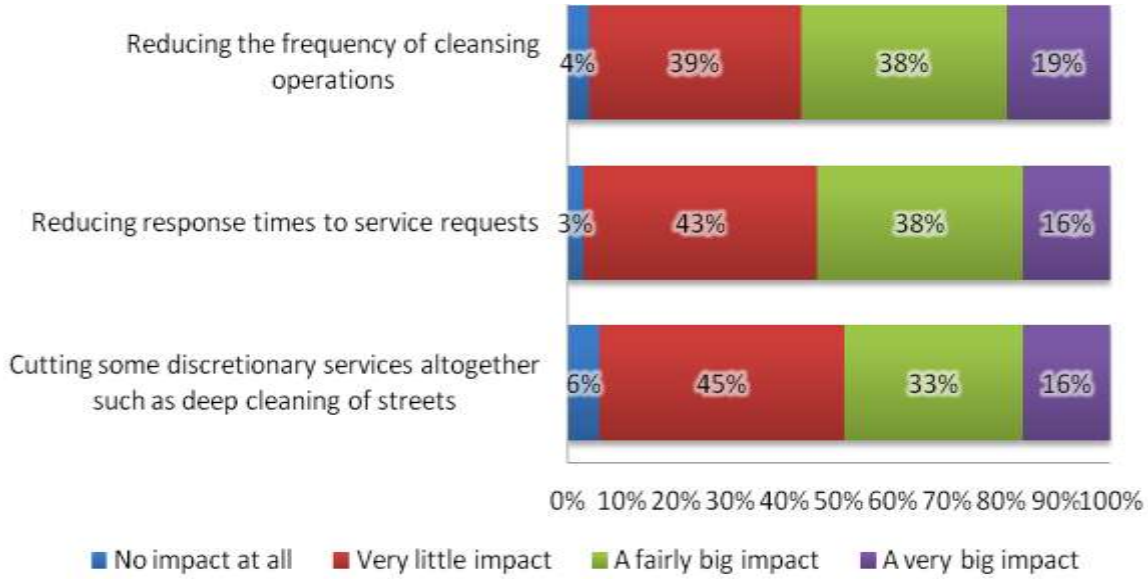


Base = 401

There were no significant differences across sub groups.

Less than one in five respondents felt that any of the specific proposals concerning street cleansing would have 'a very big impact', however, in each case about a half felt they would have some level of significant impact. 57% felt reducing the frequency of cleansing would have a big impact (very or fairly big impact), whilst 54% felt reducing response times would have a big impact and 49% cutting some discretionary services altogether.

Figure 12: Q13 Rating of the impact of specific proposals concerning street cleansing (all respondents providing a valid response)



Base = Sample varies

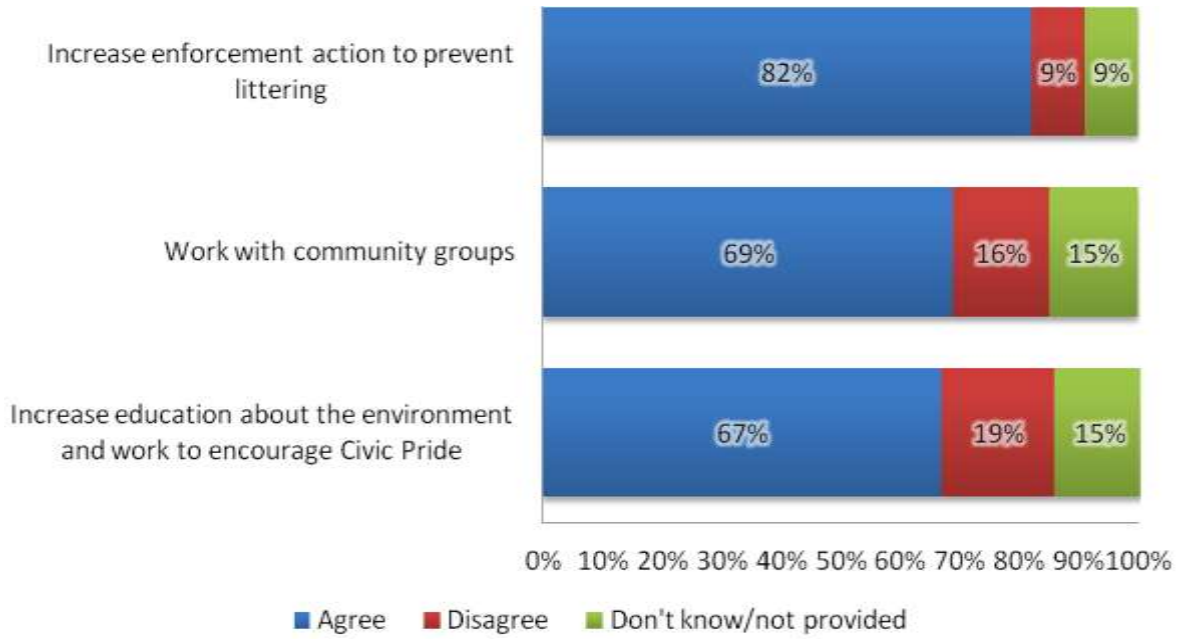
Those respondents living in more deprived wards were more likely to feel reducing the frequency of street cleansing would have an impact:

- 66% (a very/fairly big impact) in the most deprived wards;
- 63% in the next most deprived wards;
- 72% in the 'average' deprived wards;
- 53% in the next least deprived wards
- 46% in the least deprived wards.

BME groups (77%) were more likely to feel reducing the response times would have a big impact compared to white groups (50%). BME groups (70%) were also more likely to feel cutting some discretionary services altogether would have a big impact (compared to 46% of white groups).

More than eight in ten respondents agreed that increasing enforcement action to prevent littering would reduce the impact of the street cleansing proposals. More than two thirds also each agreed that working with community groups and increasing education would also reduce the impact.

Figure 13: Q15 Agreement with steps to reduce the impact of street cleansing proposals (all respondents providing a valid response)



Base = 412

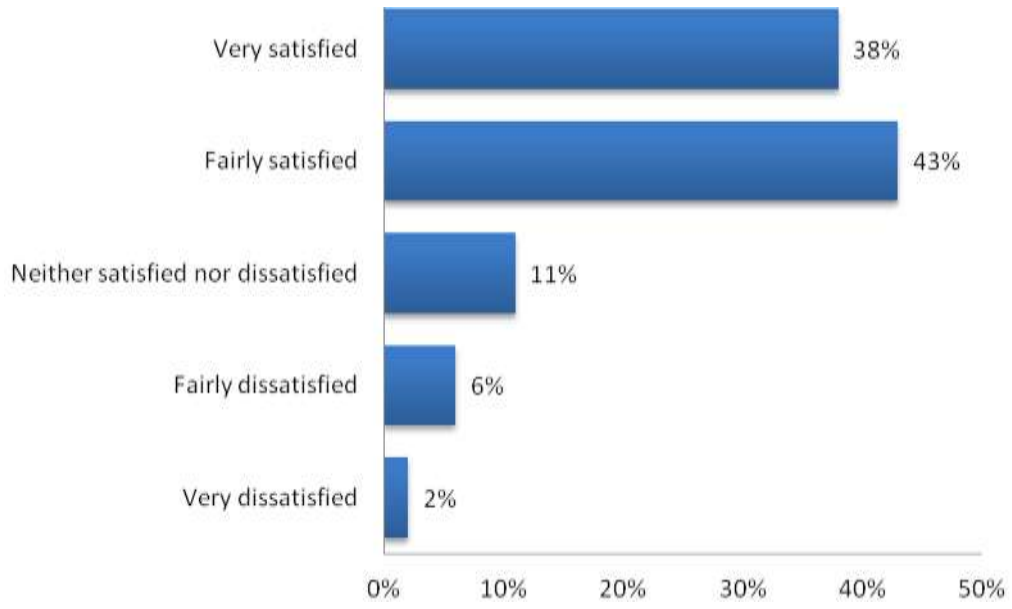
5.3 Grass cutting – verges

As an introduction to the questions about grass cutting, respondents were explained:

"The Council is proud of its grounds maintenance services on the public highway, in particular the floral displays on traffic islands and the standard of grass cutting and tree pruning. However, the renewal date for the grass cutting contract is early next year and in addition to reducing the level of shrub and tree maintenance on the highway there is now an opportunity to examine the mowing frequency."

Eight in ten respondents (81%) were satisfied with the existing grass cutting service in the local area.

Figure 14: Q16 Satisfaction with the existing grass cutting service in the local area (all respondents providing a valid response)

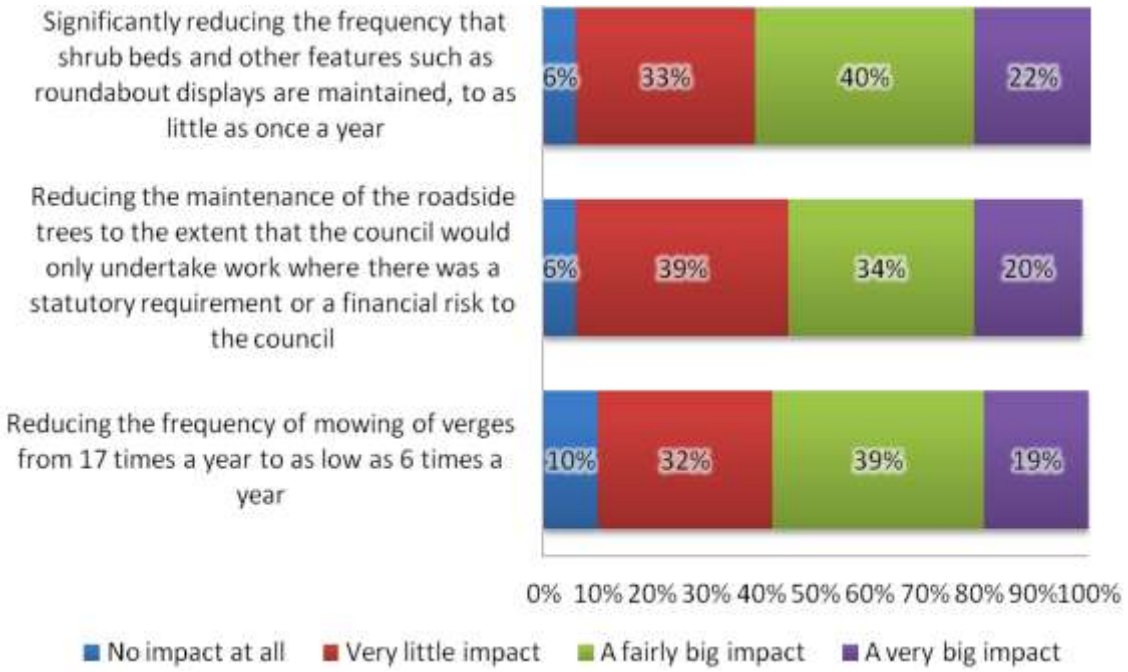


Base = 385

Those respondents living in South Luton (63% rating satisfied) where less likely to be satisfied than those in other areas; 82% in North Luton, 83% in East Luton, 84% in West Luton and 84% in Central Luton.

About one in five respondents felt that each of the specific proposals concerning grass cutting would have 'a very big impact' on them. Indeed, more than a half felt that each would have a big impact (a very/fairly big impact) overall. Significantly reducing the frequency that shrub beds etc are maintained was felt to have the biggest impact, with 61% saying this.

Figure 15: Q17 Rating of the impact of specific proposals concerning grass cutting (all respondents providing a valid response)



Base = Sample varies

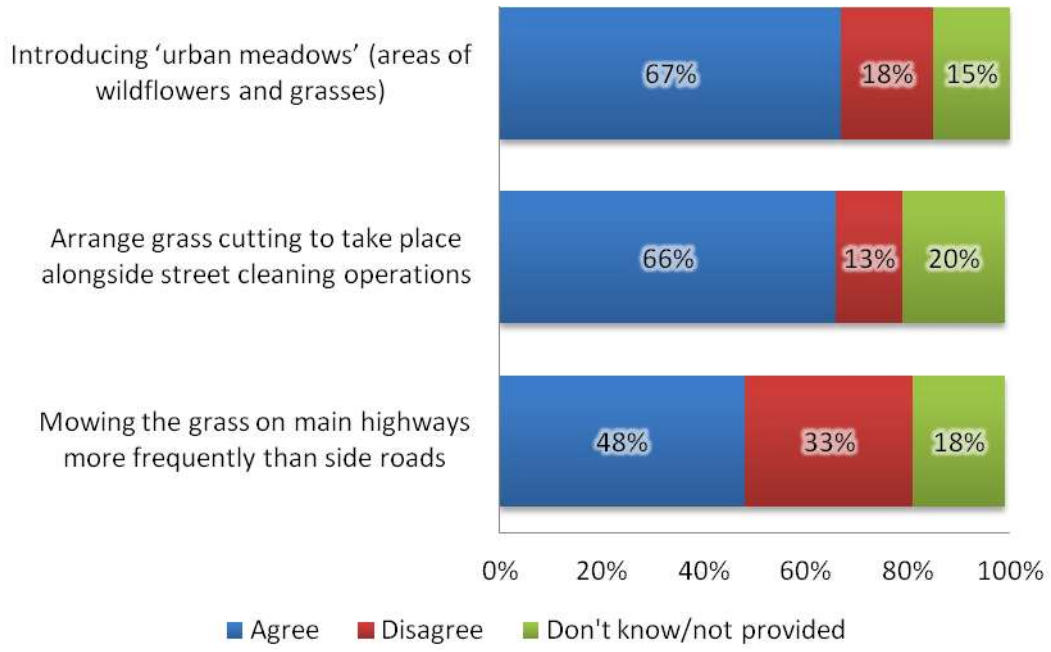
Those living in North Luton (67%), East Luton (64%) and West Luton (59%) were more likely to feel that reducing the frequency of mowing verges would have a big impact (very/fairly big) on them than those living in Central Luton (46%) or South Luton (34%).

Those living in East Luton (71%), North Luton (66%) and West Luton (62%) were also more likely to feel reducing the frequency that shrub beds etc are maintained would have a big impact on them than those living in Central Luton (51%) and South Luton (43%).

Those living in East Luton (67%) and North Luton (58%) were more likely to feel that reducing the maintenance of roadside trees would have a big impact on them than those living in West Luton (54%), South Luton (47%) or Central Luton (38%).

Two thirds of respondents agreed that introducing 'urban meadows' and arranging grass cutting alongside street cleaning would reduce the impact of the grass cutting proposals, although a third disagreed that mowing the grass on main highways more frequently than side roads would help.

Figure 16: Q19 Agreement with steps to reduce the impact of grass cutting proposals (all respondents providing a valid response)



Base = 412

5.4 Refuse collection

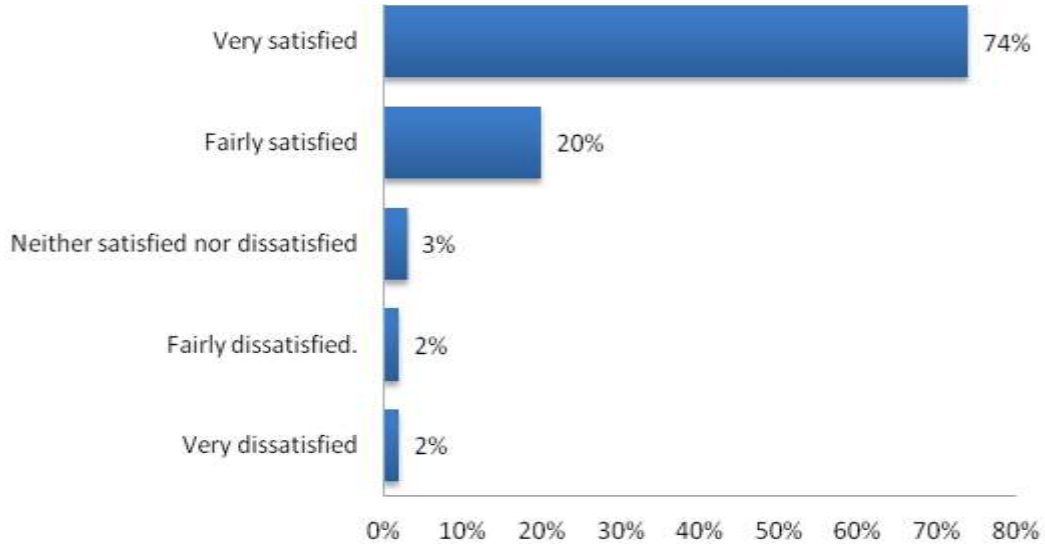
Respondents were explained that:

"At present Luton Council collects general waste from your house every week, waste for recycling is collected fortnightly and in some areas additional fortnightly collections of garden waste and glass are carried out. The Council also collects bulky household waste and clinical waste from residents free of charge. Clinical waste is any waste which poses an infection risk to residents."

"The overall cost of collection, disposal and the processing of recycled waste is a significant cost to the Council. Although you are recycling more each year, costs including landfill tax are also increasing and we need to think about how we can continue to provide the service whilst reducing the amount we spend."

The vast majority of respondents (94%) were satisfied with the existing refuse collection service in the local area, including three quarters who were 'very satisfied'.

Figure 17: Q20 Satisfaction with the existing refuse collection service in the local area (all respondents providing a valid response)

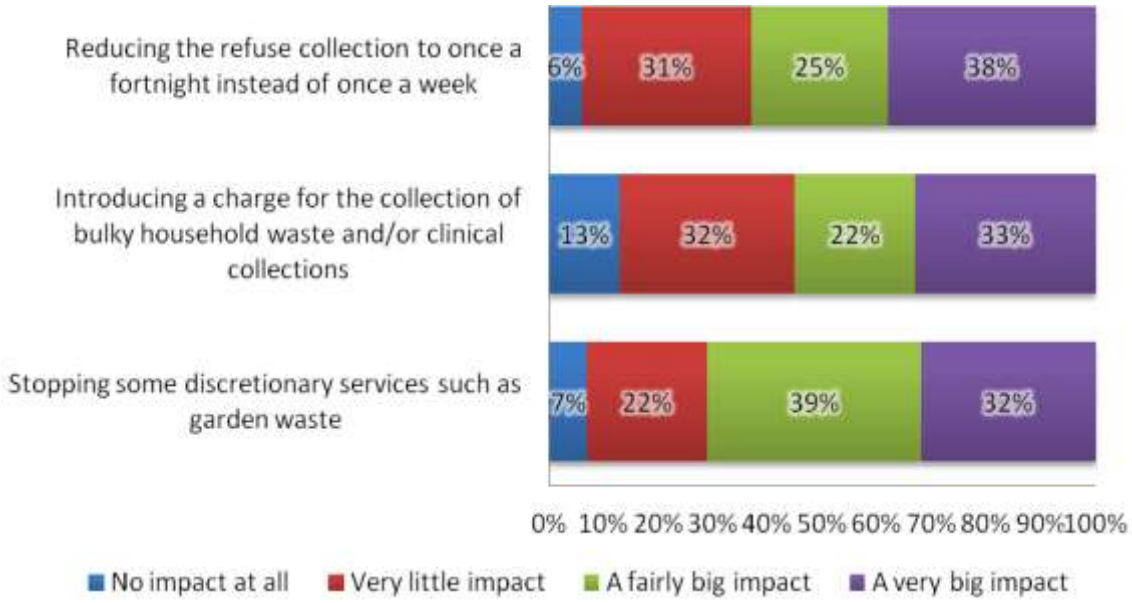


Base = 399

Those more likely to be dissatisfied included those living in Central Luton (8%) and BME groups (7%).

At least a third of respondents felt that each of the specific proposals would have 'a very big impact' on them, particularly reducing the refuse collection to once a fortnight. Furthermore, 71% felt that stopping discretionary services such as garden waste would have a big impact (very or fairly big impact).

Figure 18: Q21 Impact of specific proposals concerning refuse collection (all respondents providing a valid response)



Base = Sample varies

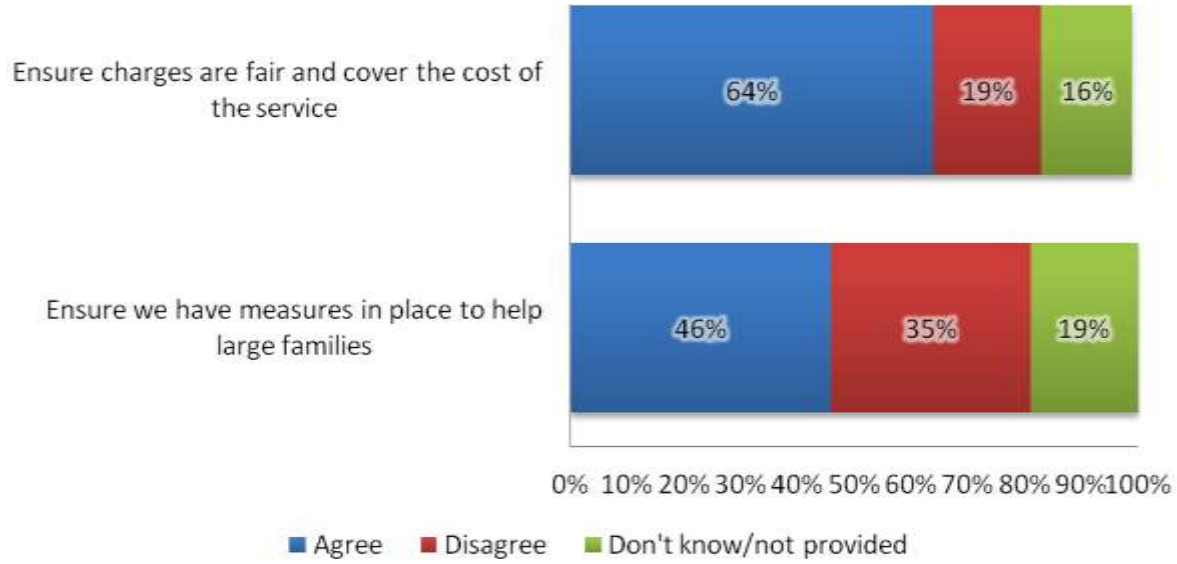
Those living in North Luton (80%) and East Luton (72%) were more likely to feel that stopping discretionary services such as garden waste would have a big impact (very/fairly big) on them compared to those in West Luton (68%), Central Luton (63%) or South Luton (56%).

BME groups (80%, including 87% of Asian groups) and those with children (75%) were more likely to feel that reducing the refuse collection to fortnightly would have a big impact on them.

BME groups (77%) were also more likely to feel that introducing a charge for bulky household waste/clinical collections would have a big impact on them.

Just under two thirds of respondents agreed that ensuring charges were fair would reduce the impact of refuse collection proposals, however, less than half agreed that ensuring measures were in place to help large families would reduce the impact.

Figure 19: Q23 Agreement with steps to reduce the impact of refuse collection proposals (all respondents providing a valid response)



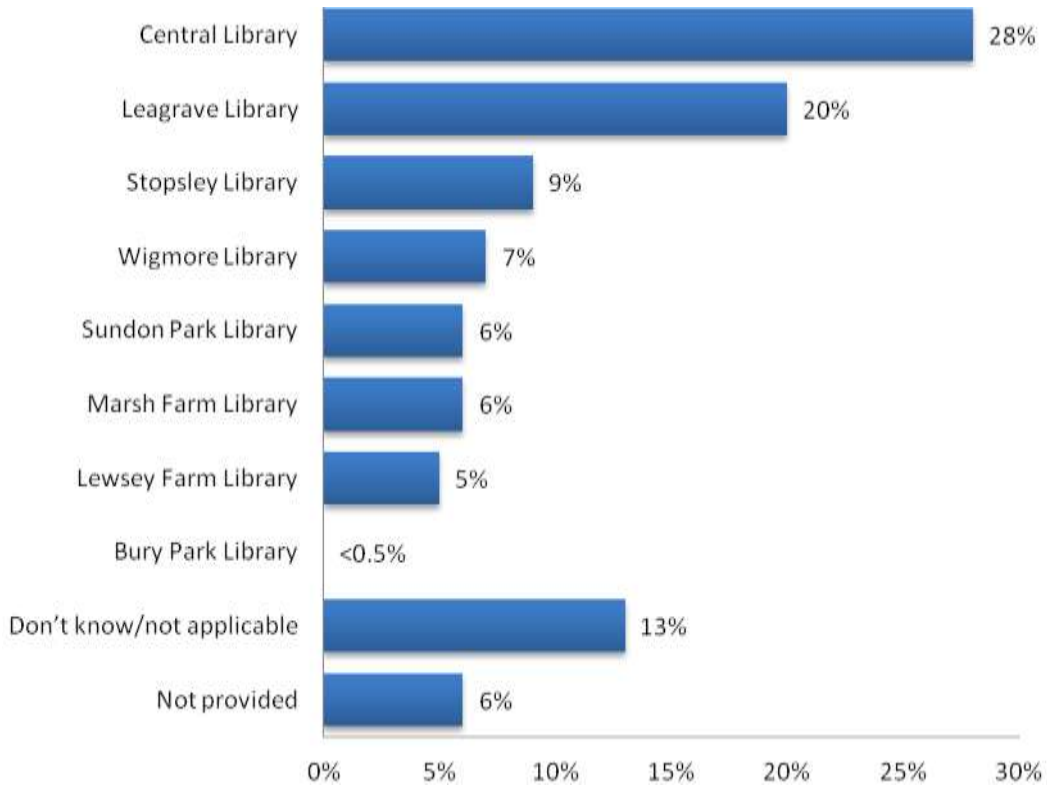
Base = 412

5.5 The local library

In terms of libraries services, respondents were asked some questions about usage and reasons for usage of local libraries.

More than a quarter of respondents said their local library (ie the one they are most likely to use) was the Central library. One in five used Leagrave Library, with less than one in ten using each of the other libraries.

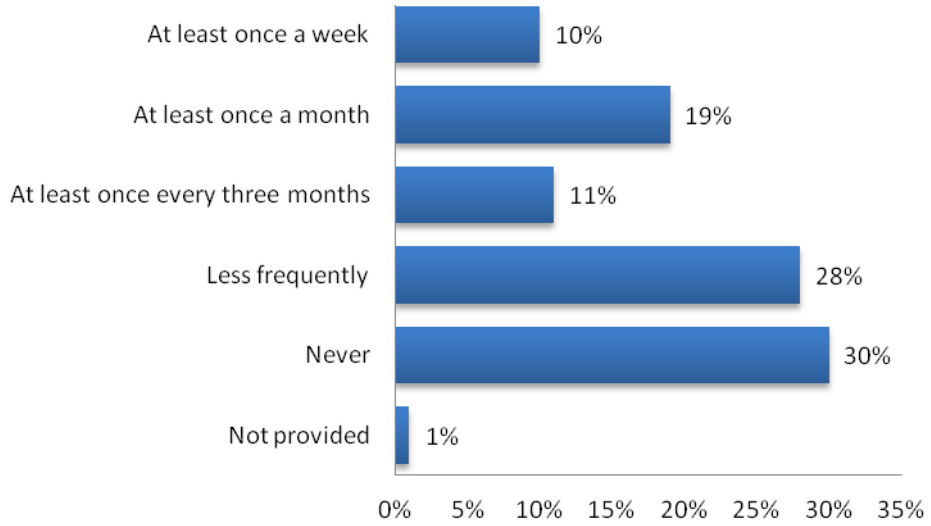
Figure 20: Q24 Which local library is most likely to be used by respondents (all respondents)



Base = 412

In terms of frequency of usage, one in ten used their local library at least once a week and a further one in five at least once a month. In contrast three in ten said they never used their local library.

Figure 21: Q25 Frequency of the local library (all respondents)

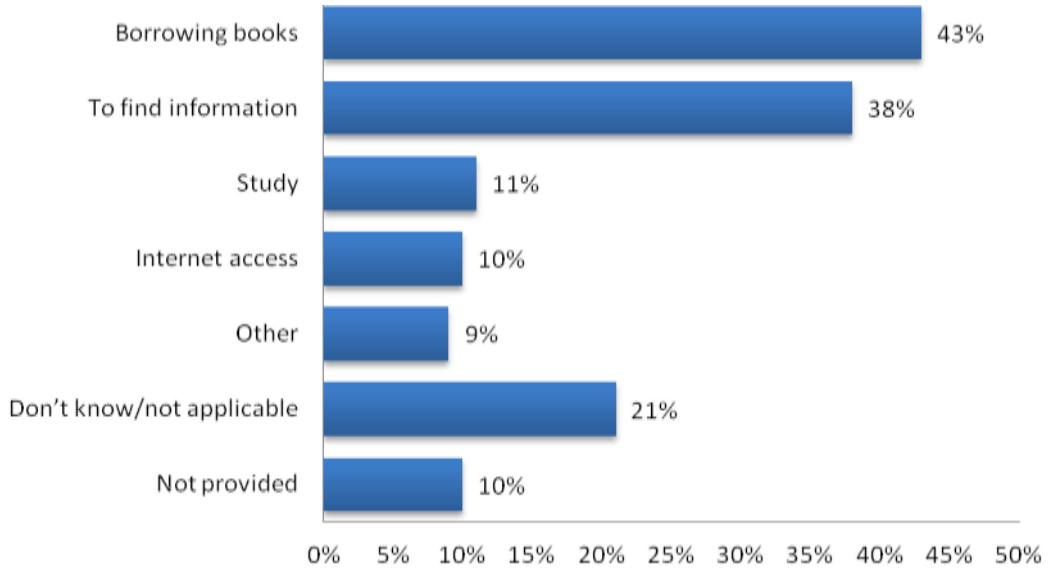


Base = 412

White respondents (33%) were more likely to say they never used their local library than BME respondents (12%). Those living in the least deprived wards (36%) were also more likely to say they never used it. In terms of specific libraries, none were used more frequently or less frequently than others.

The main reasons for using the local library included borrowing books and finding information, with more than a third mentioning each of these. About one in ten each used their local library to study or access the internet.

Figure 22: Q26 Reasons for using the local library (all respondents)

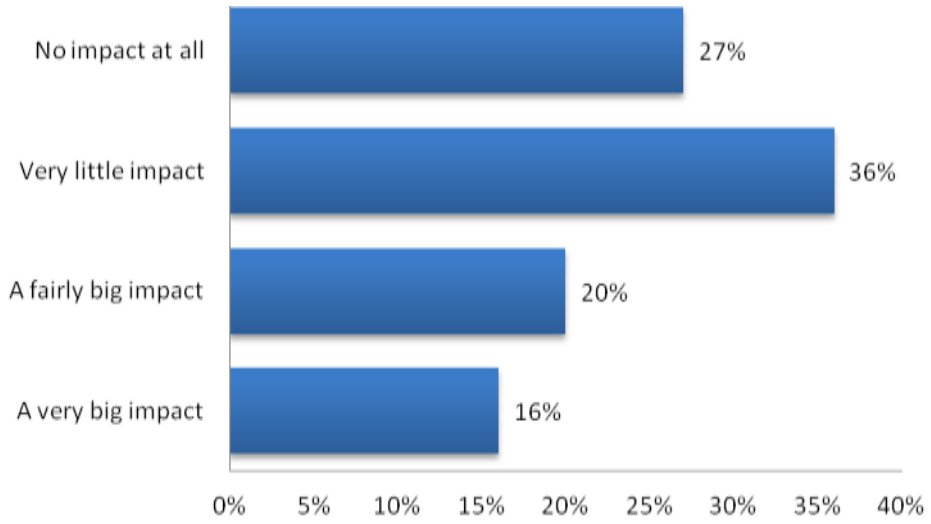


Base = 412

Females (48%) were more likely to use the library to borrow books than males (38%). Asian respondents (34%) and those with children (23%) were more likely to use it to study. Those living in the most deprived wards were more likely to use it to study (23%) or access the internet (18%).

More than a third of respondents (36%) said there would be a big impact (very/fairly big) on them if their local library was to close, with about one in six saying it would be 'a very big impact'.

Figure 23: Q27 Rating of the impact of the local library closing (all respondents providing a valid response)



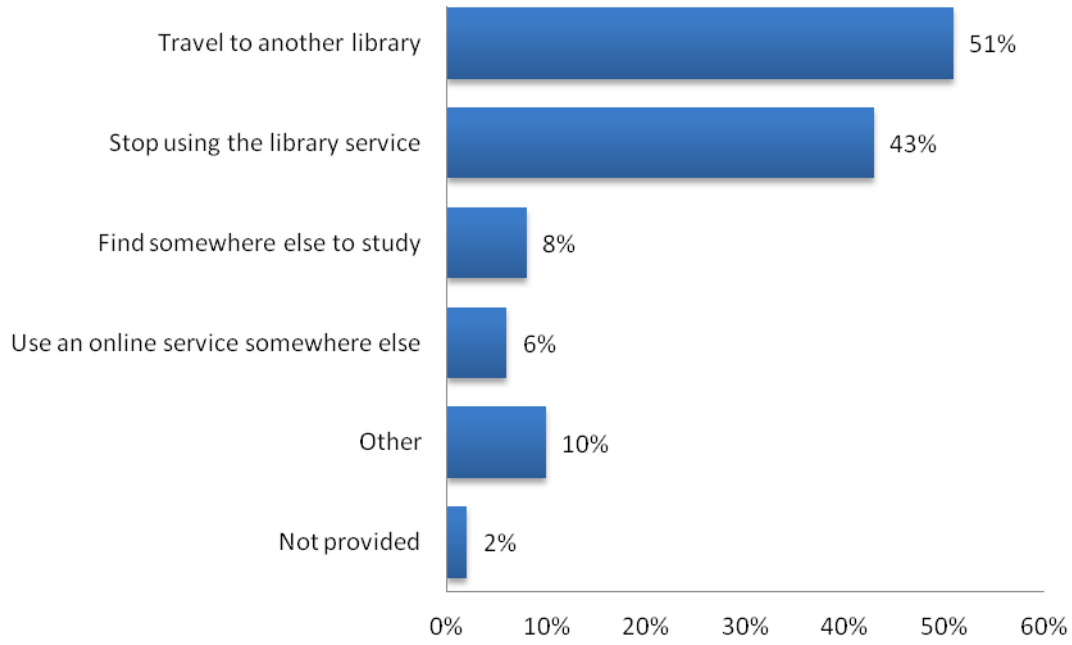
Base = 392

Those more likely to say the impact would be big (very/fairly big) were:

- Those using the library at least once a week (93%) and at least once a month (80%);
- Those using the library to access the internet (71%), study (67%) or borrow books (61%) compared to 46% of those finding information;
- BME groups (53%);
- Those living in the most deprived wards (49%);
- Those living in East Luton (46%).

Among those respondents who said there would be a very big or fairly big impact on them if their local library were to close, half said they would travel to another library instead, whilst over four in ten would stop using the library service altogether. Less than one in ten would each find somewhere else to study or use an online service.

Figure 24: Q29 What respondents would do instead, if they local library was to close (where considered a fairly or very big impact)



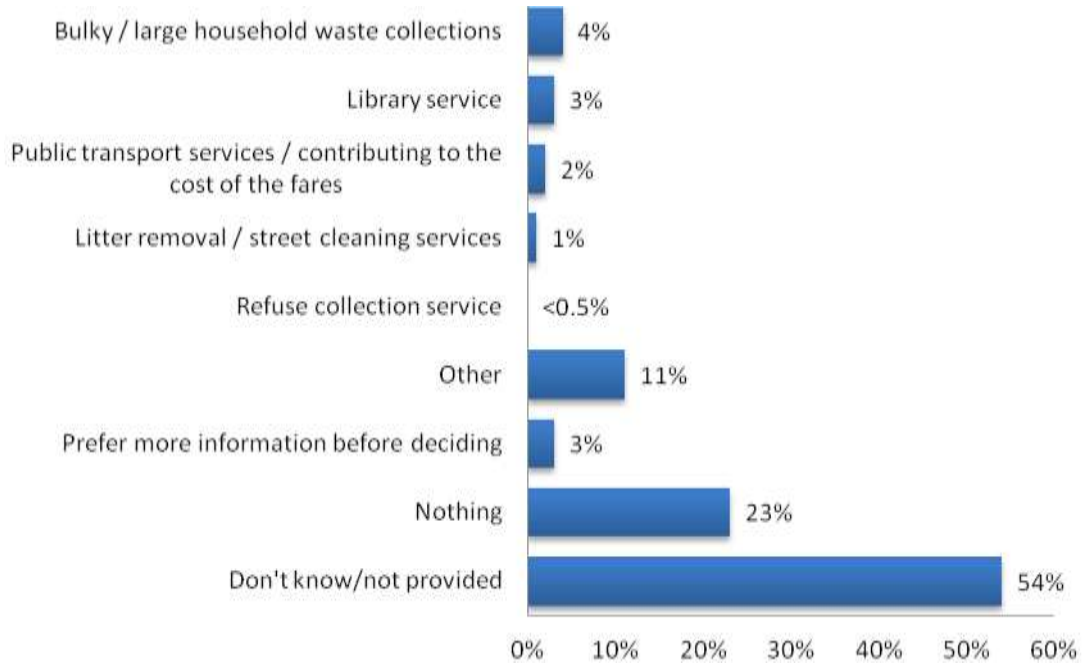
Base = 142

5.6 Charges for services

Respondents were explained that the council runs hundreds of services for thousands of people. Many of these are not charged for and people can use them regardless of their income. They were then asked on a spontaneous basis whether there were any services which they would be willing to start paying for or pay more for to protect local services.

Almost a quarter of respondents said they were not willing to pay/pay extra for any services, and more than half were unable to suggest any services. However, small proportions mentioned bulky/large household waste collections, library services, public transport or litter removal;/street cleaning services.

Figure 25: Q30 Services respondents would be willing to start paying for or pay more for to protect local services – unprompted (all respondents)



Base = 412

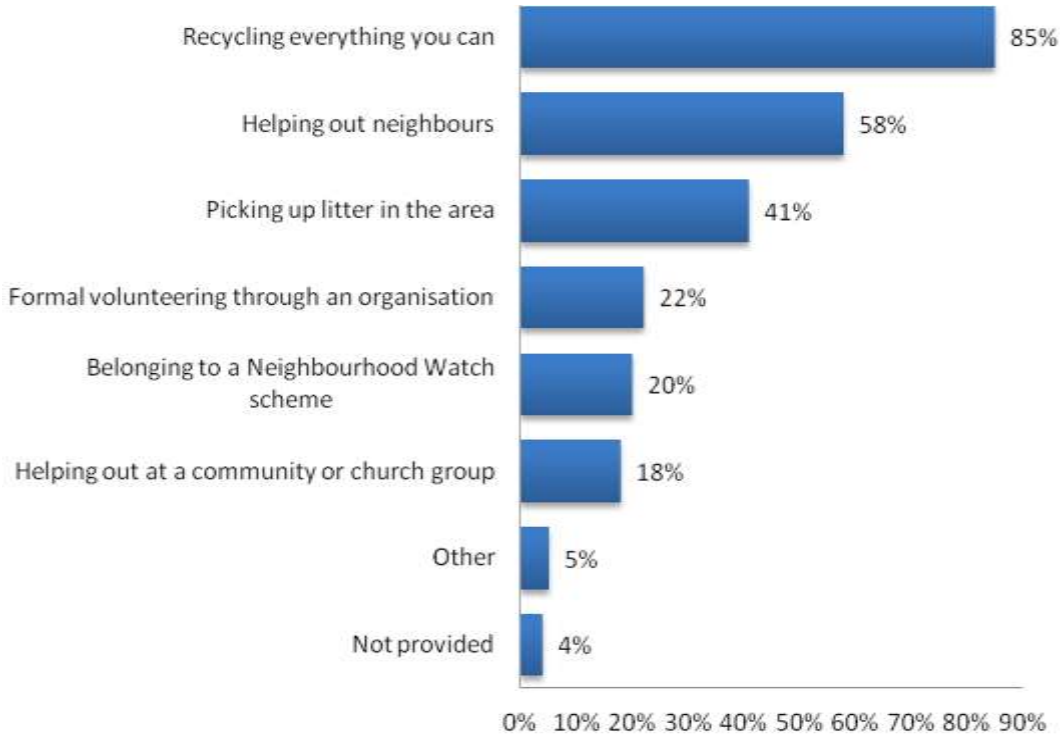
There were few significant differences across sub groups.

5.7 Community spirit and getting involved

Respondents were explained that the council wants to encourage and enable everyone in Luton to do their bit for the community. Making Luton a better place to live is everyone's responsibility.

The vast majority of respondents said they did at least one of the listed activities at least once a month. More than eight in ten said they recycled everything, with more than half also saying they help out neighbours. Furthermore, four in ten pick up litter and about one in five each undertake formal volunteering, belong to a Neighbourhood Watch scheme or help out at a community/church group.

Figure 26: Q31 Whether respondents help in the local community with specific activities on a regular basis (all respondents)

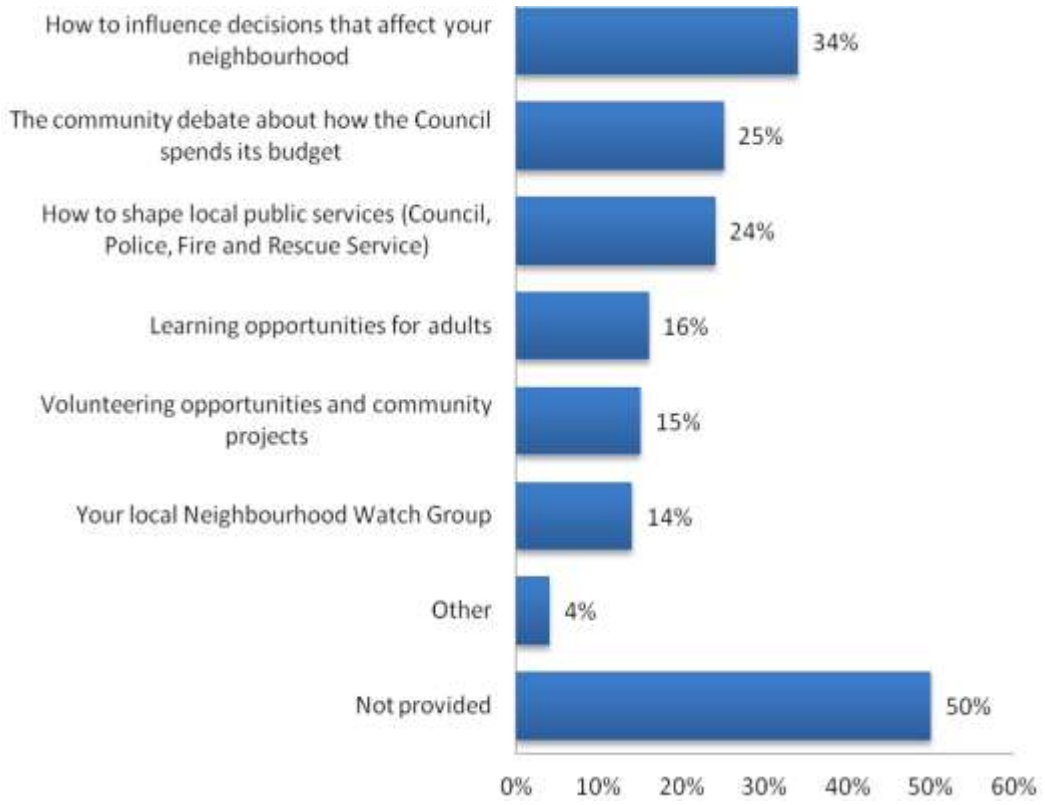


Base = 412

Those living in South Luton (9%), those living in the most deprived wards (8%) and males (6%) were the most likely to not mention any of the activities.

Half the respondents mentioned that they would be interested in finding out more about at least one of the listed activities. A third would like more information about how to influence decisions that affect their neighbourhood, and a quarter would each like to find out more about the community debate/how the council spends its budgets and how to shape local public services.

Figure 27: Q32 Whether respondents would be interested in finding out more about specific activities (all respondents)



Base = 412

Those most likely to not provide a response included white groups (54%) and those living in the least deprived wards (53%).

6 Audit and investigation

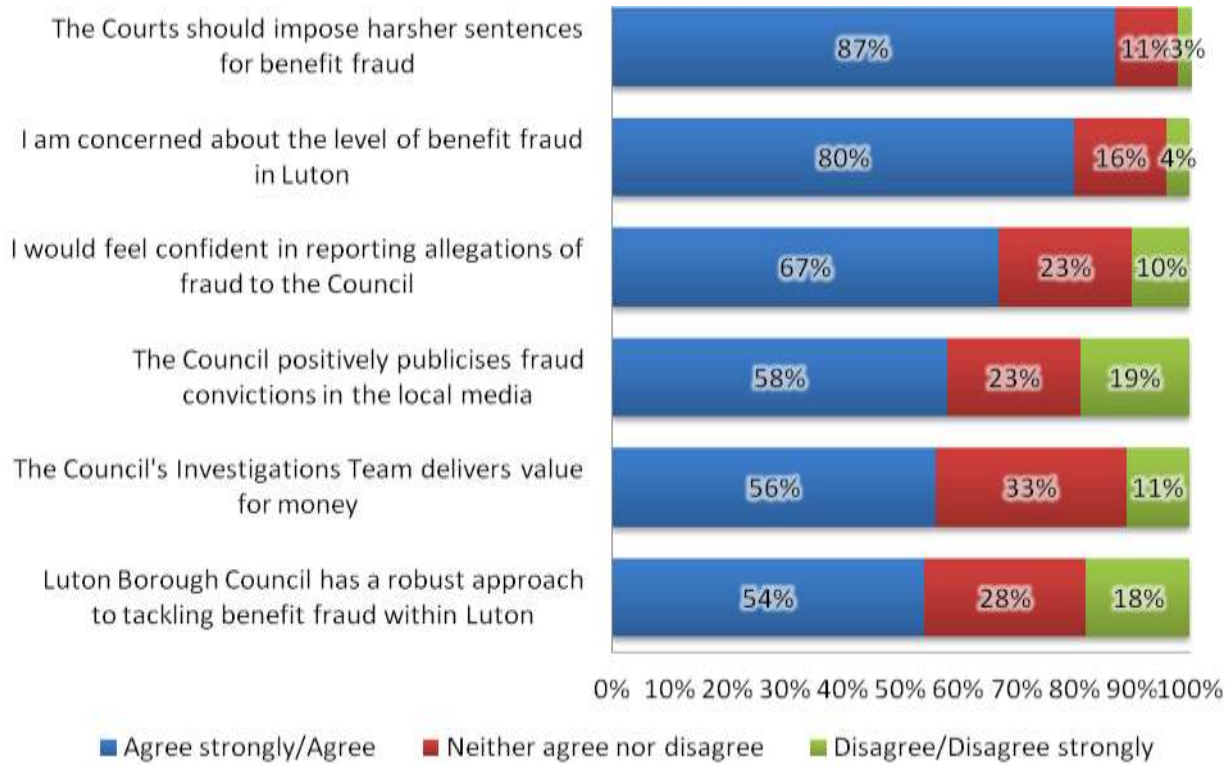
Respondents were provided with the following information:

"The Council's Audit & Investigation Team is tasked with investigating allegations of criminal conduct connected to Housing and Council Tax Benefit. The team actively investigates these allegations and where appropriate prosecutes offenders through the Courts. In 2011/2012 the team investigated 762 allegations of crime. It successfully convicted 58 individuals for fraud, issued 18 Administrative Penalties and Cautioned 30 people. The team comprises of 4 Investigation Officers and 1 Manager. Since 1st April 2011, the Investigations Team has indentified savings of over £856,000. The team costs £260,000 to run per annum."

Respondents were then asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with specific statements about the council's audit and investigation activities.

There was strong agreement (agreeing strongly/agreeing) that the courts should impose harsher sentences for benefit fraud, and also that respondents were concerned about the level of benefit fraud. More than half also agreed with other statements, particularly that they felt confident in reporting allegations of fraud. However, one in five disagreed that the council positively publicises fraud convictions in the local media or that it has a robust approach to tackling benefit fraud.

Figure 28: Q34 Agreement with statements about the Council's audit and investigation activities (all respondents providing a valid response)



Base = Sample varies

Focussing on those aspects with the highest levels of disagreement, those most likely to disagree that the council positively publicises fraud convictions were:

- 25-44 year olds (28%);
- Those living in Central Luton (27%) and North Luton (23%).

Those most likely to disagree that the council has a robust approach to tackling fraud were:

- 25-44 year olds (27%).

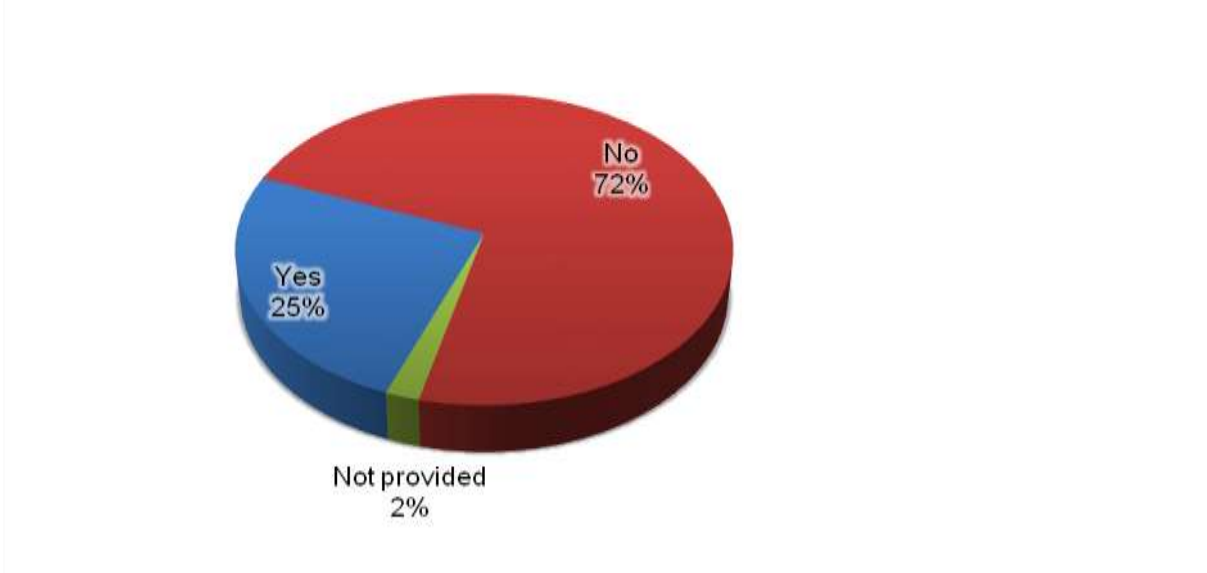
7 Youth provision

Respondents were explained that:

"The Government has published new guidance on the delivery of Youth Services and we want to engage the community of all ages in shaping what the future of the youth and connexions services will look like so your comments on the following will help us to decide the best way to deliver these services in the future."

A quarter of respondents had children or grandchildren between the ages of 11-19 years that live in Luton.

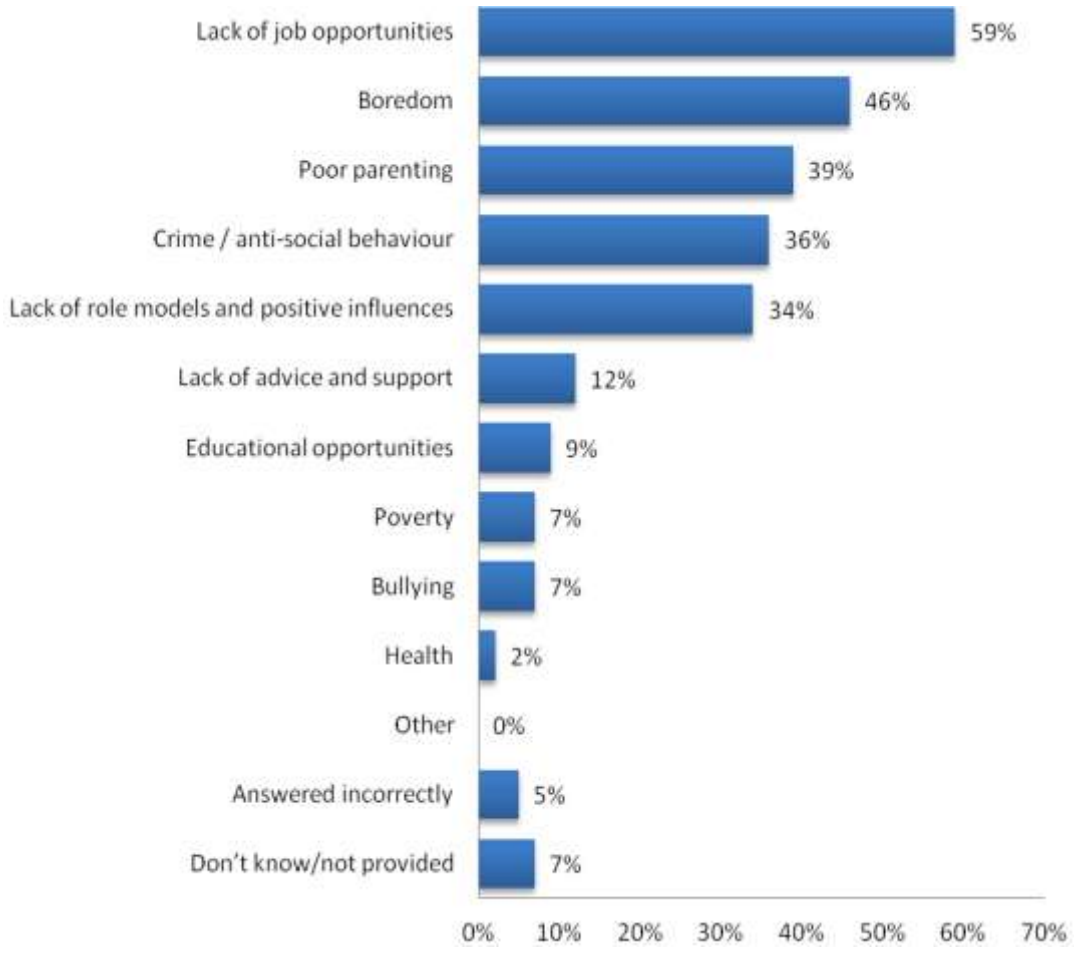
Figure 29: Q35 Whether respondents have children or grandchildren between the ages of 11-19 years that live in Luton (all respondents)



Base = 412

About six in ten respondents said one of the top three issues faced by young people in Luton was a lack of job opportunities. Just under a half mentioned boredom, with more than a third also each mentioning poor parenting, crime/anti-social behaviour and a lack of role models.

Figure 30: Q36 The top three issues faced by young people aged 11-19 years in the local area (all respondents)



Base = 412

There were some interesting differences between those respondents who had children/grandchildren compared to those who had none. Those respondents who had children/grandchildren were more likely to say a lack of job opportunities (76%) and bullying (14%) than their counterparts. Those with no children/grandchildren were more likely to say poor parenting (45%).

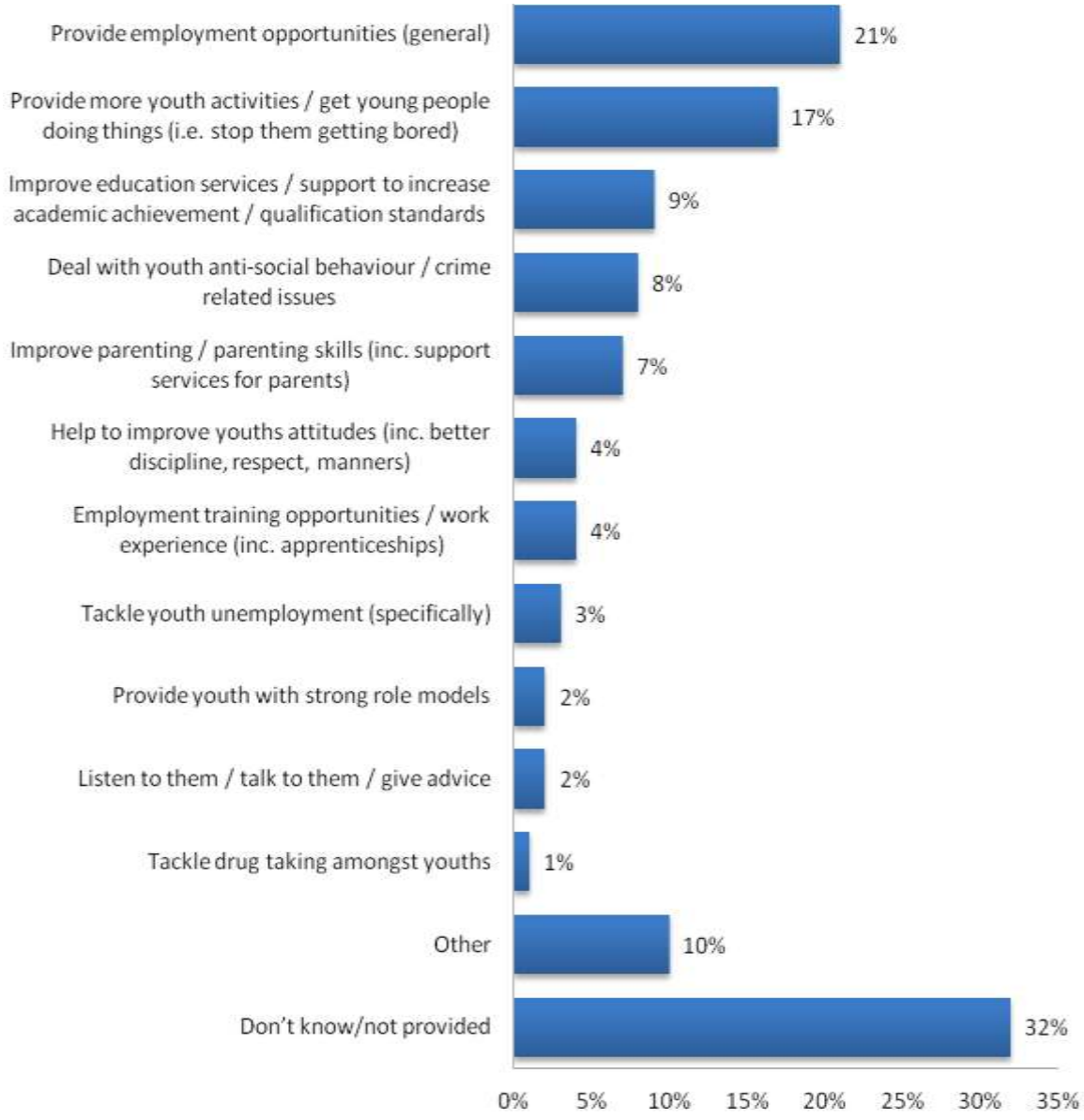
Other differences across sub groups included:

- 45-64 year olds who were more likely to say a lack of job opportunities (65%);
- White respondents who were more likely to say poor parenting (41%);

- Males who were more likely to say crime/anti-social behaviour (42%).

When asked on a spontaneous basis, what one thing the council should prioritise to tackle the issues faced by young people, one in five respondents mentioned employment opportunities and just under this proportion provision of more youth activities. Smaller proportions mentioned improving education, dealing with anti-social behaviour and improving parenting.

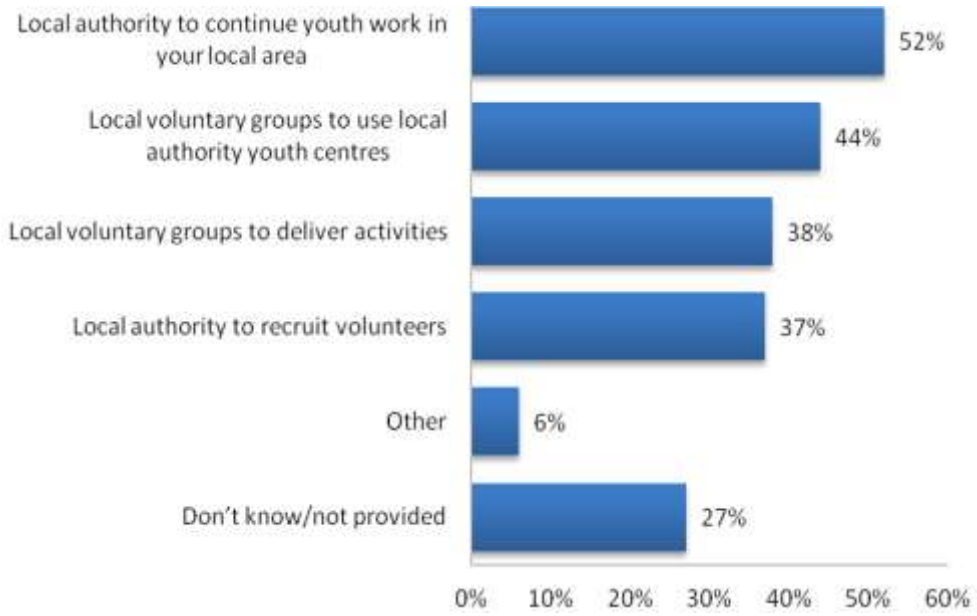
Figure 31: Q37 One thing that the Council should prioritise to tackle the issues faced by young people - unprompted (all respondents)



Base = 412

In terms of how the community could be involved, suggestions from a list included the council continuing the youth work in the local area, voluntary groups using council youth centres, voluntary groups delivering activities and the council recruiting volunteers, with each of these mentioned by more than a third of respondents.

Figure 32: Q38 Suggestions of how the community could be involved (all respondents)



Base = 412

Appendix 1 Profile of respondents

The table below shows the full profile of respondents taking part in this survey. The numbers are shown as well as the percentages. The population profile is shown for comparison purposes.

		Sample Bases	%	Population figures 2004
Total	Total	412		
Gender	Male	193	47%	51%
	Female	215	52%	49%
	Not provided	4	1%	
Age	16-24	28	7%	18%
	25-44	96	23%	40%
	45-64	181	44%	27%
	65+	99	24%	16%
	Not provided	8	2%	
Children in household	Yes	93	23%	
	No	110	27%	
	Not provided	209	51%	
Ethnicity	White	345	84%	72%
	Mixed	4	1%	4%
	Asian	32	8%	18%
	Black	22	5%	6%
	Not provided	9	2%	
Disability	Yes	75	18%	18%
	No	332	81%	82%
	Not provided	5	1%	
Employment status	Working	224	54%	
	Retired	123	30%	
	Other	57	14%	
	Not provided	8	2%	

Appendix 2 Questionnaire

Project no. 8805

Luton Citizens' Panel
June 2012

Helpful hints for completing this questionnaire:

- The questionnaire should be completed by the Luton Citizens' Panel member named on the letter.
- Please use black or blue ink and mark with an 'x' - ☒ one or more boxes to indicate your answer.
- If you make a mistake please fill in the box like this ■
- In most cases you will only have to mark one box but please read the questions and instructions carefully as sometimes you will need to mark more than one box.
- If you are asked to write something in the large box, please ensure that all the writing is **inside the box boundaries.**
- Please answer all questions unless asked otherwise.
- Once you have finished, please take a minute to check you have answered all the questions that you should have answered.
- The survey consists of 12 pages and should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.
- If you have any queries about the questionnaire please do not hesitate to contact the BMG Research Helpline on 0800 3580337.
- Once you have completed the questionnaire please return it in the pre-addressed envelope supplied. **You do not need to add a stamp**
- If you cannot find or did not receive the pre-addressed envelope please send to : Free post, BMG Research (Business Reply Plus Licence No. : RLRL-JAZJ-UCAC), 7 Holt Court North, Heneage Street West, Aston Science Park, Birmingham, B7 4AX. **You do not need a stamp.**

1

Section 1 : Local Plans

There is evidence that the future population of the Borough will increase significantly over the next 20 years and as our children grow up they will need decent and affordable homes to live in. Projections suggest the next 20 years could see the number of households in Luton increase somewhere between 11,000 to 19,000 households.

Q1 **What do you consider to be the main issues in planning for our future over the next 20 years? Please look at the following list and pick out the 5 priorities that you feel are most important.** *Please mark ☒ up to 5 boxes only*

- Finding available land ☐
- Deciding where development should go ☐
- What development looks like ☐
- How much development fits onto land ☐
- What activities and uses need to be provided by new developments ☐
- Car parking ☐
- Public transport ☐
- Walking and cycling ☐
- How building design and using land can help to reduce energy use ☐
- How to get to the town centre ☐
- How to get to local shops and facilities (e.g. dentists, chemist, libraries etc) ☐
- How to get to school ☐
- Protecting things that we like (e.g. parks, gardens, wildlife, historic buildings etc) ☐
- How to get a job locally ☐
- How to find an affordable home within Luton ☐
- Other **Please mark ☒ box and write in below** ☐

- Don't know ☐

Q2 **Please briefly tell us the reasons for choosing your priorities at Q1.** *Please write your answer in the box below*

Q3 **Now thinking about the development and growth in your local area, what 5 things would you say need improving most or would you like to see more of?** *Please mark ☒ up to 5 boxes only from the list below*

- Access to nature ☐
- Activities for teenagers ☐
- Affordable decent housing ☐
- Bus stops and bus services ☐
- Clean streets ☐
- Community activities ☐
- Community relations ☐
- Cultural facilities (e.g. libraries, museums) ☐
- Education provision and schools ☐
- Facilities for young children ☐
- Health services ☐
- Housing ☐
- Job opportunities ☐
- Level of crime ☐
- Level of pollution ☐
- Level of traffic congestion ☐
- Local services (e.g. ATM, post office, chemist, GP clinic) **Please mark ☒ box and specify which services below** ☐

- Parks and open spaces ☐
- Place to play, do sport or fun activities ☐
- Road and pavement repairs ☐
- Safe walking or cycling provision ☐
- Shopping facilities ☐
- Wage levels and local cost of living ☐
- Other **Please mark ☒ box and write in below** ☐

- Don't know ☐

Section 2: Community Safety

Q4 **How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area after dark?** *Please mark ☒ one box under 'After dark' below*

Q5 **How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area during the day?** *Please mark ☒ one box under 'During the day' below*

	After dark	During the day
Very safe	☐	☐
Fairly safe	☐	☐
Neither safe nor unsafe	☐	☐
Fairly unsafe	☐	☐
Very unsafe	☐	☐
Don't know	☐	☐

Q6 **If you feel unsafe after dark or during the day, please explain why?** *Please write your answer in the box below*

All please answer

Q7 **Thinking about this local area, how much of a problem do you think each of the following are?** *Please mark ☒ one box in each row*

	A very big problem	A fairly big problem	Not a very big problem	Not a problem at all	No opinion
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Teenagers hanging around the streets	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Rubbish or litter lying around	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People using or dealing drugs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Abandoned or burnt out cars	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Burglary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Vehicle crime (eg theft of or theft from a vehicle)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Robbery	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Violent crime	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 3 : Community Debate

The Government has made the biggest cuts to public sector funding seen in decades. Luton Borough Council, like all public authorities, faces enormous challenges to minimise the impact of these cuts. In the past two years we have saved £35 million through becoming more efficient. But we still have to save another £28 million over the next three years. By then, the Council will have to operate with about a third less income. The size of the budget cuts cannot be met by efficiencies alone and there will have to be cuts to services.

It is important that councillors, in making the difficult decisions which this will involve, understand how those decisions will affect residents and that citizens can provide ideas about what can be done to reduce the impacts. We stress no decisions have been made at this stage.

a) Street Lighting

The forecast is that energy costs to light our streets will increase by 25% over the next 5 years. With over 18,000 streetlights throughout the town clearly we will need to significantly reduce the amount of energy we use.

Q8 **How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the existing street lighting service in your local area?** *Please mark ☒ one box only*

Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/ Not applicable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q9 **What impact do you think that the following possible proposals would have for you?** *Please mark ☒ one box in each row*

	No impact at all	Very little impact	A fairly big impact	A very big impact	Don't know
Turning the street lights off all together in your area	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reducing the brightness of street lights at certain times when roads are less busy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Turning lights off for periods in the middle of the night	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q10 **If you consider the proposals will have a fairly big or very big impact, please state what you think these impacts will be.** *Please write your answer in the box below*

All please answer

Q11 Below are some steps that the council would take to reduce the impact that the possible proposals would have on residents. Do you agree or disagree these steps would help to reduce the impact? *Please mark ☒ one box in each row*

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Consult closely with emergency services before implementing changes	☐	☐	☐
Ensure any changes could be speedily reversed should it prove necessary	☐	☐	☐

Other **Please write in below any other actions the Council should take to reduce the impact of the possible proposals**

b) Street Cleansing

Routine mechanical and manual street sweeping is carried out on a fortnightly basis throughout the town with high usage areas cleaned daily. We also carry out a number of additional services that keep the borough clean. These include the removal of fly tipping within 1 day of being notified, graffiti removal within 2 days of being notified, an annual weed control programme and pressure washing & deep cleaning of streets. The cost of operations has been reduced over recent years but remains significant and in order to reduce this cost, options for reducing the overall budget have to be explored.

Q12 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the existing street cleansing service in your local area? *Please mark ☒ one box only*

Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/ Not applicable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q13 What impact do you think that the following possible proposals would have for you? *Please mark ☒ one box in each row*

	No impact at all	Very little impact	A fairly big impact	A very big impact	Don't know
Reducing the frequency of cleansing operations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reducing response times to service requests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cutting some discretionary services altogether such as deep cleaning of streets	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q14 If you consider the proposals will have a fairly big or very big impact, please state what you think these impacts will be. *Please write your answer in the box below*

All please answer

Q15 **Below are some steps that the council might take to reduce the impact that the possible proposal would have on residents. Do you agree or disagree these steps would help to reduce the impact?** *Please mark ☒ one box in each row*

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Increase education about the environment and work to encourage Civic Pride	☐	☐	☐
Work with community groups	☐	☐	☐
Increase enforcement action to prevent littering	☐	☐	☐

Other **Please write in below any other actions the Council should take to reduce the impact of the possible proposals**

c) **Grass cutting – verges**

The Council is proud of its grounds maintenance services on the public highway, in particular the floral displays on traffic islands and the standard of grass cutting and tree pruning. However, the renewal date for the grass cutting contract is early next year and in addition to reducing the level of shrub and tree maintenance on the highway there is now an opportunity to examine the mowing frequency.

Q16 **How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with existing levels of grass cutting in your local area?** *Please mark ☒ one box only*

Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/ Not applicable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q17 **What impact do you think that the following possible proposals would have for you?** *Please mark ☒ one box in each row*

	No impact at all	Very little impact	A fairly big impact	A very big impact	Don't know
Reducing the frequency of mowing of verges from 17 times a year to as low as 6 times a year	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Significantly reducing the frequency that shrub beds and other features such as roundabout displays are maintained, to as little as once a year	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reducing the maintenance of the road-side trees to the extent that the council would only undertake work where there was a statutory requirement or a financial risk to the council	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q18 **If you consider the proposals will have a fairly big or very big impact, please state what you think these impacts will be.** *Please write your answer in the box below*

All please answer

Q19 Below are some steps that the council might take to reduce the impact that the possible proposal would have on residents. Do you agree or disagree these steps would help to reduce the impact? *Please mark ☒ one box in each row*

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Arrange grass cutting to take place alongside street cleaning operations	☐	☐	☐
Mowing the grass on main highways more frequently than side roads	☐	☐	☐
Introducing 'urban meadows' (areas of wildflowers and grasses)	☐	☐	☐
Other **Please write in below any other actions the Council should take to reduce the impact of the possible proposals**			

d) Refuse collection

At present Luton Council collects general waste from your house every week, waste for recycling is collected fortnightly and in some areas additional fortnightly collections of garden waste and glass are carried out. The Council also collects bulky household waste and clinical waste from residents free of charge. Clinical waste is any waste which poses an infection risk to residents.

The overall cost of collection, disposal and the processing of recycled waste is a significant cost to the Council. Although you are recycling more each year, costs including landfill tax are also increasing and we need to think about how we can continue to provide the service whilst reducing the amount we spend.

Q20 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the existing refuse collection service in your local area? *Please mark ☒ one box only*

Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/ Not applicable
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q21 What impact do you think that the following possible proposals would have for you? *Please mark ☒ one box in each row*

	No impact at all	Very little impact	A fairly big impact	A very big impact	Don't know
Stopping some discretionary services such as garden waste	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reducing the refuse collection to once a fortnight instead of once a week	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Introducing a charge for the collection of bulky household waste and/or clinical collections	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q22 If you consider the proposals will have a fairly big or very big impact, please state what you think these impacts will be. *Please write your answer in the box below*

All please answer

Q23 **Below are some steps that the council might take to reduce the impact that the possible proposal would have on residents. Do you agree or disagree these steps would help to reduce the impact?** *Please mark ☒ one box in each row*

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Ensure we have measures in place to help large families	☐	☐	☐
Ensure charges are fair and cover the cost of the service	☐	☐	☐

Other **Please write in below any other actions the Council should take to reduce the impact of the possible proposals**

e) Your local library

Q24 **Which of the following is your local library (ie the one you use or are most likely to use?** *Please mark ☒ one box only*

Central Library ☐	Stopsley Library ☐	Marsh Farm Library ☐
Leagrave Library ☐	Sundon Park Library ☐	Lewsey Farm Library ☐
Wigmore Library ☐	Bury Park Library ☐	Don't know/not applicable ☐

Q25 **How often do you use your local library?** *Please mark ☒ one box only*

- At least once a week ☐
- At least once a month ☐
- At least once every three months ☐
- Less frequently ☐
- Never ☐

Q26 **Do you use your local library for any of the following?** *Please mark ☒ all boxes that apply*

Borrowing books ☐	Study ☐	Other **Please mark ☒ box and write in below** ☐
Internet access ☐	To find information ☐	

Don't know/not applicable ☐

Q27 **If your local library was to close, what would be the impact on you?** *Please mark ☒ one box only*

No impact at all	Very little impact	A fairly big impact	A very big impact	Don't know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

If you consider there will be a fairly big impact or very big impact if your local library was to close, please answer Q28 and Q29 below.

Q28 **If you consider there will be a fairly big impact or very big impact, please tell us what these impacts would be.** *Please write your answer in the box below*

Q29 **If your local library was to close, what would you do instead?** *Please mark ☒ all boxes that apply*

Travel to another library	☐	Use an online service somewhere else	☐
Stop using the library service	☐	Find somewhere else to study	☐
Other **Please mark ☒ box and write in below**			☐

f) Charges for services

We run hundreds of services for thousands of people. Many of these are not charged for and people can use them regardless of their income.

Q30 **Are there any services which you would be willing to start paying for or pay more for to protect local services?** *Please write your answer in the box below*

g) Community Spirit and getting involved

All please answer
We want to encourage and enable everyone in Luton to do their bit for our community. Making Luton a better place to live is everyone's responsibility.

Q31 **Do you help in your local community with any of the following on a regular basis, at least once a month?** *Please mark ☒ all boxes that apply*

Helping out neighbours	☐
Picking up litter in the area	☐
Recycling everything you can	☐
Belonging to a Neighbourhood Watch scheme	☐
Helping out at a community or church group	☐
Formal volunteering through an organisation	☐
Other **Please mark ☒ box and write in below**	☐

Q32 Would you be interested in finding out more about any of the following? *Please mark ☒ all boxes that apply*

How to influence decisions that affect your neighbourhood	☐
How to shape local public services (Council, Police, Fire and Rescue Service)	☐
The community debate about how the Council spends its budget	☐
Your local Neighbourhood Watch Group	☐
Volunteering opportunities and community projects	☐
Learning opportunities for adults	☐
Other **Please mark ☒ box and write in below**	☐

Q33 If you are interested in finding out more about the options at Q32, please enter your telephone number and email address below. *Please write in clearly below, using one box for each letter or number*

Telephone no:

Email address:

Section 4: Audit and investigation

All please answer

The Council's Audit & Investigation Team is tasked with investigating allegations of criminal conduct connected to Housing and Council Tax Benefit. The team actively investigates these allegations and where appropriate prosecutes offenders through the Courts. In 2011/2012 the team investigated 762 allegations of crime. It successfully convicted 58 individuals for fraud, issued 18 Administrative Penalties and Cautioned 30 people. The team comprises of 4 Investigation Officers and 1 Manager. Since 1st April 2011, the Investigations Team has indentified savings of over £856,000. The team costs £260,000 to run per annum.

Q34 How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? *Please mark ☒ one box in each row*

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	No opinion/ don't know
Luton Borough Council has a robust approach to tackling benefit fraud within Luton	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Council positively publicises fraud convictions in the local media	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would feel confident in reporting allegations of fraud to the Council	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am concerned about the level of benefit fraud in Luton	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Council's Investigations Team delivers value for money	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Courts should impose harsher sentences for benefit fraud	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 5: Youth provision

The Government has published new guidance on the delivery of Youth Services and we want to engage the community of all ages in shaping what the future of the youth and connexions services will look like so your comments on the following will help us to decide the best way to deliver these services in the future.

Q35 Do you have any children or grandchildren between the ages of 11 -19 that live in Luton? *Please mark ☒ one box only*

Yes ☐ No ☐

Q36 Thinking about your local area, what are the top 3 issues faced by young people aged 11 – 19 years? *Please mark ☒ up to 3 boxes*

Boredom	☐	Crime / anti-social behaviour	☐
Educational opportunities	☐	Lack of role models and positive influences	☐
Health	☐	Bullying	☐
Lack of job opportunities	☐	Poor parenting	☐
Poverty	☐	Lack of advice and support	☐
Other **Please mark ☒ box and write in below**			☐
Don't know	☐		

Q37 What one thing should we prioritise as a Council to tackle the issues faced by young people? *Please write your answer in the box below*

Q38 How could the community be involved? *Please mark ☒ all boxes that apply*

Local voluntary groups to deliver activities	☐	Local authority to continue youth work in your local area	☐
Local voluntary groups to use local authority youth centres	☐	Other **Please mark ☒ box and write in below**	☐
Local authority to recruit volunteers	☐		
		Don't know	☐

Thank you very much for taking part in this survey. Please return the questionnaire in the envelope provided as soon as possible or by **Friday 6th July 2012.**

<<BAR CODE>> <<REFERENCE>>

With more than 20 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

BMG serves both the social public sector and the commercial private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of the most recent technologies and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.