



**Babtie Group**

Kent County Council



**Parish and Town Council 2003 Survey**



The Second Annual Review of Kent Highways'  
service to Parish and Town Councils

**Babtie Group**  
Management & Technical Consultants

February 2004

Kent County Council

## **Parish and Town Council 2003 Survey**

### **The Second Annual Review of Kent Highways' service to Parish and Town Councils**

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### Executive Summary

1. This survey is the second annual review for 2003 of the level of Parish/ Town Council satisfaction with the service provided by Kent Highways. The survey had a 53% response rate with 159 of the 302 questionnaires distributed originally, returned. However it should be borne in mind that some Districts have low numbers of Parish/Town Councils and therefore their sample size is small (Table 1).
2. Most Parish/ Town Councils are reasonably satisfied with both the speed and quality of response they receive from their local highway unit (Figs. 1-2). It is noted that Tunbridge Wells and Dover have very good ratings in terms of their speed of response. However Parishes have mixed views on the speed and quality of response they get from the County Council.
3. Generally, Parishes feel that they do not receive enough information on Highways related issues (Figs. 3-8). Highway Units should seek to improve the information they provide on:
  - the roads to be salted in winter
  - when certain roads are going to be inspected
  - the nature of Kent Highways' policies on highway maintenance and safety management. It is recommended that a resume of these be attached with this executive summary, for forwarding to all Parish/ Town councils.
4. Perception of the advance planning, speed and quality of road works varies quite widely across Kent, with Parishes having positive views of all three aspects in Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Thanet (Figs. 9-11). It is recommended that these Districts share what they do to ensure that best practice is adopted across the county.
5. The perception of the work planned and completed by statutory undertakers such as the water companies is generally much worse than that carried out by Kent Highways (Figs. 12-13). Some way of improving the way these companies conduct their planning and works on the highway should be investigated. Overall it is clear that Parish and Town Councils are not receiving sufficient information about who is undertaking works in their area
6. There are mixed views on whether the Highways service has improved over the last year with progress in some Districts and decline in others (Figs. 15-17). For instance over 50% of Parishes in Maidstone state that the service has improved, none of those in Tunbridge Wells feel that it has declined, whilst over 50% think that it has got worse in Shepway and Thanet. Popular reasons for the improvement in services involve enhanced liaison and communication between Kent Highways and Parish Councils. Liaison is important as it invokes the idea of 'partnership'. The service should be about both sides talking to each other rather than one chasing the other to do things or find out what is required. If finance proves to be a problem then close working with a Parish will enable the really important things to be targeted for improvement and allow the Highway Unit to manage realistic expectations.
7. The only aspects of the current highway service that have achieved a positive net satisfaction rating are streetlighting and the 'winter service'. Satisfaction is at its worst with HGV/ lorry movements; enforcing and managing on-street parking; the state of the roads; excessive speed and the cleanliness of road drains. Satisfaction is variable across Highway Units with all core highway services (Figs. 19 – 32). However it is noted that since 2002/3 views on the roads and drainage has improved and that perception of these things is not poor everywhere. It is important that Districts share information with each other to ensure that good practice is passed on. For example the cleanliness of drains is good in Tonbridge and Malling, and on-street parking appears to be tackled well in Thanet and Tunbridge Wells. It will be useful for other Districts to learn what these Districts are doing, to see if they can improve their own service in these areas.
8. Analysis of the top priority issues has shown that while people may be most dissatisfied with lorry movements, it is not their 'key' issue (Fig. 33). Vehicle speed; maintenance of the existing infrastructure and local highway matters specific to that area are all seen as more pressing concerns.
9. A 'traffic light' summary of the results of the survey is presented as Appendix A.

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### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 The Background and Purpose of the Study

- 1.1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) reviews the performance of its Highways service by conducting sample market research with local residents and Members in the aftermath of road works, annual Mystery Shopper & a Highways Tracker Satisfaction Survey on a regular basis. It has commissioned Babtie Group (Transportation) to provide an independent series of reports based on the opinions expressed in questionnaires distributed to the public (Residents after surveys).
- 1.1.2 However KCC also wishes to understand the overall quality of the highways service and areas that it could improve on in order to provide a better level of service to the people of Kent. To this end it has commissioned Babtie Group to provide an independent report on the views of the Parish and Town Councils.
- 1.1.3 A pilot survey was undertaken in 2002 by the County Council (Ref. 1). Reference has been made to that study to highlight any key trends that have emerged over the past year. However as the format and some of the questions have changed since last year, this exercise is somewhat limited.
- 1.1.4 Questionnaires were distributed in November 2003 by the Kent Association of Parish Councils (KAPC). Surveys were also sent direct to those Parish & Town Councils who are not Members of KAPC to ensure a 100% coverage. A prepaid envelope was provided to ensure that there was a statistically significant response rate. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

#### 1.2 The Methodology of the Study

- 1.2.1 All the returned questionnaires have been input into a Microsoft ACCESS database. This has enabled a speedier analysis of the data and electronic storage for future ease of reference.
- 1.2.2 The majority of the questions in the survey involve respondents being asked for their level of satisfaction with a particular feature of Kent Highways' service. In these questions, respondents are given five options and they are asked to choose the statement that best matches their view by ticking the relevant box (multiple choice questions).
- 1.2.3 Throughout the report satisfaction has been measured by calculating the 'net satisfaction' percentage. Appendix A illustrates that the typical five options for each tick box question are:
- Very Satisfied
  - Fairly Satisfied
  - Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
  - (Fairly) Dissatisfied
  - Very Dissatisfied
- 1.2.4 The net satisfaction with a particular aspect of the highways service has been calculated by using the following equation:
- $$\text{Net Satisfaction (\%)} = (\% \text{ Very Satisfied} + \% \text{ Fairly Satisfied}) - (\% \text{ Fairly Dissatisfied} + \% \text{ Very Dissatisfied})$$
- 1.2.5 Separate net satisfaction percentages have been calculated for each District and the County Council (in Question 1). The average level for the whole of the county has also been calculated. This is the average 'Parish' view rather than that of the average 'District'.

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- 1.2.6 Analysis of the survey data has resulted in graphs for each individual question and these are illustrated in Chapter 2. These diagrams illustrate how Parish and Town Councils' satisfaction with a range of highway matters varies between the different Districts and the average picture for the whole of Kent.
- 1.2.7 There is one other multiple-choice question in the survey. This is Question 4 and it is different to the others in that people are given three choices as to whether they think the level of the service has:
- Got Better
  - Stayed the same
  - Got worse
- 1.2.8 There is also an open-ended element to this question in that respondents are asked to qualify their statement by stating why they think this is the case.
- 1.2.9 Respondents are also asked to give their opinions in three other questions. For instance they are asked if there is other information they would like to receive (Question 2), the top priority highway issue in their Parish at the moment (Question 6) and any additional comments that relate to the highway service that KCC provides (Free text box). The open-ended design of these questions ensures that the respondent's answers are not led. In order to facilitate the analysis, the replies to these open-ended questions have been summarised into key themes. These have been illustrated in a series of bar charts in Chapter 2.

### 1.3 Response Rate

- 1.3.1 The response rate for this survey is 53%, as 159 of the 302 questionnaires distributed originally have been returned. This is a better response rate than most of the 'resident after surveys' and last year's Parish/ Town Council survey where it was 41%. The change in the questionnaire this year may have helped, by making it quicker and easier to complete.
- 1.3.2 Table 1 illustrates how the response rate varies between Districts. Attention should also be paid to the number of the Parishes in some of the Districts, because a small sample size can result in a great deal of variation in net satisfaction levels.

**Table 1: Response rate by District**

District	Response	Number of Parishes	% Response
Ashford	22	39	56%
Canterbury	17	27	63%
Dartford	7	8	88%
Dover	17	36	47%
Gravesham	4	5	80%
Maidstone	16	42	38%
Sevenoaks	19	29	66%
Shepway	12	29	41%
Swale	20	36	56%
Thanet	3	8	38%
Tonbridge & Malling	10	27	37%
Tunbridge Wells	8	16	50%
Subtotal	155		
Unknown District	4		
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>53%</b>

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1.3.3 Clearly there are large variations in the number of Parish Councils each Highway Unit has to 'manage'. Whilst those with small numbers may be better placed to provide information, this may not necessarily also be beneficial to the quality of the highways services due to the possibility that they will have fewer resources at their disposal.

**1.4 The Structure of the Report**

1.4.1 Chapter 2 provides a series of graphs illustrating:

- satisfaction with various aspects of the Highways service,
- any extra information parishes would like,
- why parishes think the highway service has changed (if it has),
- the top priority highway issue in parishes.

1.4.2 The conclusions arising are presented in Chapter 3.

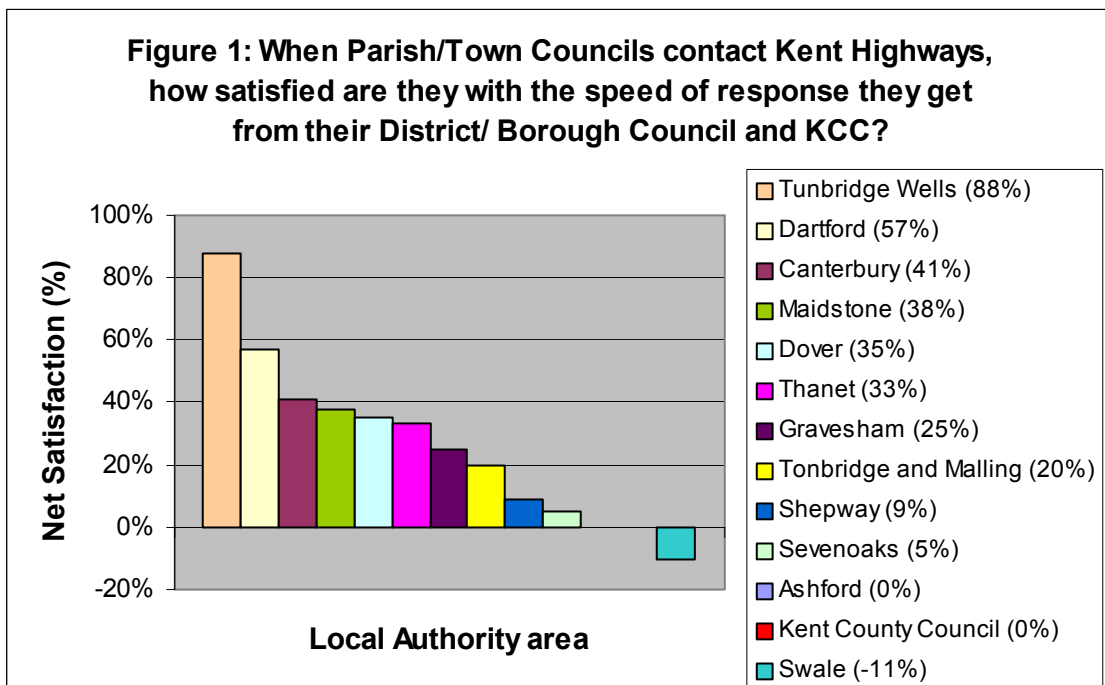
## **2 Graphical Representation of the Data Analysis**

### **2.1 Review of satisfaction with the speed and quality of response when Kent Highways is contacted?**

2.1.1 Throughout this Chapter reference is made to "Net Satisfaction". For information on how this percentage is derived, please refer to para 1.2.4.

2.1.2 Question 1.1 & 1.2: When you contact us how satisfied are you with the speed of response you get from:

- Your District or Borough Council Highway Unit?
- Kent County Council?

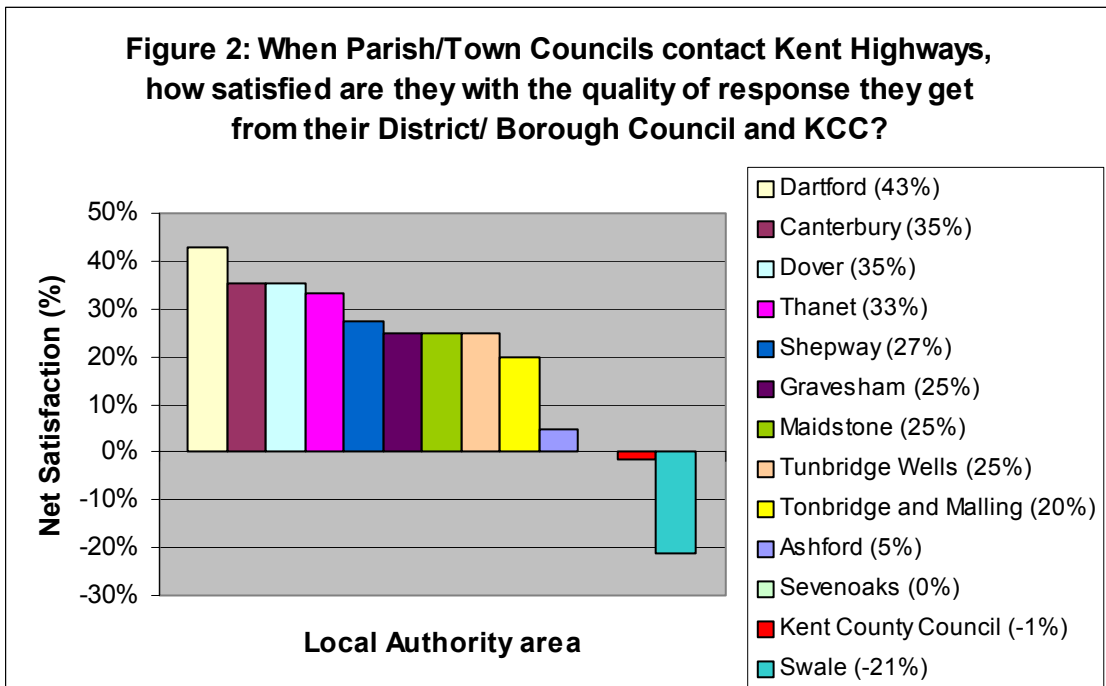


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- 2.1.3 Question 1.3 & 1.4: When you contact us how satisfied are you with the quality of response you get from:
- Your District or Borough Council Highway Unit?
  - Kent County Council?

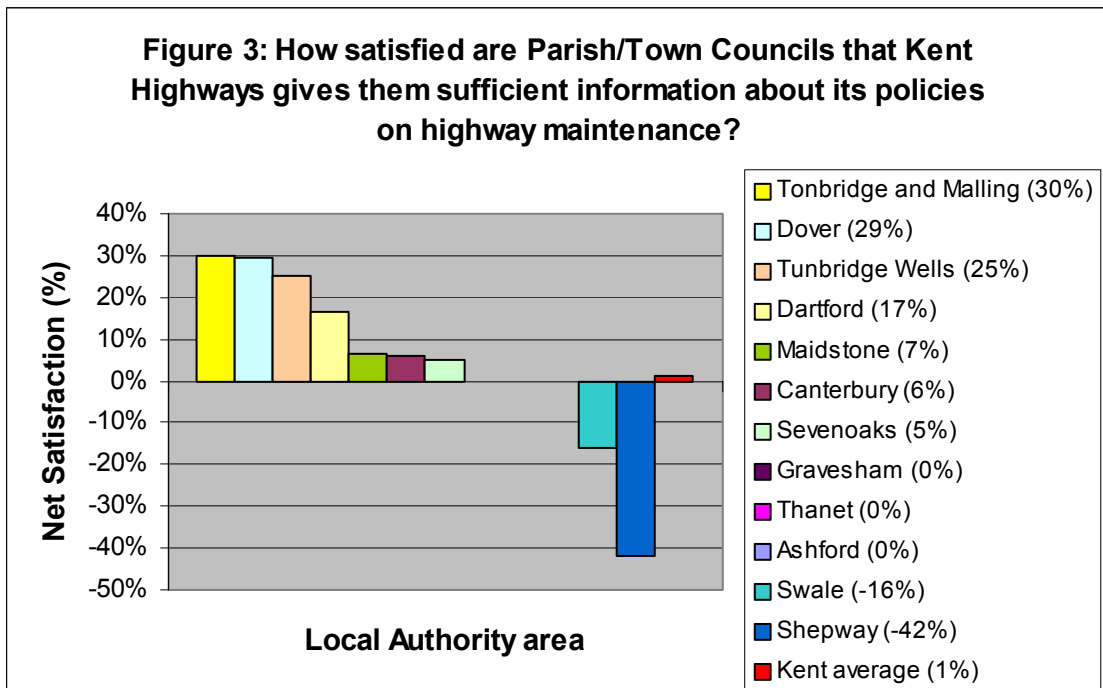


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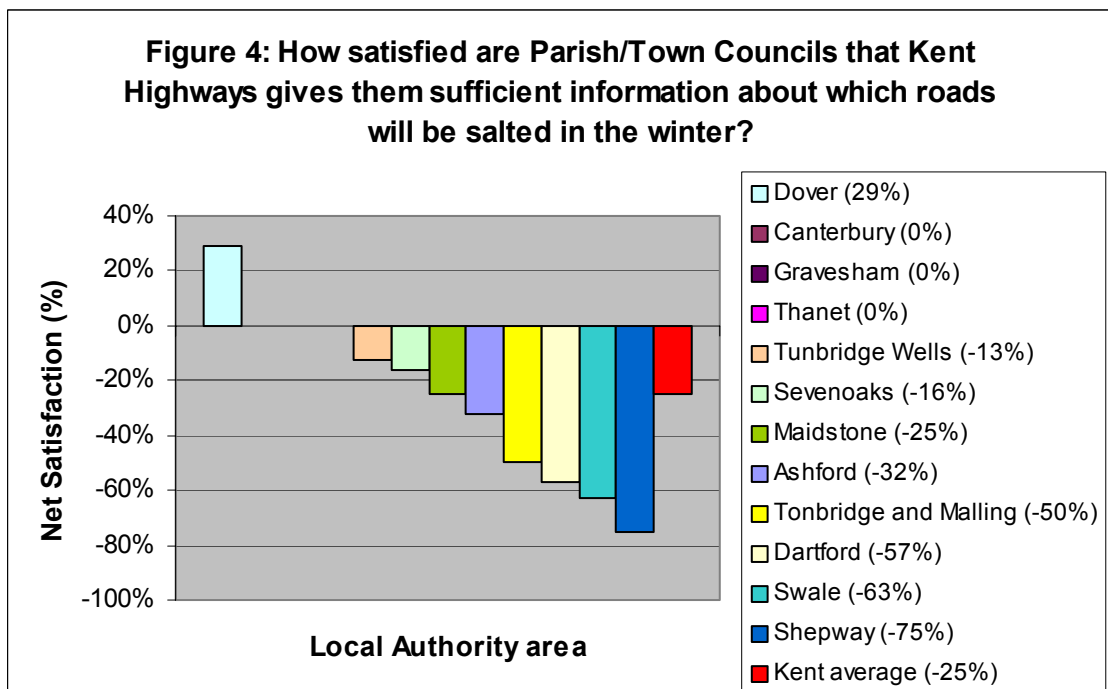
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**2.2 Review of satisfaction with the sufficiency of information given to Parish/ Town Councils about various Kent Highways' policies**

2.2.1 Question 2.1: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils that Kent Highways gives them sufficient information about its policies on highway maintenance?



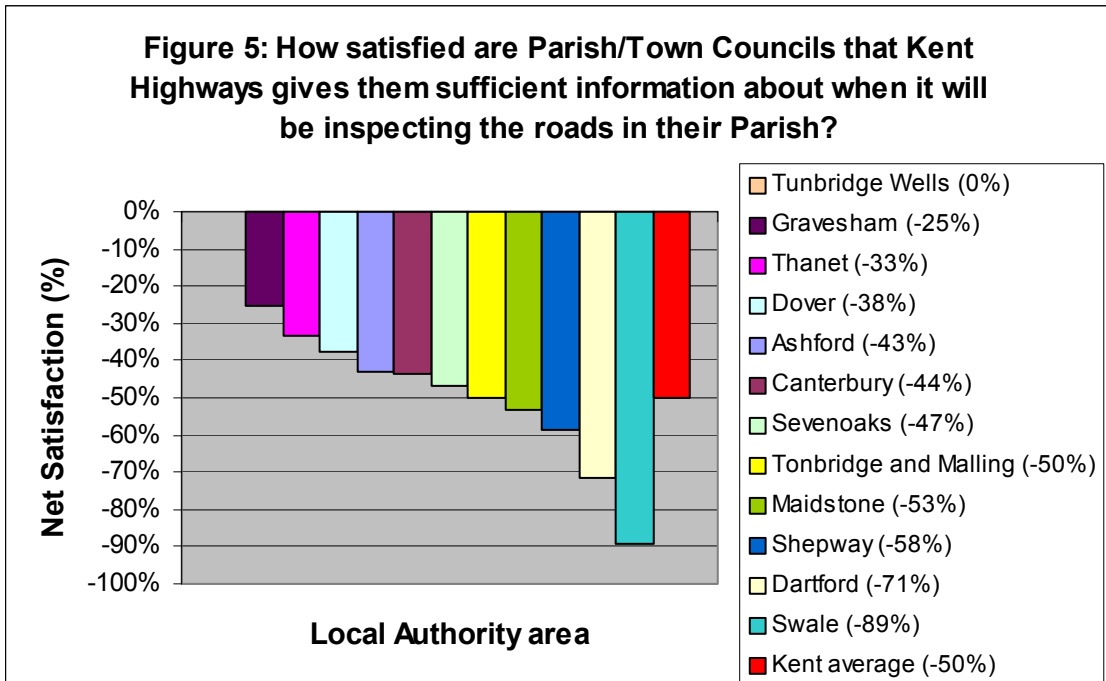
2.2.2 Question 2.2: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils that Kent Highways gives them sufficient information about which roads are salted in the winter?



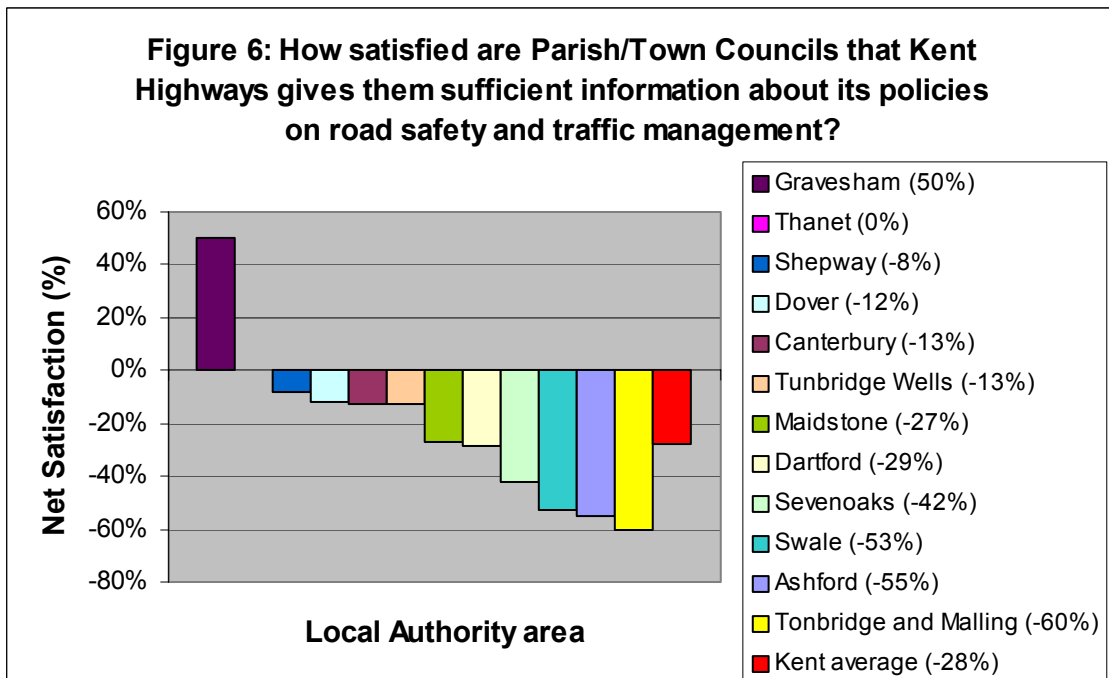
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2.2.3 Question 2.3: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils that Kent Highways gives them sufficient information about when it will be inspecting the roads in their Parish?



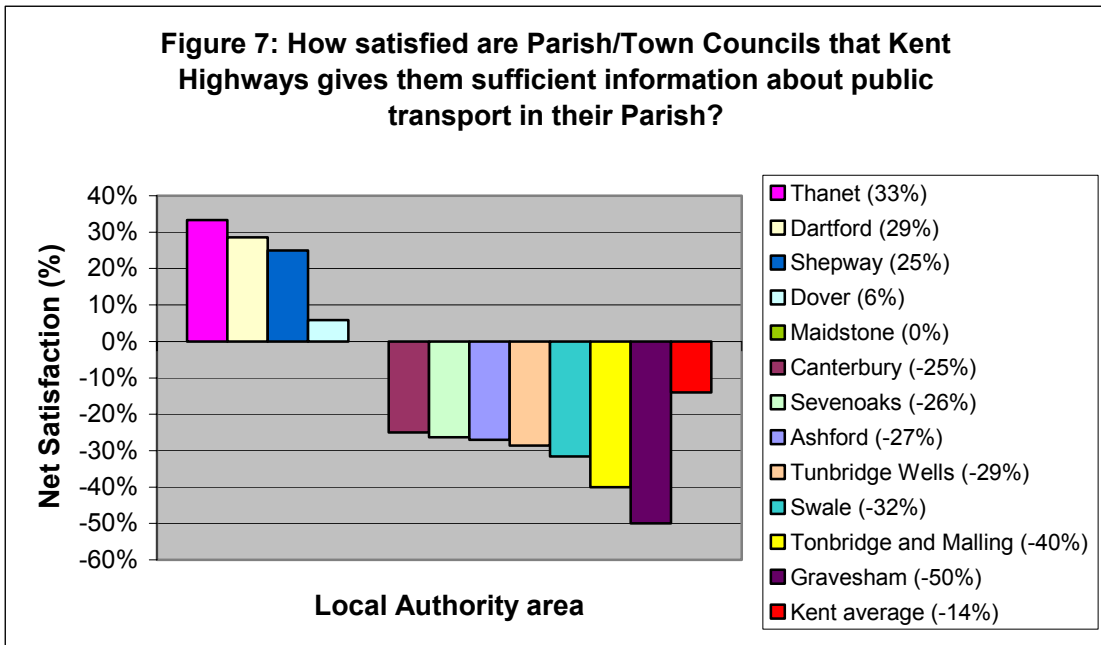
2.2.4 Question 2.4: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils that Kent Highways gives them sufficient information about its policies on road safety and traffic management?



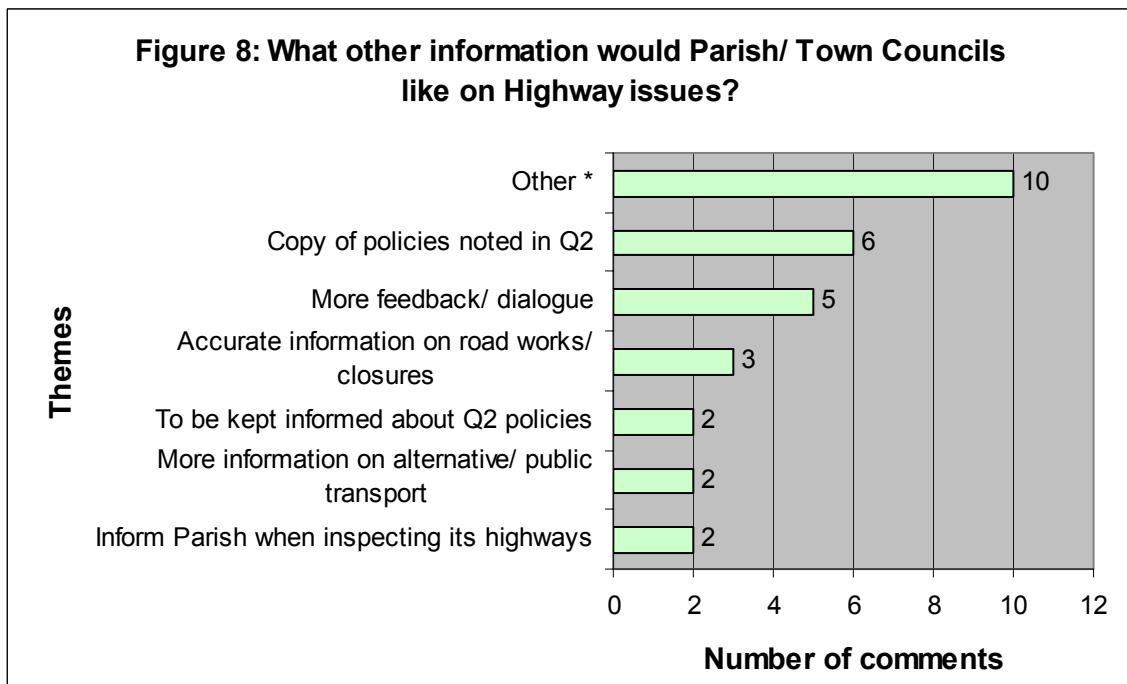
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2.2.5 Question 2.5: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils that Kent Highways gives them sufficient information about public transport in their Parish?



2.2.6 Parish and Town Councils were also asked in Question 2 if there was any other information that they would like.



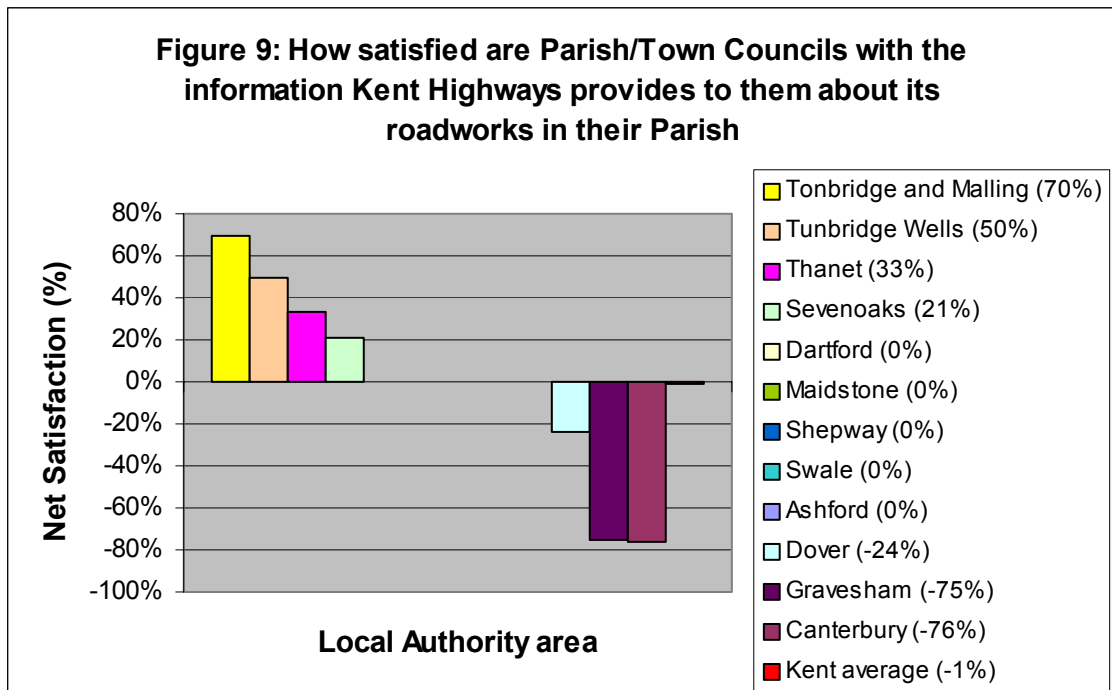
\*See Appendix C for details.

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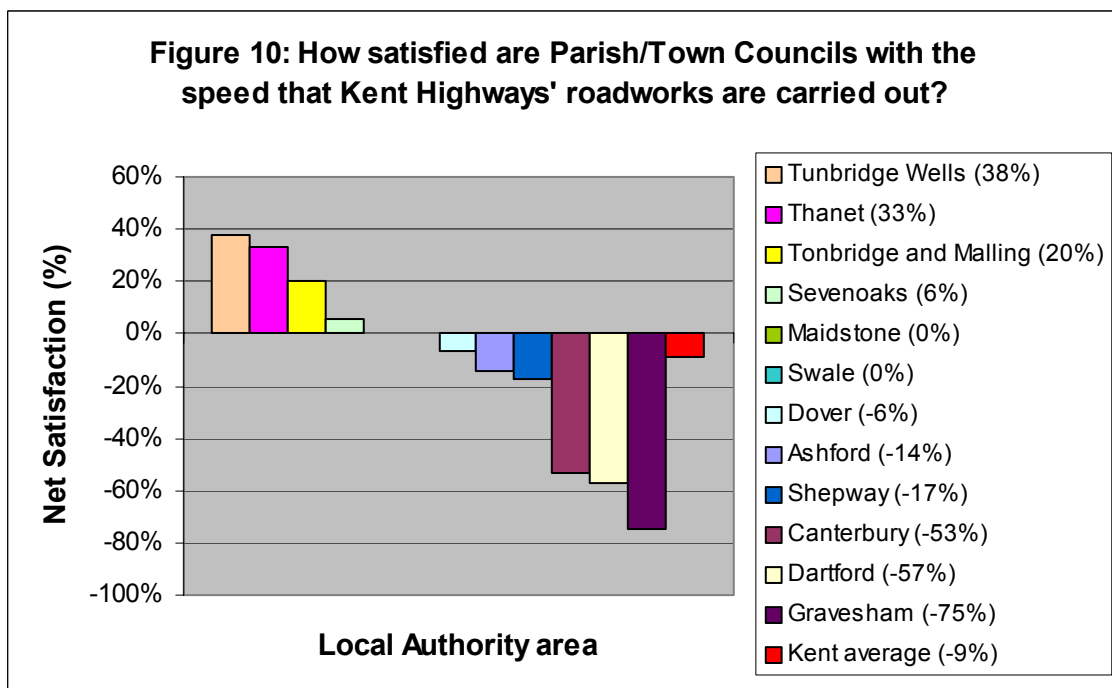
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**2.3 Review of satisfaction with Road Works carried out by Kent Highways and Statutory Undertakers**

2.3.1 Question 3.1: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the information Kent Highways provides to them about its roadworks in their Parish?



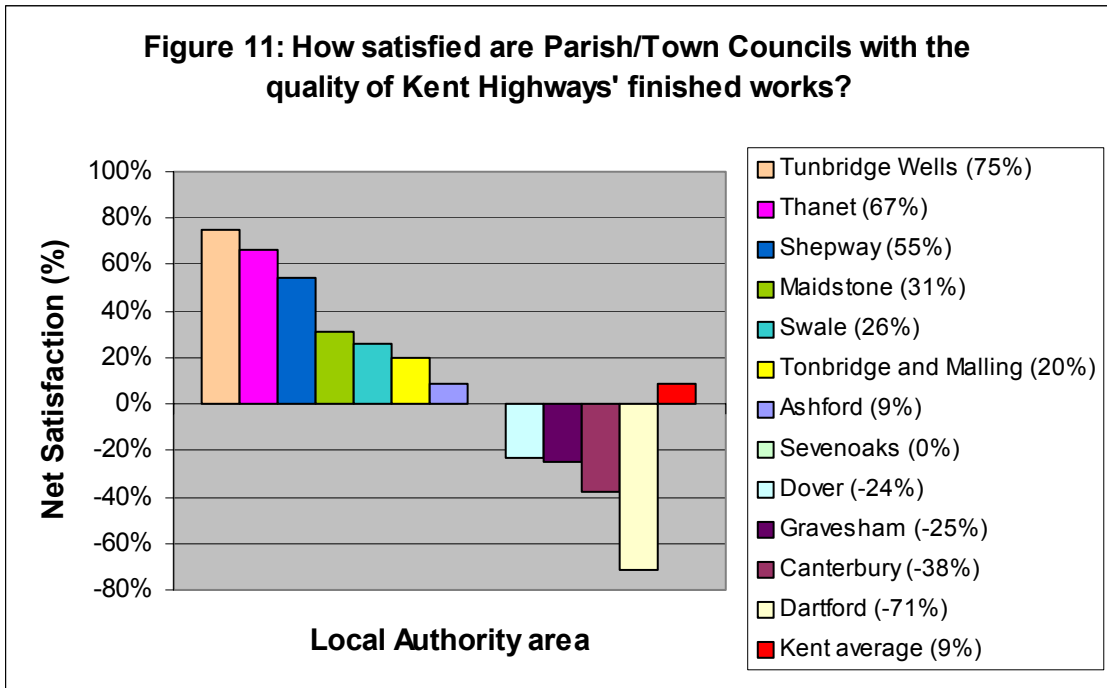
2.3.2 Question 3.2: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with how quickly Kent Highways' roadworks are carried out?



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2.3.3 Question 3.3: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the quality of Kent Highways' finished works?



**Table 2: Change in perception of the speed and the quality of Kent Highways' roadworks from 2002 to 2003**

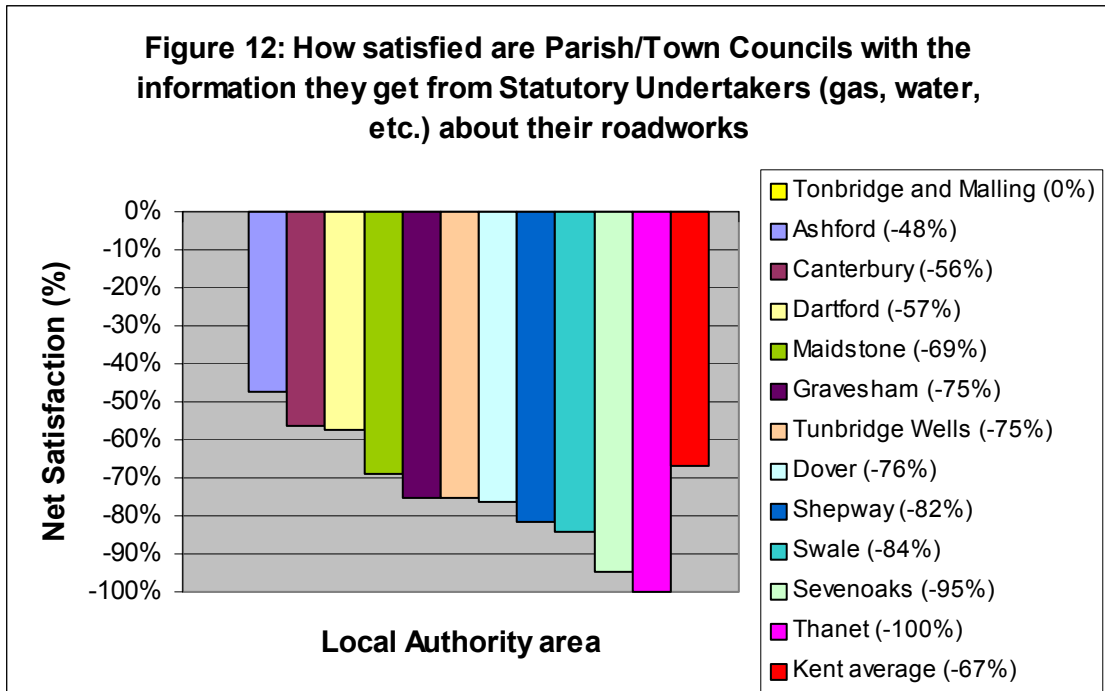
Aspect	2002*	2003	Change (% points)	Result
Speed	-2%	-9%	-7%	WORSE
Quality	4%	9%	+5%	BETTER

\* Reference 1: Question 6, Appendix 2, KCC Report.

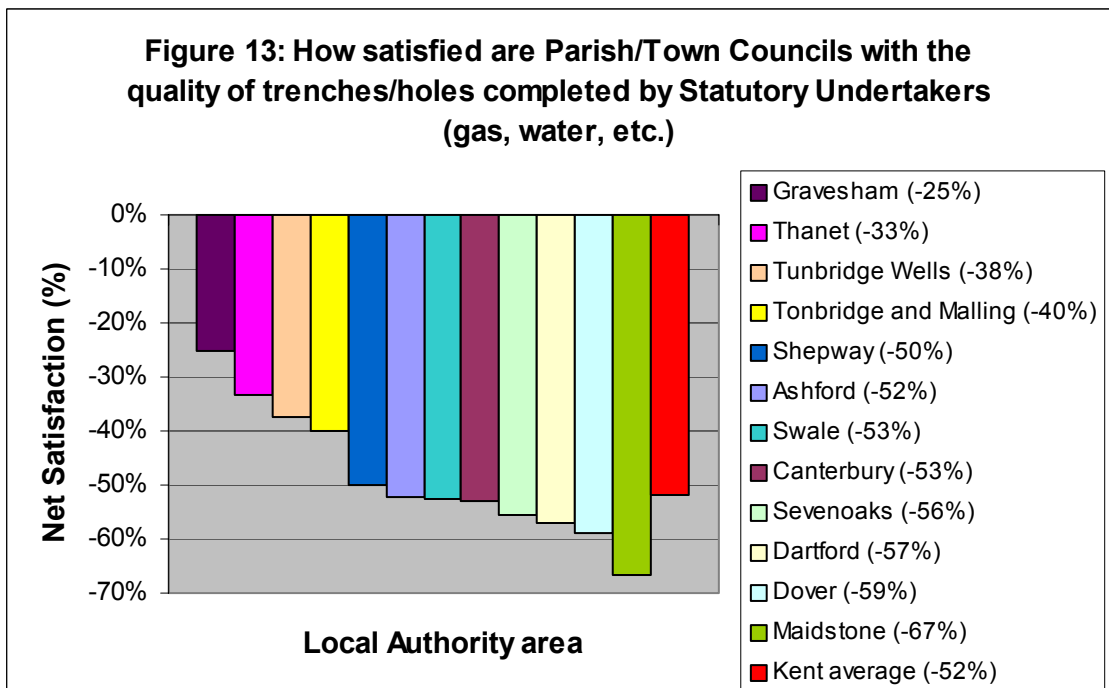
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2.3.4 Question 3.4: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the information they get from Statutory Undertakers (e.g. water, gas, etc.) about their roadworks?



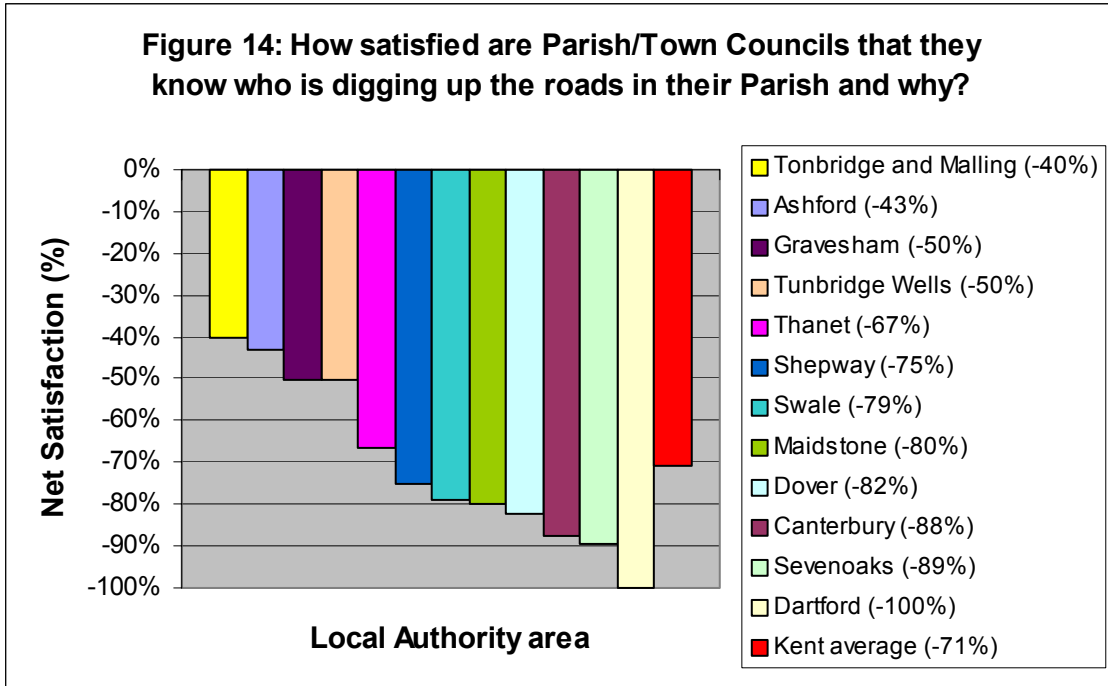
2.3.5 Question 3.5: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the quality of trenches/ holes completed by Statutory Undertakers?



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2.3.6 Question 3.6: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils that they know who is digging up the roads in their Parish and why?

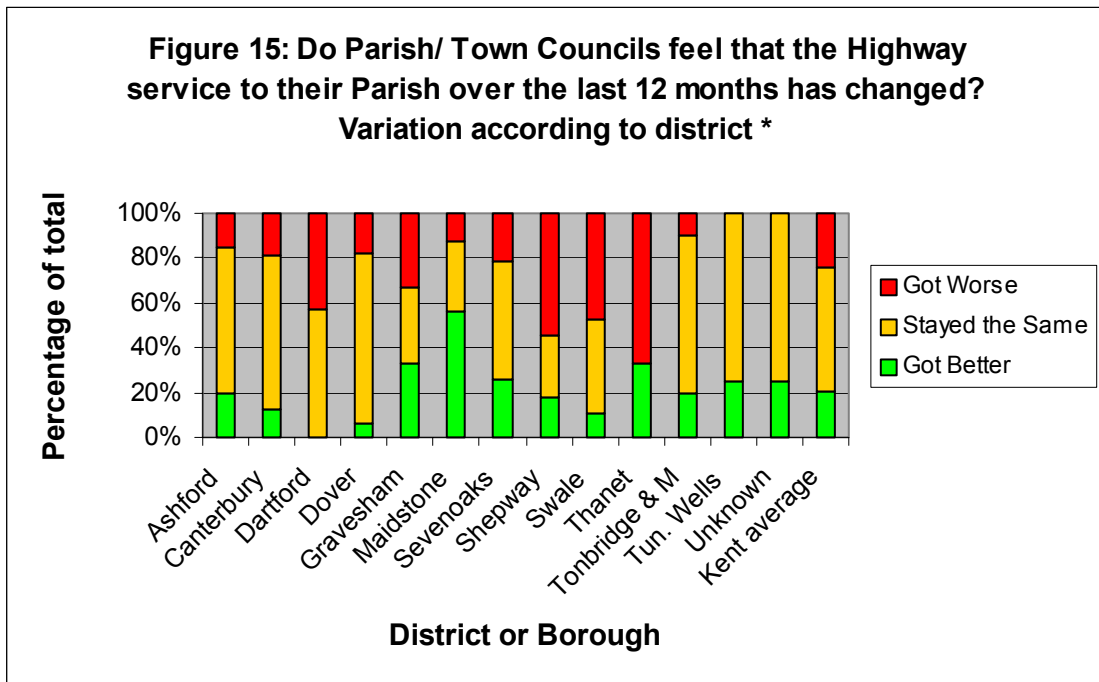


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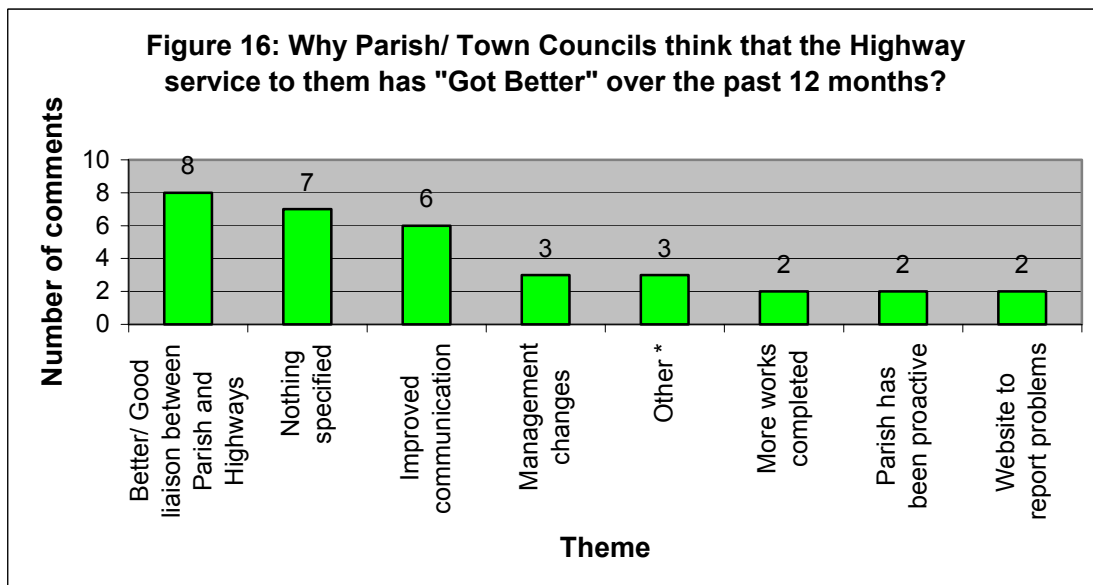
**2.4 Review of the improvement or otherwise in the Highway service to the Parish over the last 12 months**

2.4.1 Question 4.1: Over the last 12 months do Parish/ Town Councils think that the Highway service in their Parish has (i) got better; (ii) stayed the same; (iii) got worse?



\* See Table D1, Appendix D for precise figures and percentages for each District.

2.4.2 Why do Parish/ Town Councils think this is?

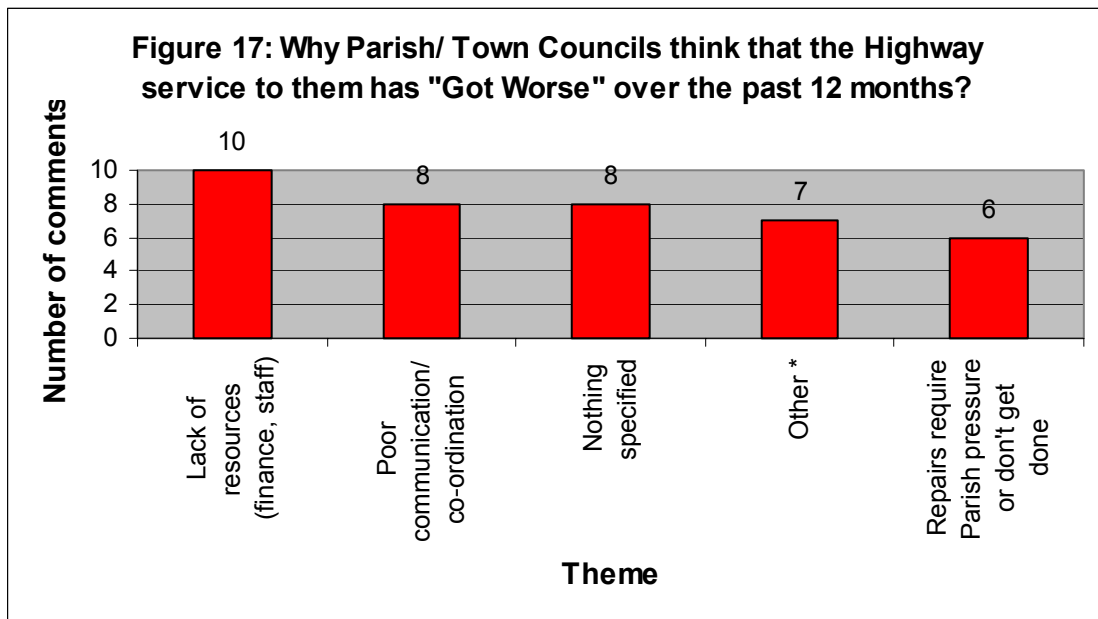


\* See Table E1, Appendix E for details

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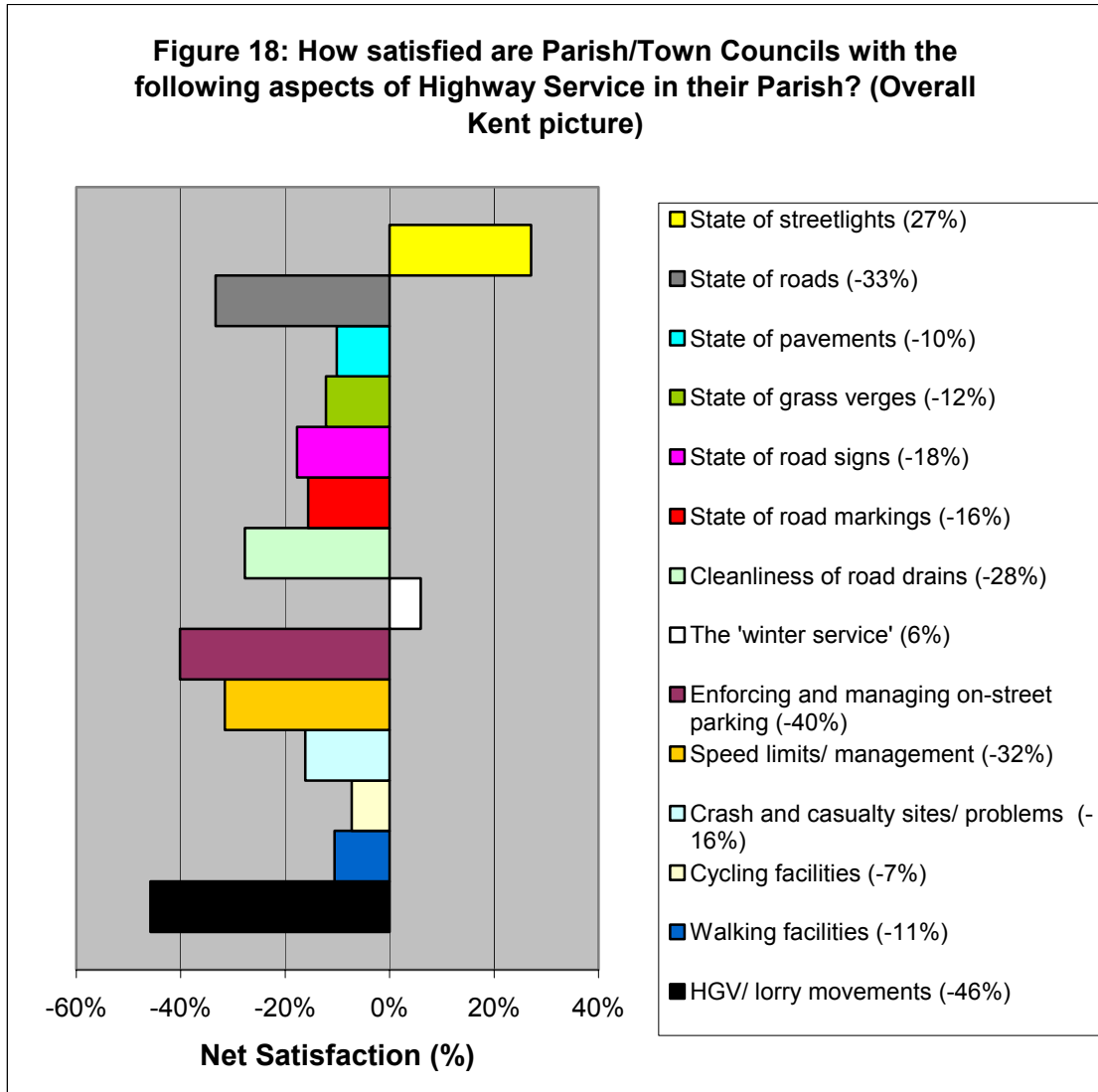
\* See Table E2, Appendix E for details.

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**2.5 Review of satisfaction of Parish/ Town Councils with features of the highway infrastructure and its management in their Parish**

2.5.1 The overall picture in Kent...



**Table 3: Comparison of Satisfaction with Highway Maintenance in 2002/3 and 2003/4**

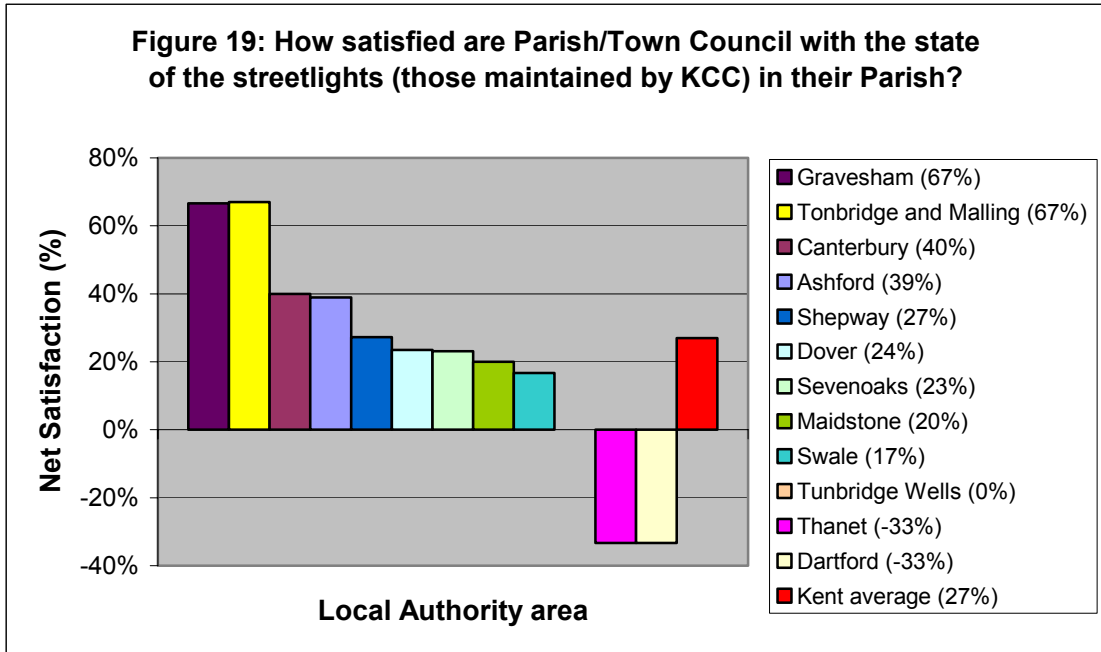
Aspect	2002*	2003	2002 to 2003 % point change	Result
Streetlighting	24%	27%	+3%	BETTER
State of roads	-46%	-33%	+13%	BETTER
State of pavements	-35%	-10%	+25%	BETTER
Grass verges	-22%	-12%	+10%	BETTER
Road signs	-4%	-18%	-14%	WORSE
Road markings	-11%	-16%	-5%	WORSE
Road drains	-43%	-28%	+15%	BETTER
Winter service	3%	6%	+3%	BETTER

\*Reference 1: Question 7, Appendix 2, KCC Report.

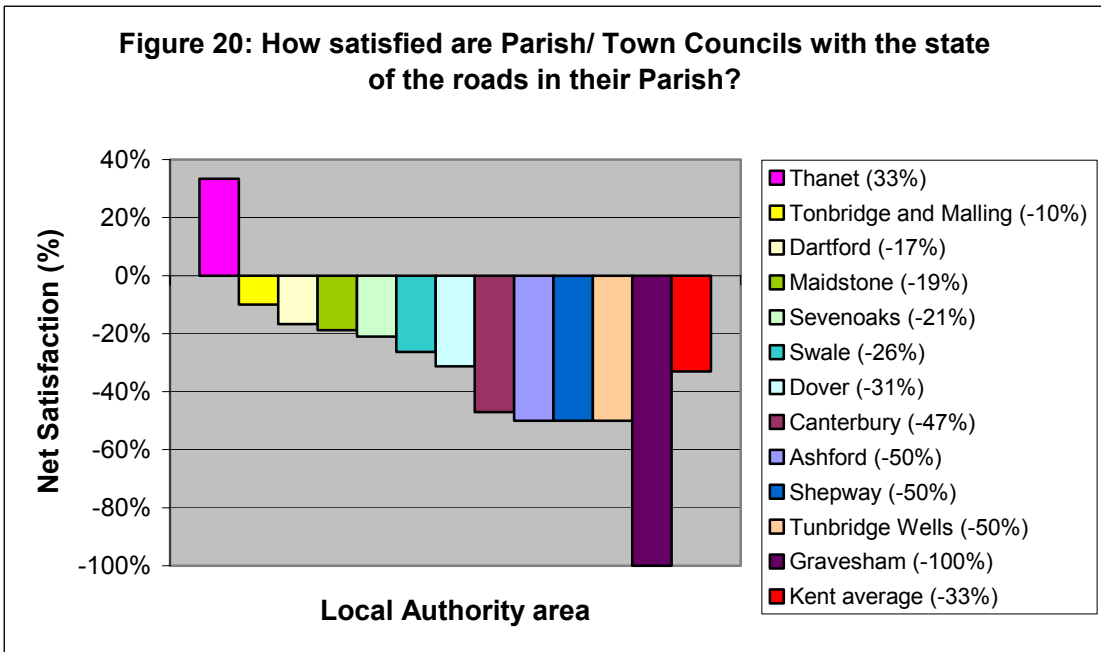
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2.5.2 Question 5.1: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the state of the streetlights maintained by KCC in their Parish?



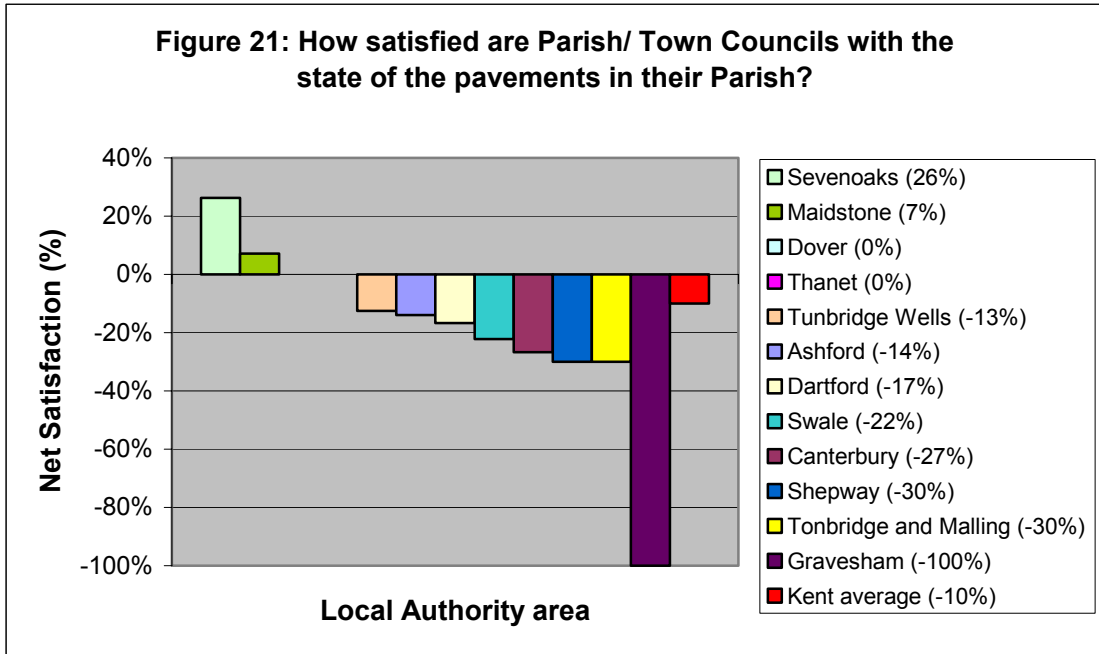
2.5.3 Question 5.2: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the state of the roads in their Parish?



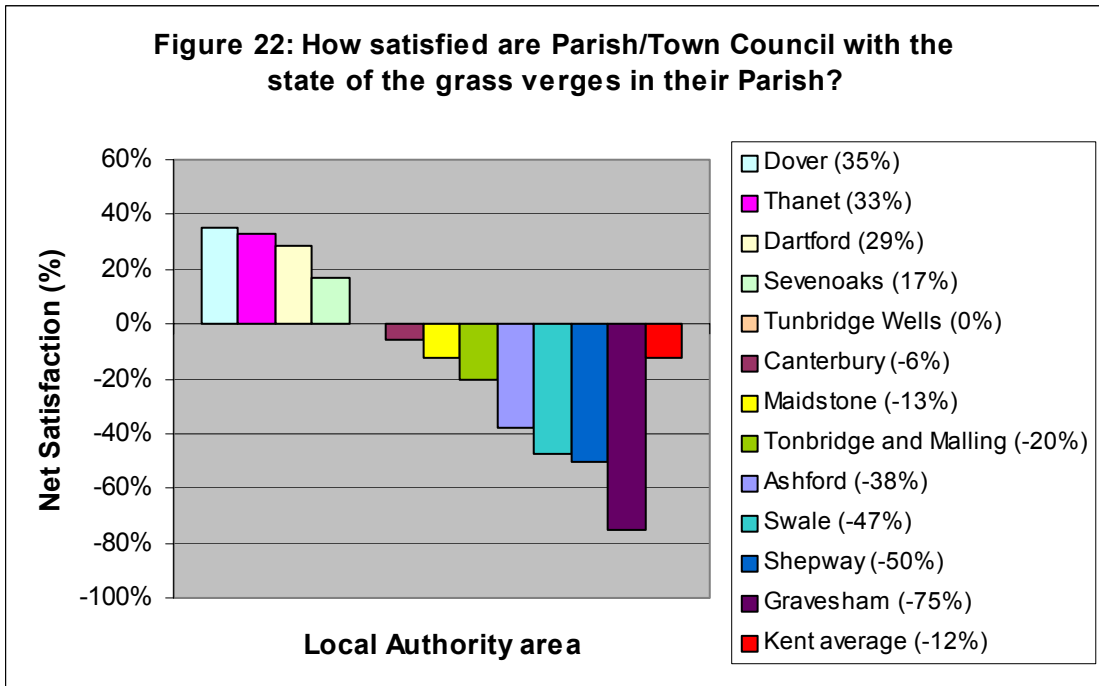
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2.5.4 Question 5.3: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the state of the pavements in their Parish?



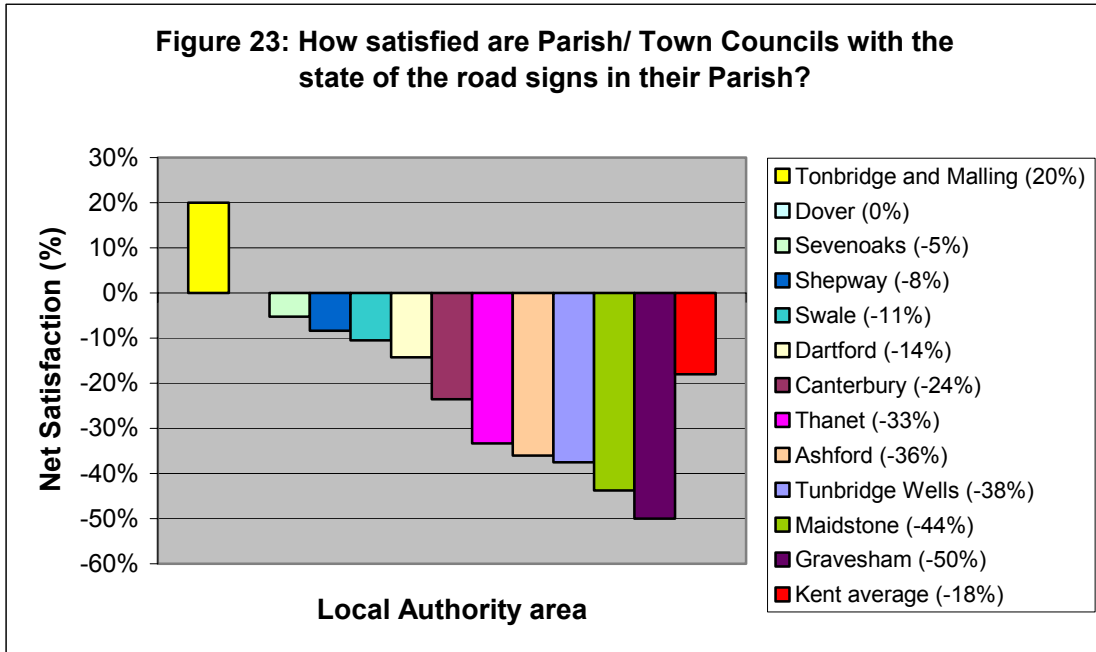
2.5.5 Question 5.4: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the state of the grass verges in their Parish?



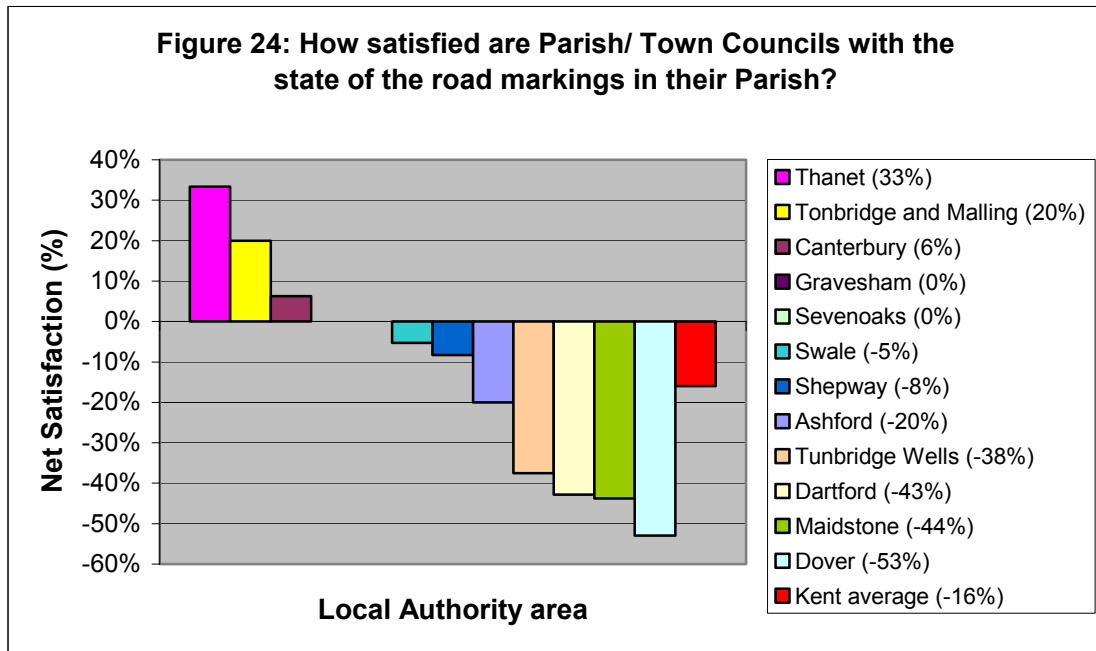
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2.5.6 Question 5.5: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the state of the road signs in their Parish?



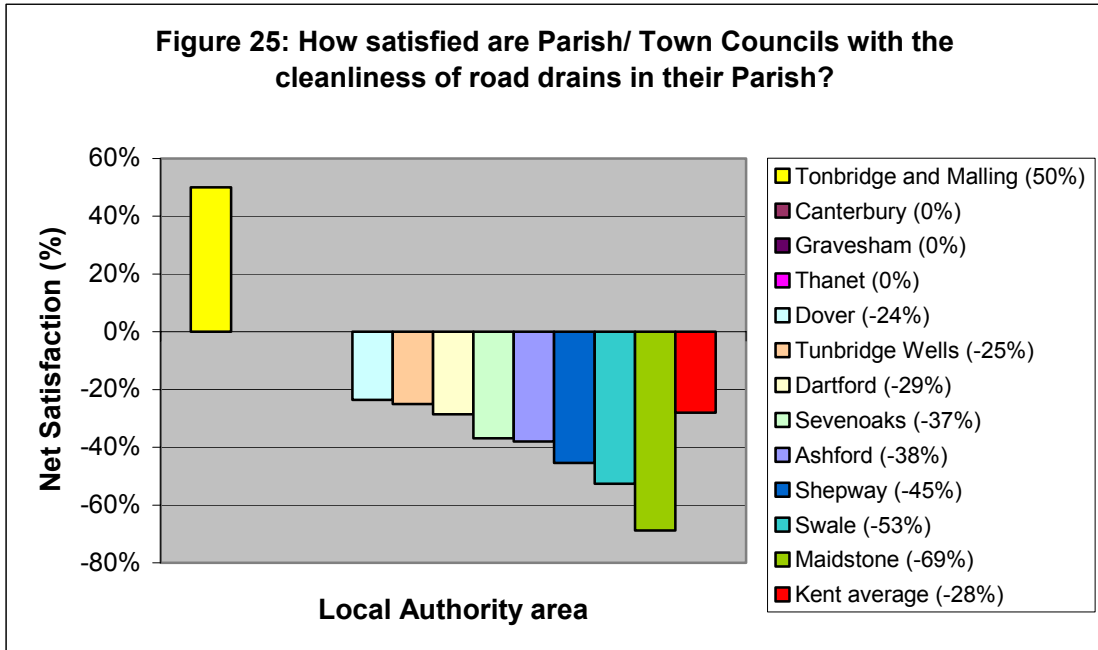
2.5.7 Question 5.6: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the state of the road markings in their Parish?



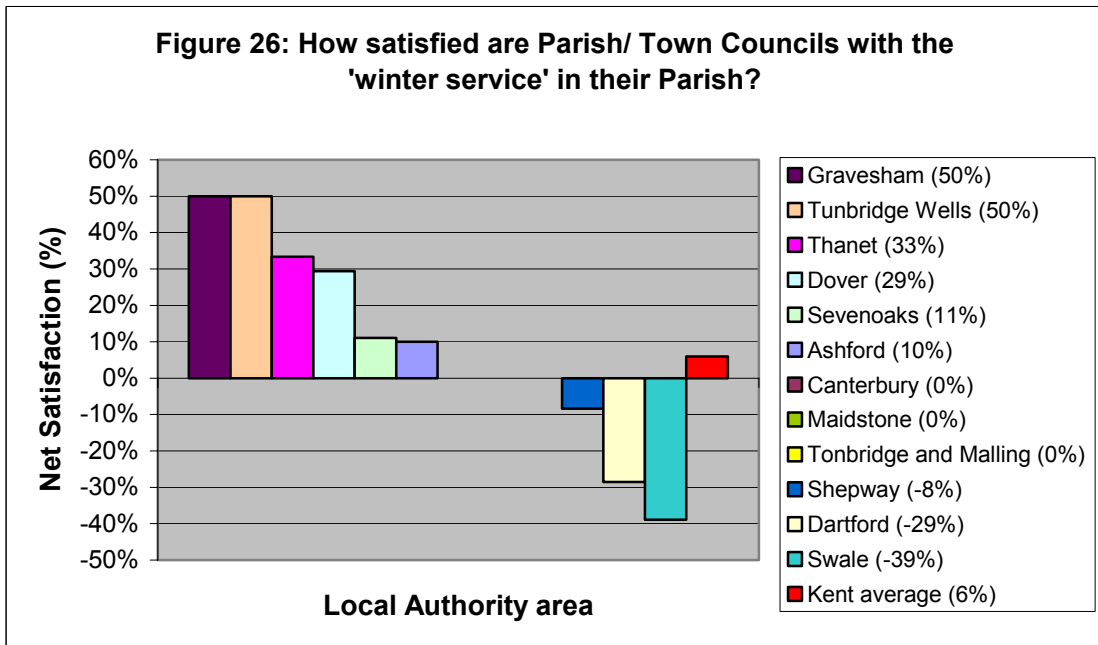
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2.5.8 Question 5.7: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the cleanliness of road drains in their Parish?



2.5.9 Question 5.8: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the 'winter service' (i.e. road salting, salt bins, snow ploughing, etc.) in their Parish?

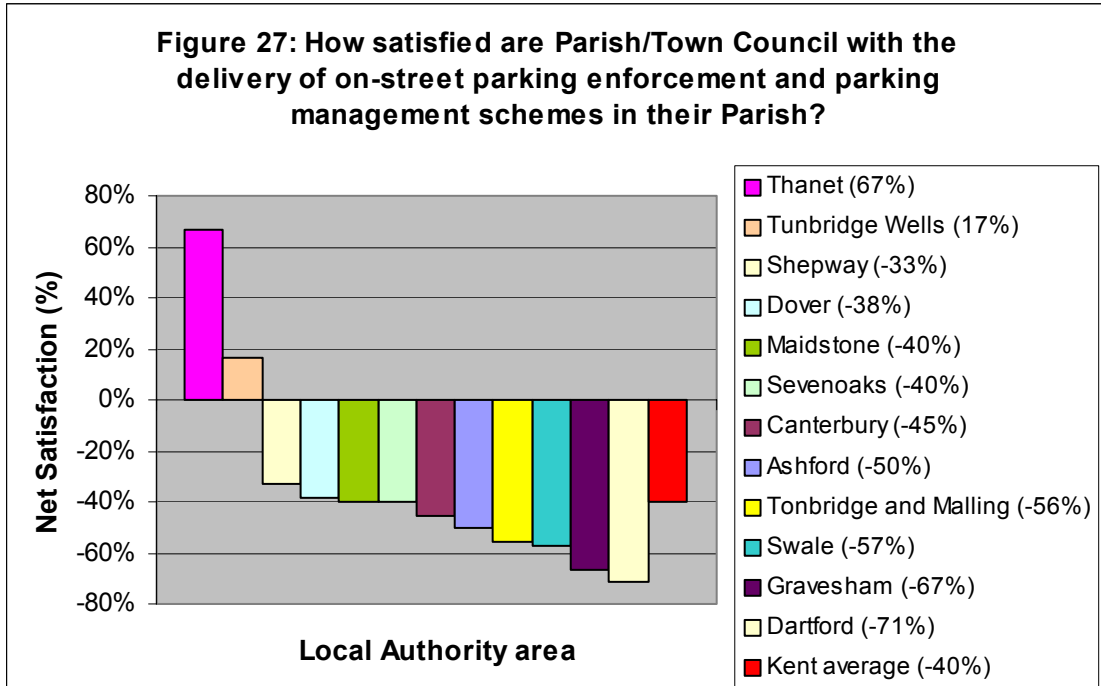


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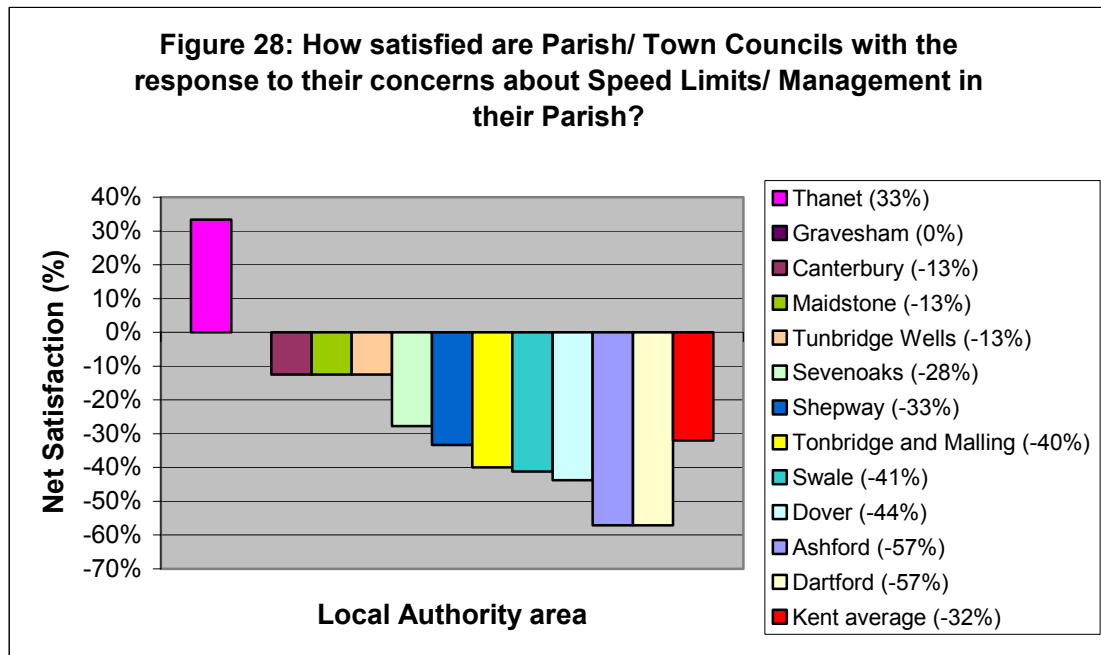
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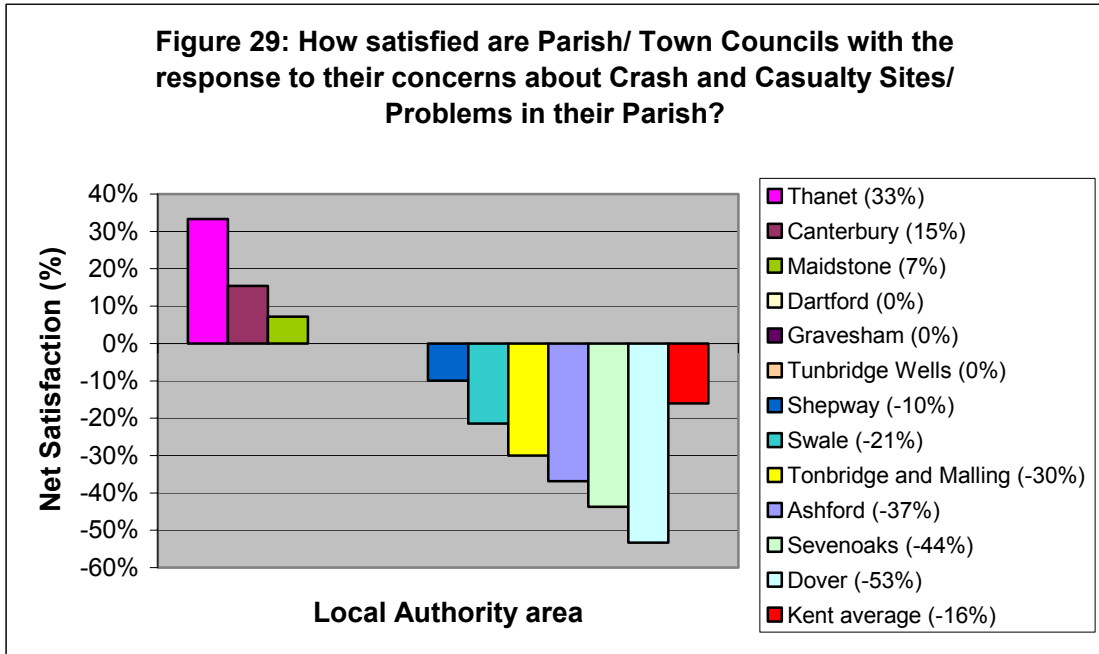
2.5.10 Question 5.9: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with the delivery of on-street parking enforcement and parking management schemes in their Parish?



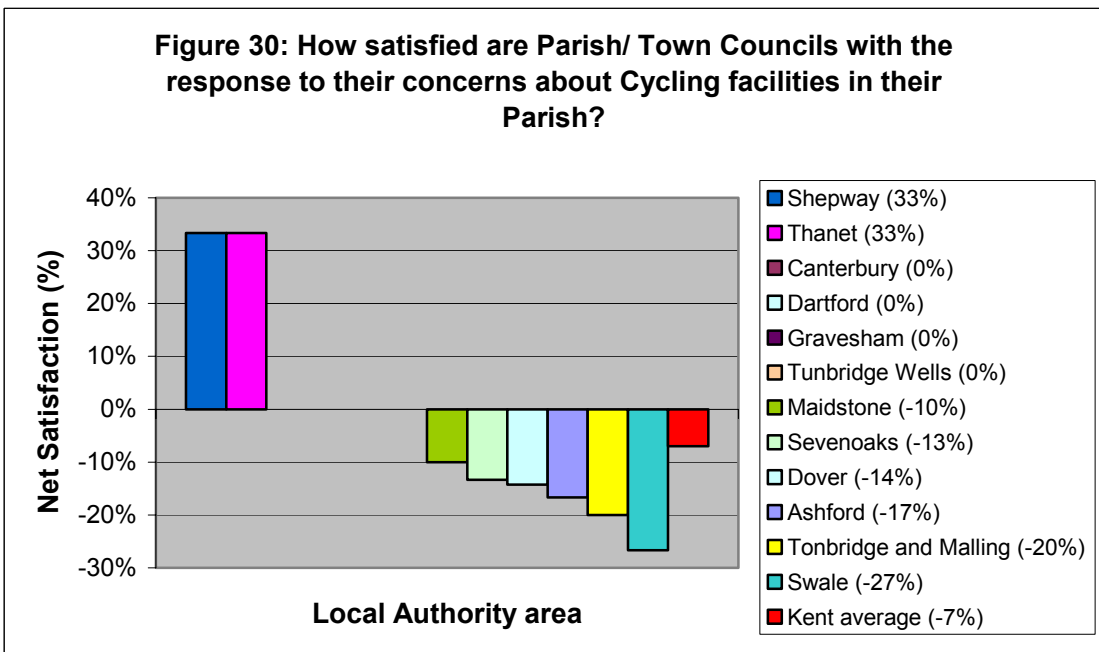
2.5.11 Question 5.10: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with KCC's response to their concerns about speed Limits and its management in their Parish?



2.5.12 Question 5.11: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with KCC's response to their concerns about crash and casualty sites/ problems in their Parish?



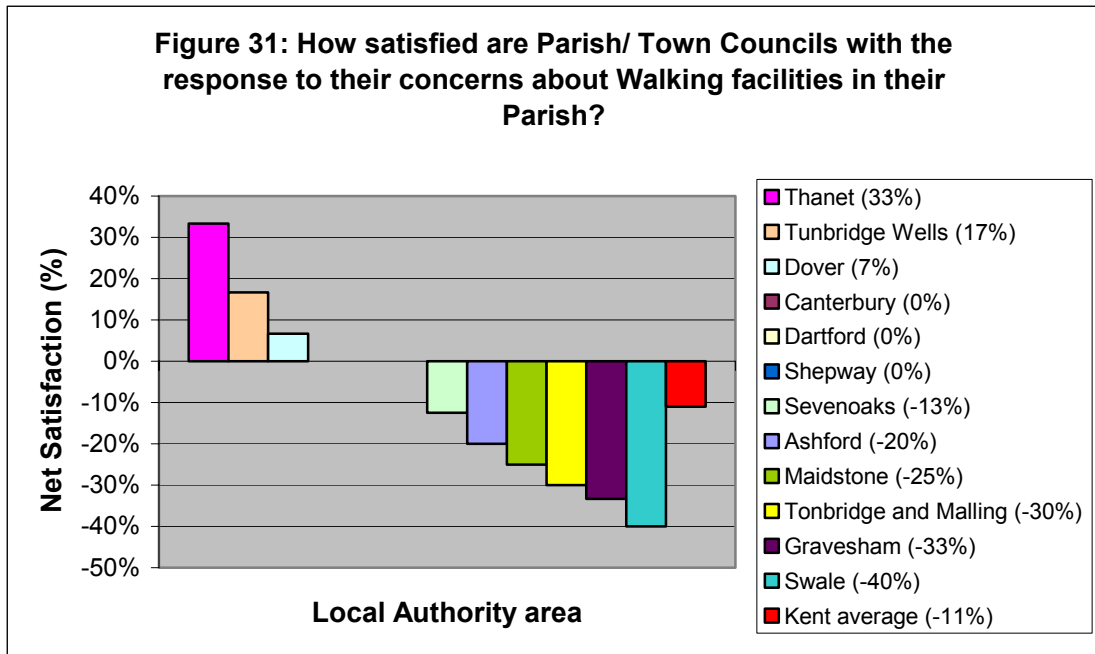
2.5.13 Question 5.12: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with KCC's response to their concerns about cycling facilities in their Parish?



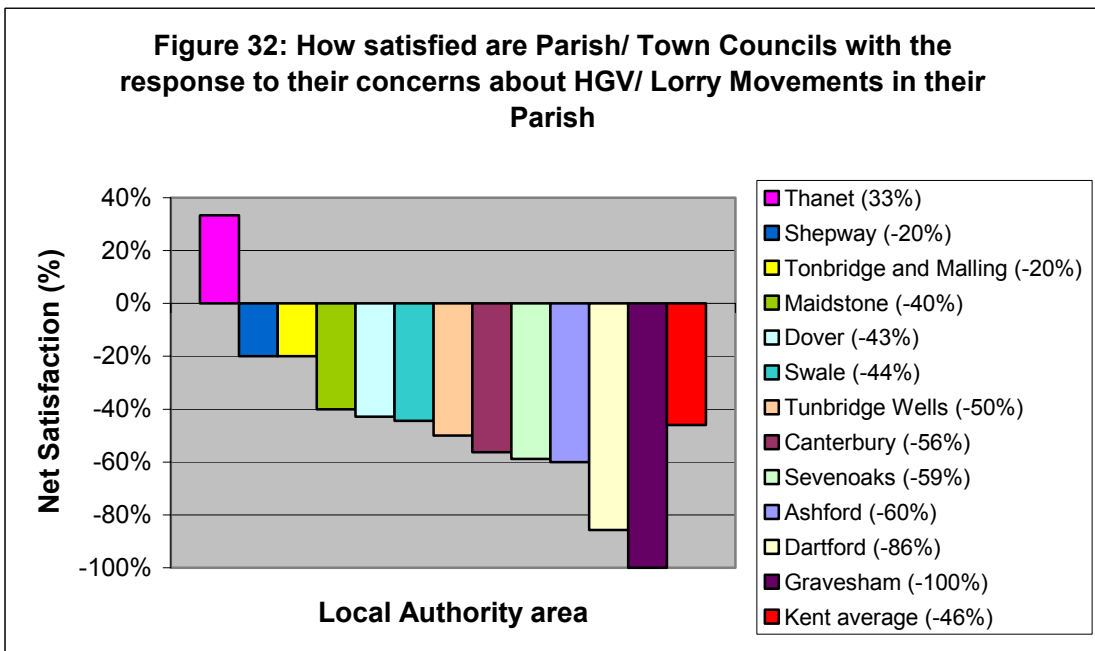
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2.5.14 Question 5.13: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with KCC's response to their concerns about walking facilities in their Parish?



2.5.15 Question 5.14: How satisfied are Parish/ Town Councils with KCC's response to their concerns about HGV/ lorry movements in their Parish?



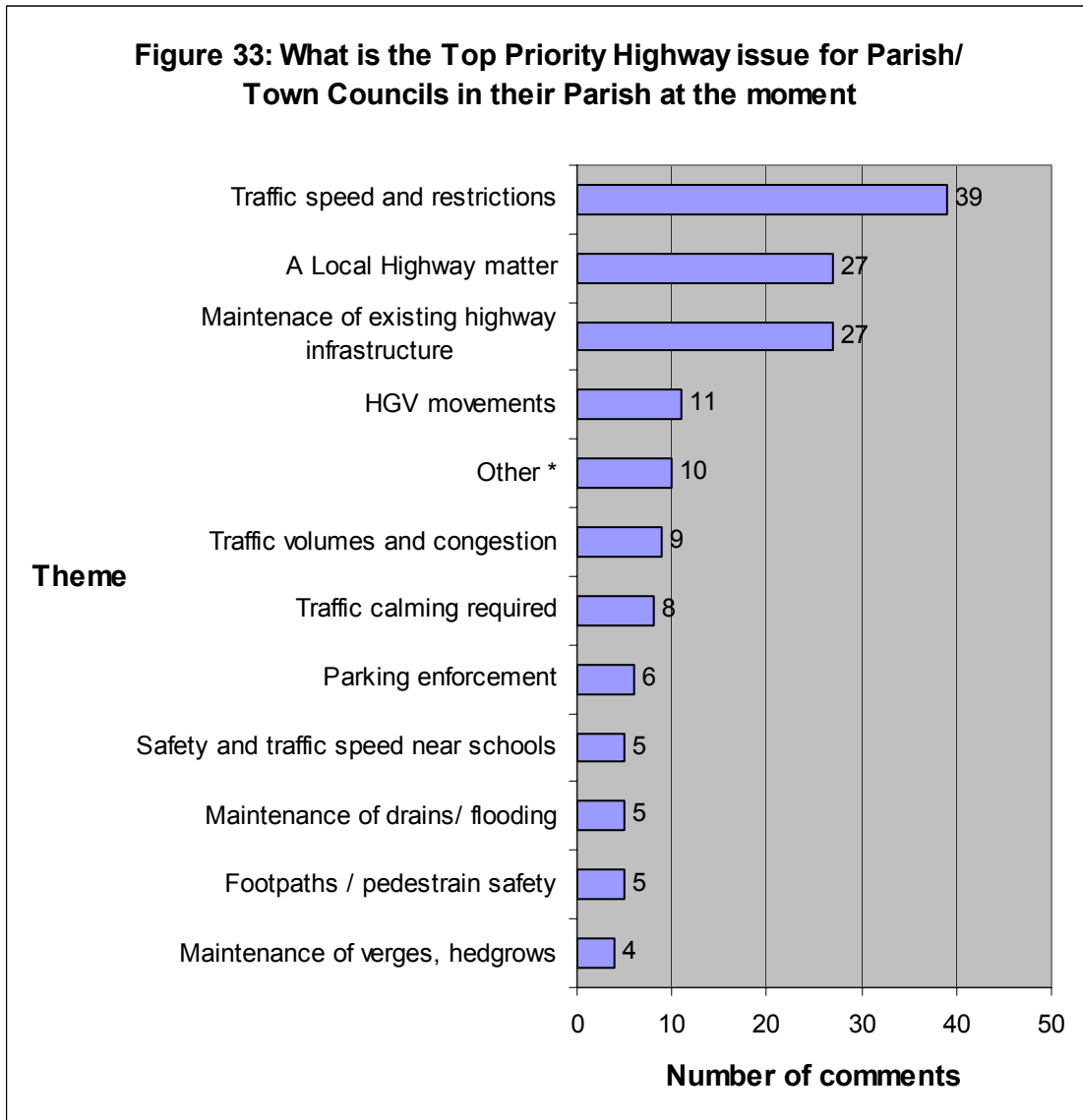
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**2.6 Review of the Top Priority highway issues in Parishes at the moment**

2.6.1 Question 6: What is the Top Priority Highway issue in your Parish at the moment?



\* See Table F1, Appendix F for details.

### **3 Conclusions**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

- 3.1.1 A lot of information has been collated from the detailed responses (159 Parish returns – 53%) to the wide ranging and comprehensive questions posed in the Questionnaire (Appendix B). It is important that this data is summarised and presented in an open and meaningful manner in order to ensure that key messages are apparent, learnt and can be given consideration for appropriate action.
- 3.1.2 Throughout this chapter, reference is made to the net satisfaction rating for each of the Districts where a discrete Highway Unit operates, and for an average of all Parishes in the County. These are indicated by the percentage in brackets after the district name. The formula for calculating “net satisfaction” has previously been shown in para. 1.2.4 and it has been adopted throughout as a good and fair performance indicator that can be easily related to.

#### **3.2 The speed and quality of response**

- 3.2.1 Figures 1 and 2 have shown that most Parish/ Town Councils are satisfied to a reasonable extent with both the speed and quality of response they receive from their District/ Borough Highway Unit. It is noted that both Tunbridge Wells (+88%) and Dover (+57%) have very good ratings in terms of their speed of response. The exception to this overall trend is Swale where Parish Councils have some slight dissatisfaction, with both the speed (-11%) and quality (-21%) aspects.
- 3.2.2 These diagrams also show that Parish/ Town Councils have mixed views on the speed and quality of response they get from the County Council, as the ratings of 0% and –1% indicate.

#### **3.3 Are Parishes satisfied that they receive sufficient information on Highways issues?**

- 3.3.1 Figures 3 to 7 illustrated whether Parish/ Town Councils felt they received sufficient information on a range of highways related issues.
- 3.3.2 From these diagrams, a number of general trends have emerged:
- Generally slight satisfaction with information on policies on highway maintenance. However there are two exceptions in Swale (-16%) and Shepway (-42%).
  - A good deal of dissatisfaction with information received on which road will be salted in winter with a number of Districts having ratings lower than –50%. The exception to this trend being Dover (+29%)
  - Considerable dissatisfaction with information on when roads in their Parish will be inspected as the average figure of –50% indicates. This is an area in which all Highway Units can improve.
  - Parishes give most Districts negative ratings on the information provided to them about road safety and traffic management policies. The only District with a positive rating is Gravesham (+50%).
  - Generally, Parishes are slightly dissatisfied (-14%) with the amount of public transport information they receive. However Parishes' views range widely across Kent, with areas such as Thanet (+33%) and Dartford (+29%) having considerably better ratings than Tonbridge & Malling (-40%) and Gravesham (-50%).

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3.3.3 Parishes were asked to comment on any other information they would like on highways issues and Figure 8 has illustrated the popular themes that have emerged. Many of the comments that were made were individual and so do not readily fit into any category. As a result ten comments have been classified as "other" in the diagram and full details of these can be found in Appendix C. These include a wish for there to be a named person to deal with a particular Parish Council.

3.3.4 From the diagram it can be seen that some of the Parish Councils do not know what Kent Highways' policies on highway maintenance, safety management, etc. are, since they have requested a copy of these following their mention in Question 2.

### **3.4 Thinking about Roadworks**

3.4.1 Figures 9 to 11 demonstrated Parish perception of the roadworks planned and completed by Kent Highways in their area. On a general level these diagrams have shown that there is overall slight dissatisfaction with the advance information (-1%) and the speed of the road works (-9%), but there was some positive perception of the finished works (+9%). These diagrams have also shown that Parishes' views vary widely according to the District/ Borough highway unit providing the service. For instance:

- Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Thanet have positive ratings for all aspects, including the advance information, speed and quality of the finished work.
- However ratings for Canterbury, Dover and Gravesham are negative for these three aspects.

3.4.2 Comparison with 2002's survey results in Table 2 reveals that the overall perception has changed a little over the past year. There has been a slight decrease in satisfaction with how quickly the works are carried out, but on the other hand there has been a small increase in satisfaction with the overall quality of the finished product.

3.4.3 Figures 12 and 13 have provided information on Parishes' perception of the work planned and completed by Statutory Undertakers such as the water companies. The contrast with these results and those for Kent Highways is quite marked. For instance the average rating for advance information (-67%) and the quality of the works (-52%) is much worse than those for Kent Highways (-1% and 9%). This is a trend consistent for most Districts, with the only exception being Gravesham where the ratings for Kent Highways and the Statutory Undertakers are the same.

3.4.4 The final part of this section asked Councils if they knew who was digging up the roads in their Parish and why. Figure 14 has illustrated the results for this question and it is apparent that the average perception is very poor indeed (-71%). Nonetheless there is still some variation according to locality with -40% at Tonbridge and Malling and -100% at Dartford. It would seem that in many Districts the poor ratings relate to the work carried out by people other than Kent Highways. This is evident from Figure 9, where it is clear that the advance Public Relations (PR) undertaken by Tonbridge and Malling is rated at +70%. Yet the Councils in that Borough are not satisfied that they know who is digging up the roads in their Parish.

### **3.5 Has the Highway service improved during the last twelve months?**

3.5.1 Figure 15 showed that:

- 21% (or 32) of Parishes felt that the service had got better;
- 56% (or 84) of Parishes felt that it had stayed the same;
- 24% (or 37) of Parishes thought that it had got worse over the past twelve months.
- It is noted that 6 Parishes did not answer this question.
- Precise figures are found in Appendix D for each District.

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- 3.5.2 Within this general picture there are some exceptions:
- Over 50% of Parishes in Maidstone feel that the service has improved;
  - In Tunbridge Wells, none of the Parishes feel that it has got worse;
  - At least 50% of Parishes in Shepway, Swale and Thanet feel that it has got worse.
- 3.5.3 Analysis of Parishes' comments has been carried out to understand why the service has improved or declined in various parts of the county. The comments made by the 31 Parishes that thought it had got better have been summarised in Figure 16. It is noted that a few Parishes made more than one comment.
- 3.5.4 The diagram shows that the most popular reasons for the service improvement involve the liaison and communication between Kent Highways and Parish Councils. Some of the remaining comments refer to reasons such as staff/ management changes, the completion of more works, the approach of the Parish and a new website to report Highways related problems and issues. Three comments have been made that do not fit any of the categories just described. These are classified as "other" in Figure 16, and are described in detail in Appendix E. These include amongst others a reference to the fact that they have been one of the six parishes earmarked for special attention this year, and that has worked well.
- 3.5.5 Figure 17 summarised the views of the 37 parishes that felt the service had got worse, with a few of them making more than one comment. It illustrates that the most popular comment made by 10 Parishes refers to a perceived lack of resources for Kent Highways to carry out what needs to be done. In this instance the term resources refers to a combination of finance and staff to achieve what the Parishes want.
- 3.5.6 Eight comments have been made that refer to communication and co-ordination issues. These contain a wide range of issues and a summary of these is presented here, with the number of times mentioned in brackets:
- Lack of consultation/ co-ordination between all parties such as contractors, the authority, etc. (2)
  - Bad communication with staff (2)
  - Too much change, such as the movement of KCC departments (2)
  - No feedback (1)
  - Poor supervision has led to low quality work by contractor and statutory undertakers (1)
- 3.5.7 Six Parishes have commented on a feeling that if they did not really push their Highway Unit, then nothing would get done. Hence it is important that Parishes do strive to chase the Highway Unit on problems and issues, rather than hoping for them to be done.
- 3.5.8 Seven comments have been made that do not readily fit any of the categories just described. For reasons of clarity these have been classified as "Other" in Figure 17. Full details of these comments can be found in Appendix E. These include amongst others a reference to a lack of local input as a reason for things not working as well.
- 3.5.9 Comparison of Figures 16 and 17 show that some of the same themes crop up in both the reasons for success and things getting worse. If District Highway Units pay attention to these positive themes and make sure that they do them, then many of the reasons for expressing negative views should disappear. For instance improved liaison and communication with the Parish would mean that they would not have to continually chase up problems. If finance proves to be a problem at certain times, then working with the Parishes closely will enable the really important things to be targeted for improvement. It will also allow the Highway Unit to manage the expectations of the Parish to a realistic level.
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#### 3.6 Satisfaction with various elements of the Highways service in the respondent's Parish

- 3.6.1 Figure 18 has illustrated the average Parish view on a number of aspects of highway maintenance. It shows that their view of most of them is fairly negative. The five aspects that have the worst ratings are:
- HGV/ lorry movements (-46%);
  - Enforcing and managing on-street parking (-40%);
  - State of roads (-33%);
  - Speed limits and their management (-32%);
  - Cleanliness of road drains (-28%).
- 3.6.2 However there was some slight satisfaction with two aspects of highway maintenance, and these are streetlights (+27%) and the 'winter service' (+6%).
- 3.6.3 Respondents to the 2002 survey were asked to state how satisfied they were with many of the aspects presented in Figure 18. Table 3 illustrated that there has been an increase in the satisfaction with six of the eight parts of the maintenance service surveyed in both years. Big increases in satisfaction with the state of the pavements and the cleanliness of the drains have been noted. Nonetheless there is still overall dissatisfaction with these features of the highway infrastructure. On the other hand, Table 3 demonstrated that there has been an increase in dissatisfaction with the state of the road signs and markings over the past year.
- 3.6.4 It is also important to consider the geographical variation that exists in the perception of these aspects of highway maintenance. Figures 19 to 24 illustrate how Parish Council's views on the state of things such as streetlights and roads vary according to the District or Borough. The following trends have been picked out from the diagrams:
- A good level of satisfaction with the streetlighting exists in most Districts. Gravesham and Tonbridge & Malling are both rated very highly (+67% each).
  - Thanet and Dartford are identified as areas where attention/ improvements to streetlights are needed (-33% each)
  - It has been noted in para 3.6.1 that most parishes share general dissatisfaction with the state of the roads, with very low ratings in Gravesham (-100%) particularly. Thanet (+33%) is the only area where Parishes are generally satisfied.
  - Parish/ Town Councils are generally not satisfied with their pavements in the majority of Districts, although the rating in all areas apart from Gravesham is no worse than -30%. However it is noted that there is some slightly positive satisfaction with the pavement condition in Sevenoaks and Maidstone Districts.
  - Parishes are generally dissatisfied with the state of their grass verges in the Mid Kent Districts (Maidstone, Ashford and Shepway), but there is some moderate satisfaction in Districts such as Dover (+35%) and Thanet (+33%).
  - Most Parishes are dissatisfied with the state of their road signs in 10 out of the 12 Districts. Areas with the lowest percentages include Gravesham (-50%) and Maidstone (-44%). Tonbridge & Malling (+20%) is the only District where there is some net satisfaction noted.
  - Figure 24 has indicated that there are mixed views on the state of the road markings. Whilst there is some net satisfaction noted in the areas of Thanet (+33%) and Tonbridge & Malling (+20%), there is a great deal of dissatisfaction in Districts such as Dover (-53%), Maidstone (-44%) and Dartford (-43%).
- 3.6.5 Figure 25 and para 3.6.1 has indicated that there is a great deal of dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of the road drains in the majority of Kent's Parishes and Towns. Most of the Parish/ Town Councils in the Districts of Mid Kent state that they are dissatisfied with this aspect, with Maidstone (-69%) particularly so.
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- 3.6.6 However there is no reason why the cleanliness of drains has to be rated so low across Kent, because in Tonbridge & Malling (+50%), there is a good level of satisfaction noted. It is recommended that this District share its maintenance strategies with the other Districts, so they can improve their handling of this particular part of the Highways service.
- 3.6.7 The 'winter service' is one of the few areas where parishes across the county are generally satisfied. Figure 26 illustrated the geographical variation in this perception, highlighting Gravesham and Tunbridge Wells where there were relatively high ratings (+50% each). However there are a few Districts where the quality of the winter service is not particularly rated, such as Swale (-39%) and Dartford (-29%).
- 3.6.8 Figure 18 indicated that Parish satisfaction with on-street parking enforcement and management was the second worse of all the aspects of highway maintenance. Figure 27 has shown that this is because there is a great deal of dissatisfaction with it in all but two of the Districts. It especially seems to be a problem in North Kent as shown by the satisfaction levels of -71% and -67% in Dartford and Gravesham respectively. The two areas where it does not seem to be as much of a problem are Thanet (+67%) and Tunbridge Wells (+17%). Liaison with those areas where the councils seem to be doing things well will be important to improve delivery of on street parking enforcement and management across Kent.
- 3.6.9 The questionnaire asked councils how satisfied they were with a number of traffic management issues. The results of this have been shown in Figures 28 to 32, pointing to some geographical variation in the trends highlighted in Figure 18 and para 3.6.1:
- The issue of speed limits and their management was the fourth worse area in terms of Parish Council satisfaction. Analysis of Figure 28 indicated that this is because it appears to be a problem for Parishes in 10 out of the 12 Districts, with especially low ratings in Ashford and Dartford (-57% each). The only District where parishes were generally happy was Thanet (+33%), although it is noted that this is small in size.
  - Parishes in Dover (-53%) and Sevenoaks (-44%) are the most dissatisfied with the response to their concerns about crash and casualty sites. It is noted that the opposite view is held by most Parish/ Town Councils in Thanet (+33%) and Canterbury (+15%).
  - Parishes in six Districts are generally dissatisfied with the cycling facilities. These include Swale (-27%) and Tonbridge & Malling (-20%). However parishes in both Shepway and Thanet (+33% each) are generally satisfied as the rating suggests.
  - Figure 31 has illustrated that satisfaction with walking facilities is also quite variable, with general dissatisfaction noted in 6 of the 12 Districts, such as Swale (-40%) and Gravesham (-33%).
  - It is noted that the -13% rating for Sevenoaks is surprising when one considers the Parish rating for a particular aspect of walking facilities – pavements, was moderately good (+26% - see Figure 21). The opposite situation is found for Tunbridge Wells, where walking facilities are seen as moderately good (+17%) but the state of pavements is slightly poor (-13% - see Figure 21).
  - Figure 18 has shown that Parish Councils consider HGV/ lorry movements to be the highway maintenance/ traffic management issue that they are most dissatisfied with. This results from the fact that all but three Districts have net satisfaction levels -40% or lower. These are Thanet (+33%), Shepway (-20%) and Tonbridge & Malling (-20%). Lorry movement concerns may be different across Kent because the suitability of the roads for HGVs and the demand for goods to arrive by lorry is likely to vary from one District to another.

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#### **3.7 Top Priority issues**

- 3.7.1 The vast majority of Parish/ Town Councils have made reference to what they thought to be the top priority highway issue in their Parish, and Figure 33 has summarised what they have stated. This diagram has shown that the top three issues are:
- Traffic speed is a problem and it needs to be restricted (39 comments).
  - Maintenance of the existing highway infrastructure, e.g. resurfacing, repairing potholes, etc. (27 comments).
  - A Local Highway matter (this is something like safety at a named junction – e.g. Key Street Roundabout, Bobbing, or a village such as Littlebourne needs a bypass) (27 comments). The questionnaires used in this survey are to be distributed to Highway Units, which will allow them to understand issues of this nature.
- 3.7.2 Thirteen comments have been made that do not fit any of the main categories described in Figure 33 and for clarity of presentation these have been classified as “other” in the diagram. These include for instance a reference to the desire for the M20 to have a quieter road surface. However it should be noted that this particular concern is a Highways Agency rather than a KCC matter. For full details of these, reference should be made to Appendix F.
- 3.7.3 Comparison with the results from last year reveals that excessive speed and the restriction of it has grown in importance. In 2002, priorities such as maintenance of the existing highway infrastructure and the cleaning of drains were seen as more important, (Reference: Question 9, Appendix 2, KCC Report).
- 3.7.4 In the 2003 survey, there was also a free text box for Parish Councils to write anything on Highways issues that was not covered by any of the previous questions, although 86 of the 159 respondents chose not to do so. These comments have been summarised in Appendix G, although it should be noted that many of these are what has been described in para. 3.7.1 as a “Local Highway Matter”.
- 3.7.5 The remaining comments have also been summarised into a number of appropriate themes in Appendix G, such as communication, status of works programme, etc. These contain some important issues, which may apply across the whole of Kent.

#### **3.8 Summary**

- 3.8.1 Most Parish/ Town Councils are reasonably satisfied with both the speed and quality of response they receive from their local highway unit. It is noted that Tunbridge Wells and Dover have very good ratings in terms of their speed of response. However Parishes have mixed views on the speed and quality of response they get from the County Council.
- 3.8.2 Generally, Parishes feel that they do not receive enough information on Highways related issues. Highway Units should seek to improve the information they provide on:
- the roads to be salted in winter
  - when certain roads are going to be inspected
  - the nature of Kent Highways' policies on highway maintenance and safety management. It is recommended that a resume of these be attached with this executive summary, for forwarding to all Parish/ Town councils.
- 3.8.3 Perception of the advance planning, speed and quality of road works varies quite widely across Kent, with Parishes having positive views of all three aspects in Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Thanet. It is recommended that these Districts share what they do to ensure that best practice is adopted across the county.

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- 3.8.4 The perception of the work planned and completed by statutory undertakers such as the water companies is generally much worse than that carried out by Kent Highways. Some way of improving the way these companies conduct their planning and works on the highway should be investigated.
- 3.8.5 There are mixed views on whether the Highways service has improved over the last year with progress in some Districts and decline in others. For instance over 50% of Parishes in Maidstone state that the service has improved, none of those in Tunbridge Wells feel that it has declined, whilst over 50% think that it has got worse in Shepway and Thanet. Popular reasons for the improvement in services involve enhanced liaison and communication between Kent Highways and Parish Councils. Liaison is important as it invokes the idea of 'partnership'. The service should be about both sides talking to each other rather than one chasing the other to do things or find out what is required. If finance proves to be a problem then close working with a Parish will enable the really important things to be targeted for improvement and allow the Highway Unit to manage realistic expectations.
- 3.8.6 Satisfaction across Kent with aspects of Highway management is at its worst with HGV/ lorry movements; enforcing and managing on street parking; the state of the roads; excessive speed and the cleanliness of road drains. However it is noted that since 2002, views on the roads and drainage has improved and that perception of these things is not poor everywhere. It is important that Districts share information with each other to ensure that good practice is passed on. For example the cleanliness of drains is good in Tonbridge and Malling, and on-street parking appears to be tackled well in Thanet and Tunbridge Wells. It will be useful for other Districts to learn what these Districts are doing, to see if they can improve their own service in these areas.
- 3.8.7 Analysis of the top priority issues has shown that while people may be most dissatisfied with lorry movements, it is not their 'key' issue. Vehicle speed; maintenance of the existing infrastructure and local highway matters specific to that area are all seen as more pressing concerns.
- 3.8.8 It is recommended that the executive summary of this report be shared with Parish/ Town councils along with a refresher of the County Councils' various policies on highway management.

## **4 REFERENCES**

1. "Parish and Town Councils Survey 2002 on Aspects of Highway Maintenance", KCC (2002).



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Appendix B – The Questionnaire



Help us to improve the **HIGHWAY SERVICE** in your Parish

**Questionnaire for Parish/Town Councils**



We want to improve our service to your Parish and are keen to get your views on how we can achieve this. By giving us 5 minutes of your time and filling in this short questionnaire you will help us to continue with the good things we are doing and improve other things. If you would like to talk to us about this questionnaire you will find details at the end.

**Our Parish/Town Council is:**

*please write the name of your Parish or Town Council in the box above*

**Question 1: When you contact us how satisfied are you with...**

<i>(please tick the relevant boxes)</i>		Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
1.1	<b>the speed of response you get from:</b> your District or Borough Council Highway Unit?					
1.2	Kent County Council?					
1.3	<b>the quality of the response you get from:</b> your District or Borough Council Highway Unit?					
1.4	Kent County Council?					

**Question 2: How satisfied are you that we give you sufficient information about....**

<i>(please tick the relevant boxes)</i>		Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
2.1	our policies on highway maintenance?					
2.2	which roads are salted in the winter?					
2.3	when we will be inspecting the roads in your Parish?					
2.4	our policies on road safety and speed management					
2.5	information about public transport in your Parish					
Is there any other information you would like?						

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**Question 3: Thinking about roadworks, how satisfied are you with the following...**

<i>(please tick the relevant boxes)</i>		Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Fairly Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
3.1	the information we provide to you about <b>OUR</b> roadworks in your Parish?					
3.2	how quickly <b>OUR</b> roadworks are carried out?					
3.3	the quality of <b>OUR</b> finished works?					
3.4	the information you get from <b>STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS</b> (gas, water etc) about <b>THEIR</b> roadworks					
3.5	the quality of trenches /holes completed by <b>STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS</b> (gas, water etc)					
3.6	that you know who is digging up the roads in your Parish and why					

**Question 4: Do you think that the highway service in your Parish has improved, stayed the same or got worse over the last 12 months?**

<i>(please tick the relevant box)</i>		Got Better	Stayed the Same	Got Worse
4.1	Over the last 12 months do you think that the highway service in your Parish has.....			
Why do you think this is?				

**Question 5: How satisfied are you with the following in your Parish...**

<i>(please tick the relevant boxes)</i>		Very Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
5.1	The state of the streetlights? (those maintained by KCC)					
5.2	The state of the roads?					
5.3	The state of the pavements?					
5.4	The state of the grass verges?					
5.5	The state of the road signs?					
5.6	The state of the road markings?					
5.7	The cleanliness of road drains?					
5.8	The winter service? (i.e. road salting, salt bins, snow ploughing etc)					
5.9	Our delivery of on-street parking enforcement and on-street parking management schemes					

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Appendix B – The Questionnaire

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Our response to your concerns about the following traffic management issues:					
5.10	Speed Limits / Management				
5.11	Crash & Casualty Sites/Problems				
5.12	Cycling facilities				
5.13	Walking facilities				
5.14	HGV / Lorry movements				

**Question 6: What is the TOP PRIORITY highway issue in your Parish at the moment?**

Please feel free to write any other comments about the highway service we provide to your Parish in the box below

**Thank you very much for taking time to complete this questionnaire. Please put it in the FREEPOST envelope provided and post it back to us. If you could send it back in the next THREE weeks it would be much appreciated**

Contact David Thomas by telephone on 01622 221036 or email on david.thomas@kent.gov.uk if you want to discuss the content or background to this questionnaire.

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Please try our new website [www.kent.gov.uk/highways](http://www.kent.gov.uk/highways) where you will find useful information about the Highway and Transport Service provided by Kent County Council in partnership with District Councils, Babsie, Ringway and Colas.

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The second Annual Review of Kent Highways' service to Parish and Town Councils:  
Appendix C – Comments in Figure 8 classified as "Other"

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**Appendix C: Comments in Figure 8 classified as "Other"**

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Parish</b>
A date when our roads and pavements will be repaired.	Hawkinge
A named person to deal with our Parish Council.	Unknown (Swale)
Are roads ever inspected?	Little Chart
Better publicity on whom to call regarding potholes.	Walmer
Comment about expected time ... (rest is unreadable).	Otford
Comprehensive programme of works to be carried out.	Bobbing
Information on when poor footways are going to be maintained.	Warden
What is the frequency of footway inspections?	Walmer
When to expect thorough verge treatment?	Warden
Who has contract for hedge, verge cutting and snow plough work?	Chilham

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The second Annual Review of Kent Highways' service to Parish and Town Councils:  
Appendix D – Table illustrating the variation between districts on the subject of whether the Highways service has changed over the past twelve months

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**Appendix D**

**Table D1: Variation between districts on the subject of whether the Highways service has changed over the past twelve months (Question 4.1)**

District	Got Better		Stayed the Same		Got Worse		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Ashford	4	20%	13	65%	3	15%	20
Canterbury	2	13%	11	69%	3	19%	16
Dartford	0	0%	4	57%	3	43%	7
Dover	1	6%	13	76%	3	18%	17
Gravesham	1	33%	1	33%	1	33%	3
Maidstone	9	56%	5	31%	2	13%	16
Sevenoaks	5	26%	10	53%	4	21%	19
Shepway	2	18%	3	27%	6	55%	11
Swale	2	11%	8	42%	9	47%	19
Thanet	1	33%	0	0%	2	67%	3
Tonbridge & Malling	2	20%	7	70%	1	10%	10
Tun. Wells	2	25%	6	75%	0	0%	8
Unknown	1		3				
<b>Kent average</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>153</b>

Note: Six Parishes did not answer this question.

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Appendix E – Comments classified as "Other" in Figures 16 to 17

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## **Appendix E**

**Table E1: Comments classified as "Other" in Figure 16**

<b>Positive Comments</b>
Has always given excellent service.
Local accountability.
One of 6 parishes targeted for special attention - has worked well.

**Table E2: Comments classified as "Other" in Figure 17**

<b>Negative Comments</b>
Consequence of years of neglect.
Funding problems and poor management at Swale Borough Council.
Lack of local input.
Lack of will.
New methods although faster to implement are not satisfactory and putting road users at risk.
Nothing is done properly.
Rubbish left on highway and grass verges are not cut often enough.

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The second Annual Review of Kent Highways' service to Town and Parish Councils:  
Appendix F – Top Priority issues classified as “Other” in Figure 33

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## **Appendix F**

**Table F1: Comments classified as “Other” in Figure 33**

<b>Issue</b>
All aspects.
Communicating and keeping promises.
Congestion and pedestrian safety.
Improved safety for motorist and pedestrians in village.
Mud on road.
Quieter M20 surface.
Rapid response from Highway Department.
Speed and safety.
Swale insisting it has no funds for works that the Parish considers essential.
White lining on centre of main roads.

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The second Annual Review of Kent Highways' service to Parish and Town Councils:  
Appendix G – Comments made in the Free Text Box

**Appendix G: Comments made in the Free Text Box**

**Free text box comments regarding the Kent Highways service in general**

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Parish</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Acknowledgement of communications to Highways at Ashford required.	Chilham	Communication
Bad communication with KCC Highways.	Southfleet	Communication
Bad communication with Swale.	Lower Halstow	Communication
Better, communication has improved.	Addington	Communication
City Council is helpful on the phone.	Bridge	Communication
Clerk on Council for only short time prefer to comment in a years time.	Lyminge	Communication
Communication to village re progress on current highway matters.	East Sutton	Communication
Correspondence not to be ignored.	Barham	Communication
Good communication with Highways but poor response to correspondence.	Farningham	Communication
Good response but bad actioning.	Newham	Communication
Inordinate delay in dealing with reported matters.	Linton	Communication
Highways at Cranbrook are very useful. KCC Highways unknown?	Sandhurst	Lack of Awareness
The Parish council is totally unaware of any services you provide.	Hothfield	Lack of Awareness
As Bicknor lies on the edge of Swale & Maidstone both Boroughs blame each other for lack of maintenance.	Bicknor	Other
Concerned about open access to motorway at emergency access points.	Brasted	Other
Dead trees on highway verge.	Bearsted	Other
Impressed with speed camera.	Hawkinge	Other
Need for monitoring and improving the flow of traffic into and out of Bluewater.	Bean	Other
More empowerment for minor road maintenance to Parish Councils.	Meopham	Other
Quality of roads in the area has been slowly declining.	Kingston	Other
The majority of items are not major but amalgamated together sums up parish frustration.	Ditton	Other
These forms seem to be a waste of time.	High Halden	Other
Stowting, Shepway requests a reply to this questionnaire.	Stowting	Other
Bad performance by contractors causing concern	Littlebourne	Performance
Is there a planned maintenance programme? Repairs are often poor quality.	Waltham	Performance
Appears to be a lack of will to get things done or institute any improvement. Always claim there is no funding.	Hever	Resources
At every public meeting, the same comment is made "there are not the resources to carry out the works".	Cranbrook	Resources
Funds allocated to Maidstone Highways are not enough to service rural areas.	Chart Sutton	Resources
It seems that lack of budget limits the ability to take acceptable action.	Headcorn	Resources

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Appendix G – Comments made in the Free Text Box

<b>Comments</b>	<b>Parish</b>	<b>Issue</b>
Lack of funding.	Exthorne	Resources
Appreciated the help given with car park project.	Teynham	Satisfied
Excellent working knowledge with Kent & Thanet HU.	Broadstairs and St. Peter's	Satisfied
Good support from Gravesham Highways.	Higham	Satisfied
Quite satisfied with Ashford Highways.	Orlestone	Satisfied
Road Schemes take too long from inception to fruition and liable to failure.	Goudhurst	Slow progress
Slow responses to works promised.	Thanington	Slow progress
Speed of repair is slow.	Swarden	Slow progress
Time delay in carrying out works.	Kingsnorth	Slow progress
Long outstanding highway issues.	Seal	Status of Programmes
More feedback from Highways on agreed programmes.	Swanley	Status of Programmes
Parish councils to be informed on annual maintenance work programme.	Boxley	Status of Programmes
Ashford Highways is efficient but towns seem to get priority over rural areas.	Charing	Town vs. country
Swanscombe is neglected due to major prestigious developments taking favour.	Swanscombe	Town vs. country

Note: There were also 30 comments classified as "Local Highway Matters".

**Kent County Council**  
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The second Annual Review of Kent Highways' service to Parish and Town Councils:  
Appendix G – Comments made in the Free Text Box

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