

WARD WALKS REPORT

SANDHURST

July 2007 – PILOT



**WARD WALK PILOT – JULY 2007
SANDHURST**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Ward Walks pilot was carried out in Sandhurst during July 2007. The programme enabled Council staff and Councillors to interact face to face with residents and learn about the key issues in this area. Information gathered from the interviews provided valuable information on how services could be improved, how residents felt about their local area and particular issues that were of concern at that time.

The Ward Walks programme was set up not just as another form of consultation but an opportunity to learn first hand what attention needs to be given to these areas and to inform service areas and partner agencies, where resources should be prioritised.

There are a further three components to the programme in addition to the consultation; acknowledgement and response to urgent issues, reports for the Council, Parish Councils and relevant partner agencies, followed by community feedback events to inform residents of the key issues raised and provide the opportunity to discuss their issues in more detail with agencies who provide services in their area.

A total of 102 interviews were completed in Sandhurst. A number of respondents, who did not wish to participate in the survey, also raised key issues. This report provides a clear but in depth overview of the results from this research and recommendations where necessary.

2. AIMS OF THE PILOT

The Ward Walks programme set out to meet the following aims:

- To enhance engagement with local residents through a systematic process.
- Place Councillors at the frontline of engagement
- Provide an opportunity for face to face contact with local residents
- Learn about key issues at a localised level
- To act upon resident's immediate concerns and to inform long term policy development

As the list reveals, the initial focus of the programme was to engage with residents at a much more in depth level. The Local Government White Paper emphasised the need for local authorities to increase citizen engagement in order to shape the direction and delivery of services. Neighbourhood priorities should be used to inform services of how and where resources should be concentrated; to apply a bottom up approach to service delivery. The White paper advocates the enhanced involvement of local communities to actively engage in their local services.

Therefore the design of the ward walk programme looked to develop a process of engaging with residents, which incorporated these aims. By setting up a model of interaction and response at this level, it laid the foundation for developing long-term policy, improvements in service delivery and more importantly customer satisfaction.

3. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

3.1 Location of ward walks

Sandhurst was one of two areas chosen as part of the pilot programme, which represented a rural setting within the borough.

Sandhurst is a small rural village located to the far east of the borough on the Rother District and Ashford Borough border.

The parish of Sandhurst has approximately 530 households, a population of 1,328 (census 2001) and is located within the ward of Hawkhurst and Sandhurst.

3.2 Sampling

The Parish Council helped to identify different areas that could be visited. In Sandhurst, 17 roads were selected covering the centre of the village, Sandhurst Cross and lanes on the outskirts of the village.

Three ward walk sessions were held in Sandhurst and interviewing took place at different times, to ensure that a good number of interviews were completed:

Location	Date	Time
Sandhurst	Tuesday 10 July 2007	10 am – 2 pm
	Wednesday 11 July 2007	4 pm – 7.30 pm
	Saturday 14 July 2007	10 am – 12noon

Figure 1: Date and times of ward walks

By holding ward walk sessions in the evening and at the weekend, it meant interviewers could reach residents that were out at work or occupied with young children during the week. This helped to approach a greater range of respondents.

3.3 Interviews

The pilot sought to get Councillors and Council staff working together to interview residents. Council staff, Ward Members, Parish and County Councillors were invited to take part in the Ward Walks.

It was agreed before the programme started, that interviewing should be carried out in pairs, a Councillor with member of staff or male with female where possible. This did occur, although there were times where two of the same gender had to interview together and the ratio of Council staff to Councillor was often higher. Interviews were carried out in pairs for safety reasons.

In total, 38 Council staff took part in the pilot and the average number of sessions attended was two. Fifteen Councillors took part in both areas; five of which were Ward members, one Portfolio Holder and nine Parish/ Town Councillors. However Councillors only attended sessions in their local constituency.

The number of interviewers and the time and length of each ward walk session did have an impact on the number of interviews completed (see figure 2).

Date	Time of day/ Length of time	No. of pairs/ groups interviewing	No. of interviews completed
Sandhurst			
Tuesday 10 July	Daytime – 4 hrs	8	49
Wednesday 11 July	Evening – 3.5 hrs	5	32
Saturday 14 July	Morning – 2 hrs	5	20
By phone		N/A	1

Figure 2: Interviews completed at each ward walk

The questionnaire was created in partnership with Ipsos MORI (research consultants) and focused on a number of issues relating to the resident's local area and services provided.

Questions looked at the following:

- First attraction to area
- Best and worst things about the local area
- Rating how safe resident feels in their local area and level of crime
- Satisfaction with services and access to facilities
- Most important services provided and suggestions for improvements
- Source of information preferred when learning about local issues
- Level of community involvement in local area
- Urgent issues that need to be addressed
- Key issues in local area and opportunity to raise additional comments

3.4 Publicity

Residents were informed that the Ward Walks were taking place through various forms of publicity. Residents living within the selected roads were hand delivered a postcard advertising the programme, of which approximately 400 were delivered in Sandhurst. A small piece was placed in the Sandhurst parish magazine and posters placed in the village notice boards. A webpage was also designed for the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website, which listed the dates and provided a suggestions box to complete online. The Ward Walks design was eye catching and a number of residents commented on the promotion campaign. Interviewers also carried name badges during each ward walk and wore t-shirts, which clearly identified the purpose of their visit.

3.5 Process involved

Councillors and Council staff were offered to attend training prior to the Ward Walks by Ipsos MORI. This training took place on Thursday 5 July 2007 and gave interviewers the chance to raise any concerns they had with the process, look at draft copies of the questionnaire and discuss practical issues, such as travel and emergency situations. In Sandhurst, an officer attended a Parish meeting to inform Councillors of the procedures involved and to discuss practical issues.

3.6 Analysis of results

Data from the completed questionnaires were placed onto a database and responses were coded to assist with analysis. Analysis was then carried out using analytical software (SPSS).

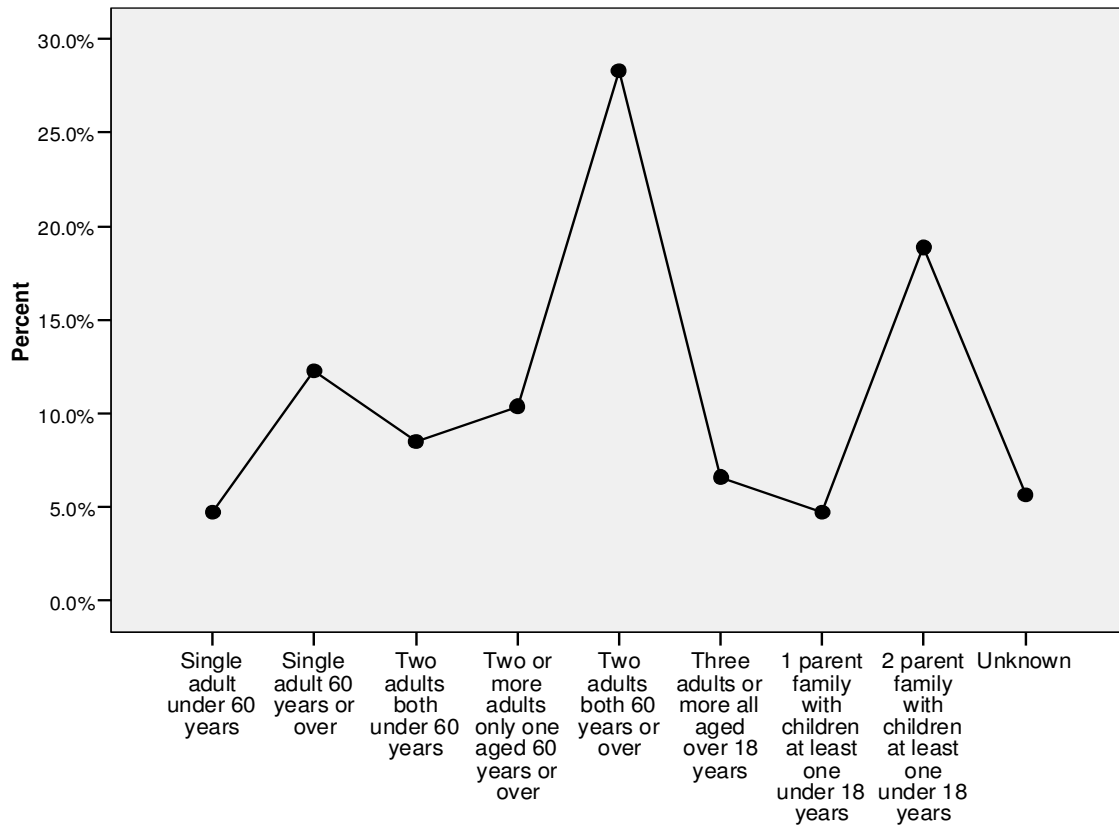


Figure 4: Household composition of respondents in Sandhurst

4.4 Household tenure

Household tenure	Sandhurst (%)
Own outright	52.8
Own with mortgage	26.4
Rent from housing association	9.4
Rent from private landlord	0.9
Other	2.8
Unknown	7.5
Total	100.0

Figure 5: Household tenure of respondents in Sandhurst.

As figure 5 indicates, the majority of respondents in Sandhurst were owner-occupiers (79.2%). About half of the respondents owned their property outright, which may have reflected the age groups interviewed in the pilot whereas only 9.4% of respondents rented their property from a Housing Association.

4.5 Ethnicity

The vast majority of residents interviewed were White British (91.5%) and other than those respondents who did not declare their ethnicity, the only other ethnic group recorded was 'White Other' (2.8%).

5. SATISFACTION WITH THE LOCAL AREA

5.1 Features that attracted respondents to Sandhurst

- 70% of respondents had lived in the Sandhurst area for more than ten years.
- Only 16.7% of respondents had lived in the Sandhurst area for five years or less.

This suggested that respondents tended to have good local knowledge and possibly stronger views on local issues.

The top three reasons for respondents locating to the Sandhurst area are listed in figure 6, of which having family in the area played an important part.

Sandhurst		
1	Family in area	(19.8%)
2	Born in area	(9.4%)
3	Countryside	(8.5%)

Figure 6: Top three reasons for locating to Sandhurst

There was some correlation between how long a household had lived in the area and their reason for locating there. Out of those who had located to Sandhurst in the past five years, 23.5% located there for primary, secondary schools and facilities for school age children in the area. The countryside, parks and open spaces however had been a longstanding attraction for people moving to Sandhurst.

5.2 Best and worst things

The top two best things about living in the Sandhurst area were:

- 1) Other reasons (34.9%)
- 2) Schools (22.6%)

The 'Other reasons' recorded by respondents included the 'Countryside', 'Peace and quiet' and 'friendly people.' 25% of those who thought the best thing about the area were the schools, had located in that area for that reason. Nearly 40% of respondents, who regarded 'other reasons' as the best thing, had located to the area to be near family members so it may be that proximity to family and friends was regarded as most important.

The top two worst things about living in the Sandhurst area were:

- 1) Transport (34.9%)
- 2) Other reasons (30.2%)

An additional 8.5% also regarded traffic congestion as a problem.

Respondents felt 'Transport' was one of the worst things about living in the area, likely to be due to the lack of public transport available at present; the bus service only 2 hourly and no direct route to train station.

'Other reasons' mentioned by respondents included various issues, such as traffic, refuse and recycling, lack of streetlights and transport.

5.3 Raising children

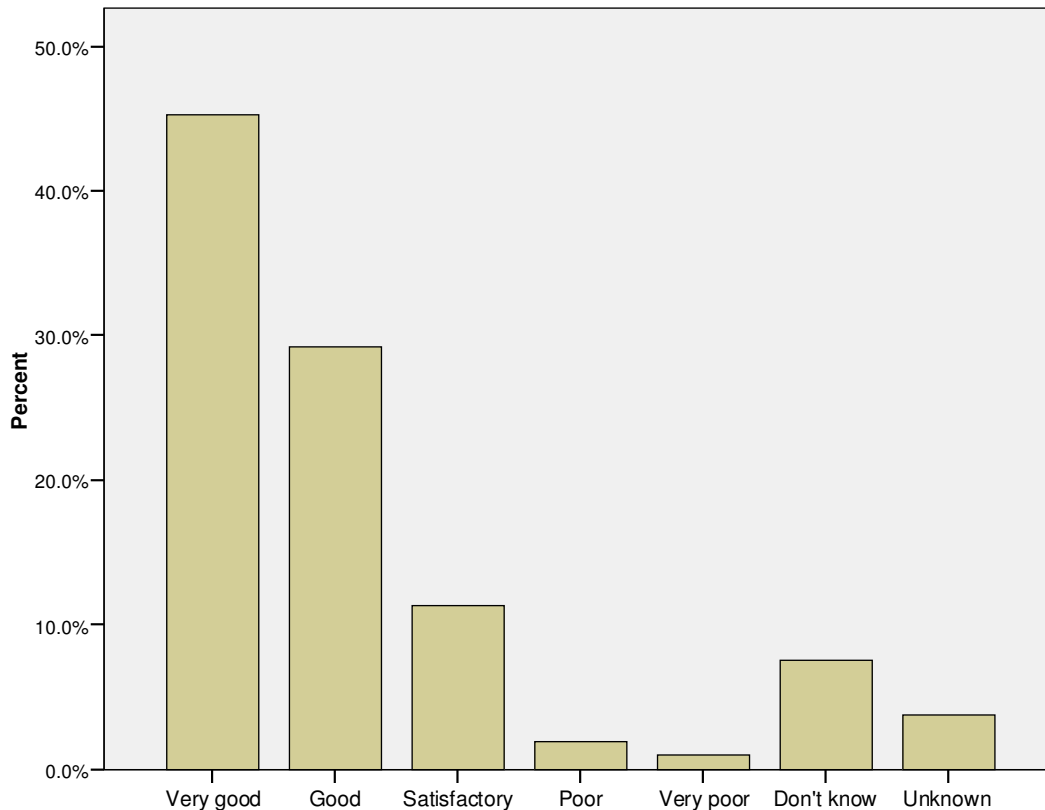


Figure 7: Rating the local area as a place to raise children

Sandhurst was rated as a good place to raise children (see figure 7):

- Sandhurst was rated as 'Very good' by 45.3% of respondents
- A number of respondents were unable to answer this question, as they did not have children.

When comparing the length of time a household had lived in the Sandhurst area with their opinion on raising children, those who had lived in the area for 11 to 40 years, provided a significantly higher rating.

- 31.0% of Sandhurst respondents who rated the area as a 'Very good' place to raise children regarded 'Schools' as one of the best things about living there.

5.4 Place to live

Respondents in Sandhurst were satisfied with their local area as a place to live (figure 8);

- 86.7% felt 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' within the Sandhurst area

Furthermore, 74.3% of Sandhurst respondents who felt 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the area as a place to live raised no key issues. Out of those who were dissatisfied with the area as a place to live, issues such as refuse collection, police presence and customer service issues were identified as needing improvement.

The response to this question provides a similar response to that given by residents who took part in the BVPI General survey 2006/07 whereby 84.0% of respondents felt 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with their local area as a place to live.

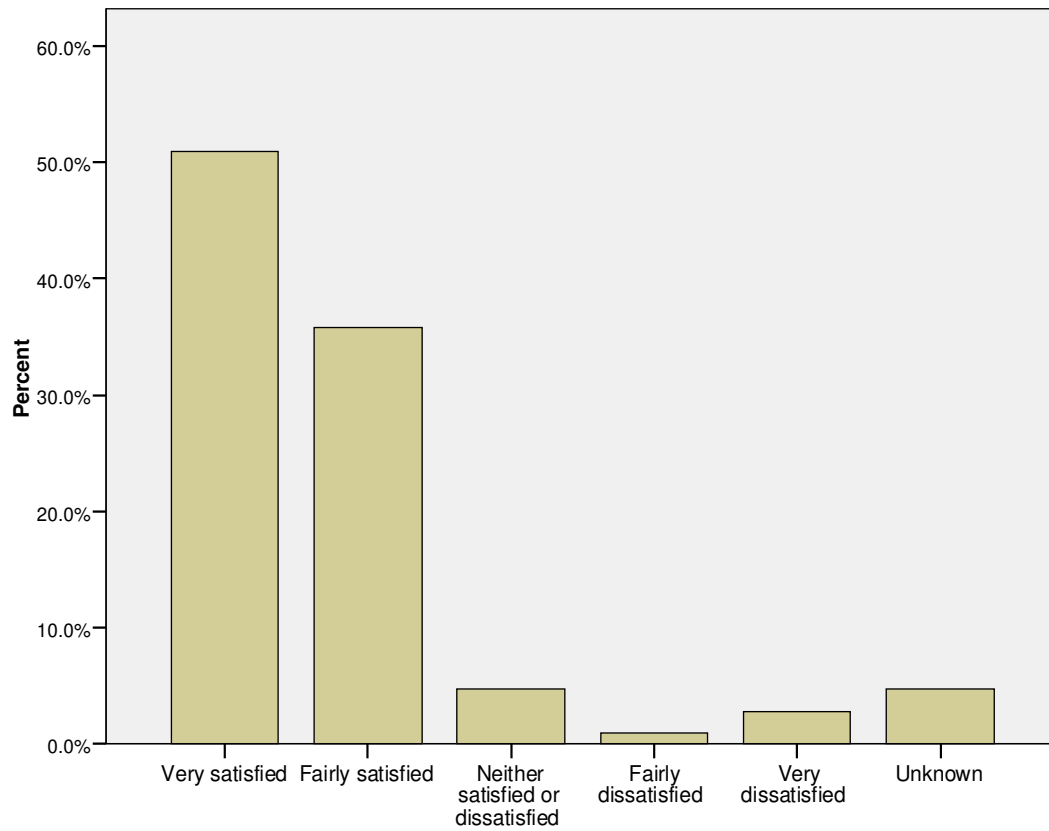


Figure 8: Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live

6. SATISFACTION WITH THE SERVICES PROVIDED

6.1 Key issues and important services

Top five issues to be addressed in the Sandhurst area:

- Traffic calming and road maintenance
- Public transport (bus service)
- Refuse and recycling (need for recycling facilities in Sandhurst)
- Facilities for young people (and new village hall)
- Need for police presence and community safety

Top five services that need improving in Sandhurst:

- Public transport
- Recycling facilities
- Refuse collection
- Community centre/ village hall
- Other

Top three services regarded as most important:

- Refuse collection
- Road maintenance
- Street cleaning

6.2 Road maintenance, street cleaning and traffic calming

Traffic calming and road maintenance featured as the top issue in Sandhurst. Road maintenance was also regarded as one of the most important services in Sandhurst.

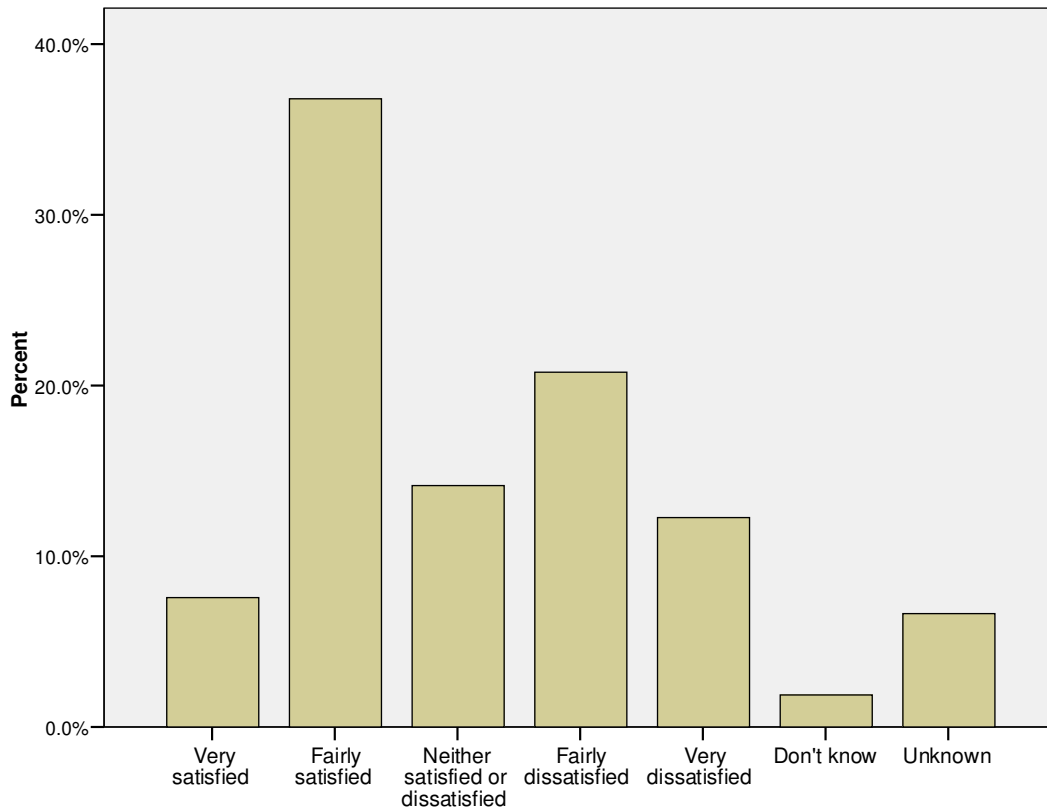


Figure 9: Satisfaction with road maintenance

One third of respondents in Sandhurst felt 'fairly satisfied' with road maintenance. However 20.8% of respondents in Sandhurst were 'fairly dissatisfied' with the service provided. Issues such as potholes and general maintenance of the roads caused dissatisfaction in this rural area.

- Road maintenance was considered an important service mostly by respondents' aged 40 and over.
- Household tenure had no impact on satisfaction with road maintenance.
- Respondents that regarded road maintenance as an issue in Sandhurst tended to be aged 60 or over.

Level of satisfaction with street cleaning

Respondents from Sandhurst regarded street cleaning as one of the most important services.

Nearly 50% of respondents in Sandhurst felt 'fairly satisfied' with street cleaning and a further 20% were 'very satisfied' (figure 10).

- Half of those respondents in Sandhurst who thought street cleaning was an important service, were aged 60 or over.

There was no correlation between the length of time a respondent lived in the area and regarded street cleaning as an important service. This suggests that the service has maintained the same current standard for a period of time.

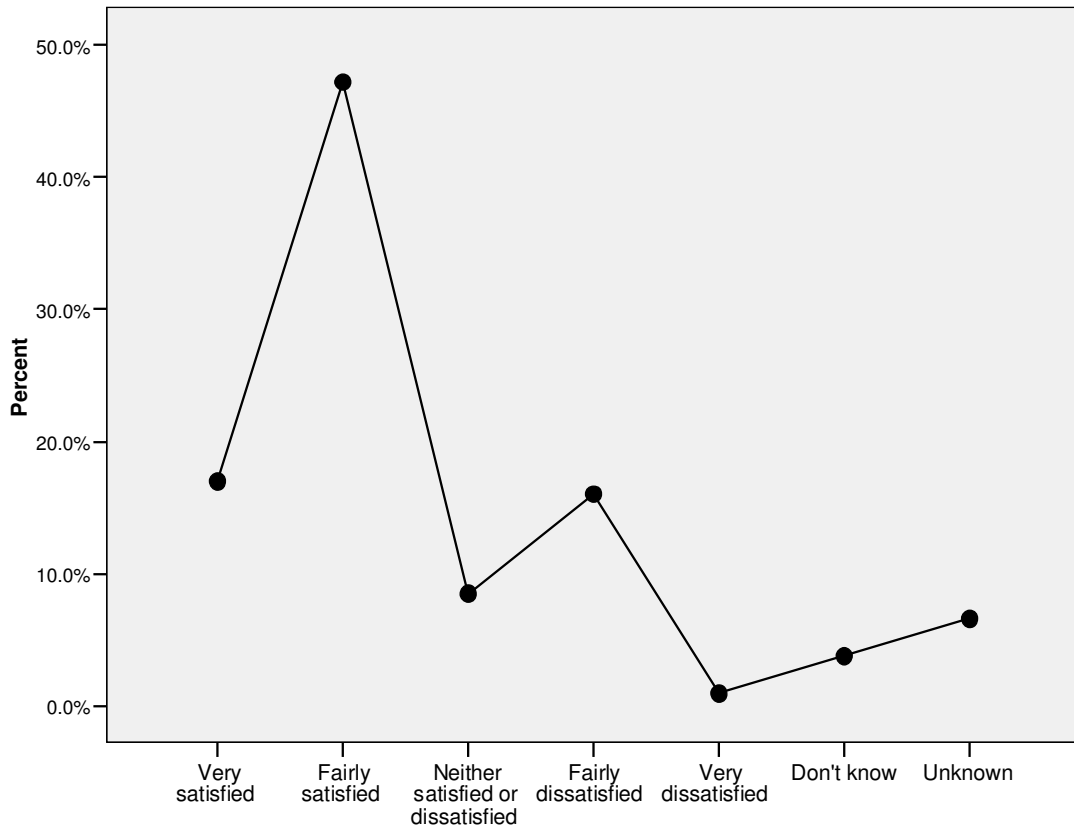


Figure 10: Satisfaction with street cleaning

Traffic calming

Traffic calming was regarded as one of the top five issues in Sandhurst. In Sandhurst, respondents were generally concerned about the speed of traffic travelling through the village, on the main road (Queen Street) and on Bodiam Road, at Sandhurst Cross. Respondents thought some form of traffic calming was required for the village to reduce risk of accidents.

- Respondents of all ages between 25 and 75 years or over regarded traffic calming as a key issue in Sandhurst.
- There was no correlation between the length of time that respondents had lived in their area and the issue of traffic calming.

6.3 Public transport

Public transport was regarded as the second most important issue in Sandhurst and respondents also suggested that improvements were required to improve this service. The main issue that respondents in Sandhurst were referring to was the recent reduction in the frequency of their bus service.

As figure 11 illustrates, there is quite a high level of dissatisfaction with the Public transport services provided in Sandhurst.

- 55% of respondents that raised Public transport as a key issue were either 'a single adult aged 60 years or over' or one of 'two adults aged 60 years or over.' This is likely to be due to their dependence on public transport.
- However respondents from various household tenure regarded public transport as an important service.

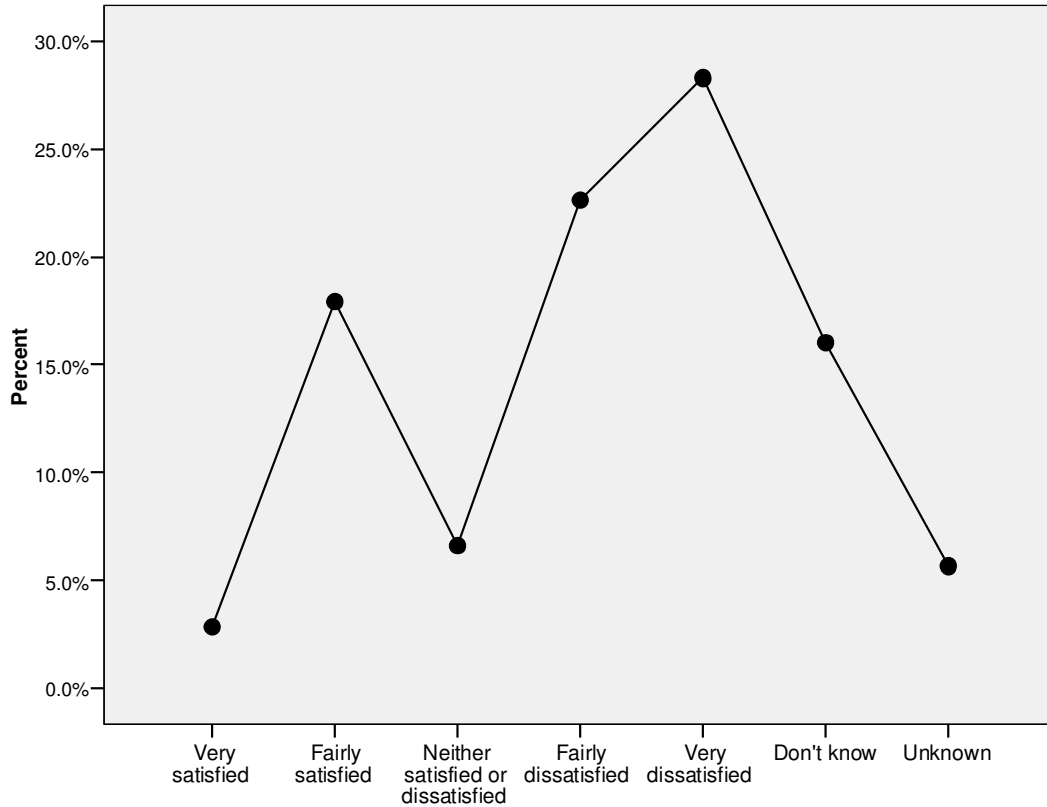


Figure 11: Satisfaction with access to public transport

6.4 Parking issues

Sandhurst was reported to be experiencing problems with traffic congestion and parking but specifically at school times.

6.5 Refuse collection and recycling facilities

Refuse collection and recycling facilities were regarded as one of the top five issues in Sandhurst. Refuse collection was also regarded as one of the services that was most important to respondents. A number of respondents made particular suggestions as to how the refuse collection and current recycling facilities could be improved.

- Provide recycling facilities (**a bring site**) in Sandhurst
- Add plastics and cans to the **door-step** recycling service
- Recycling facilities in Cranbrook and Hawkhurst are often **overflowing**
- Provide **weekly** refuse collection

Residents from varying household tenure regarded the current state of refuse collection and recycling facilities as a key issue in their local area.

- 61% of respondents from Sandhurst thought refuse collection was an important service.
- Approximately two thirds of Sandhurst respondents, who suggested that the refuse collection and recycling facilities should be improved, were female.

6.6 Leisure and Recreation

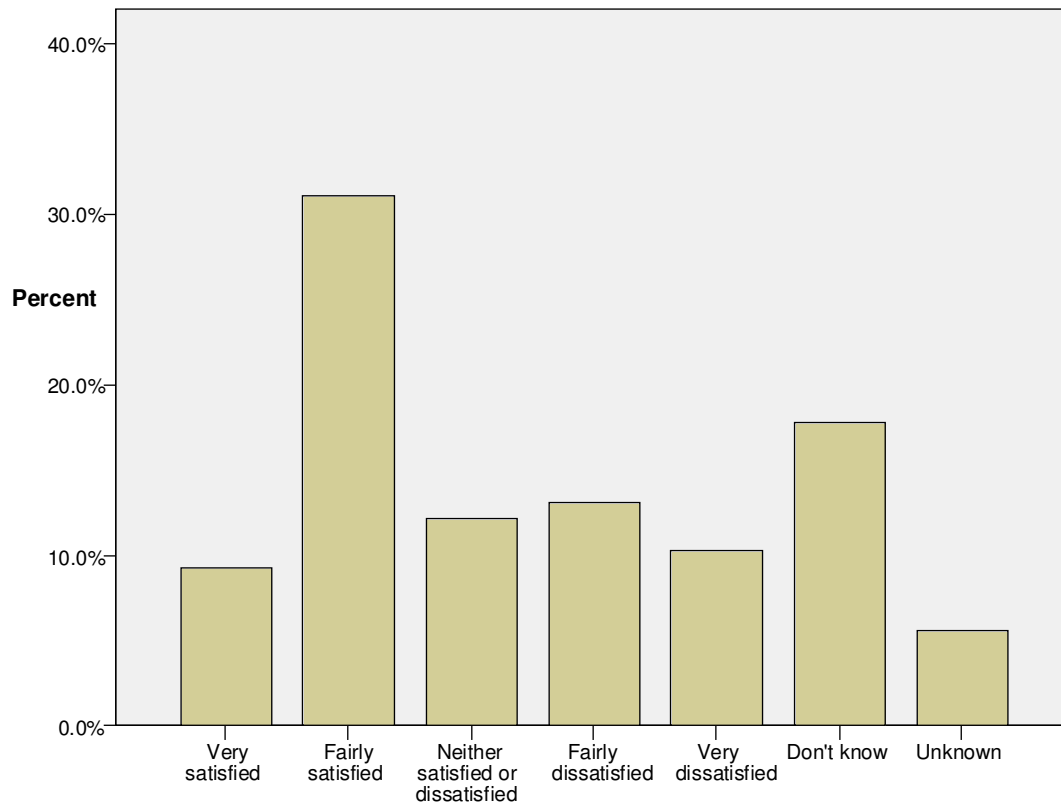


Figure 12: Satisfaction with cultural and recreation facilities

As figure 12 indicates, there was quite a difference of opinion regarding leisure and recreation facilities in the area; 40.5% of Sandhurst respondents were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with cultural and leisure facilities, a number mentioning the cinema in Hawkhurst as one good facility but there were also a spread of respondents who were not satisfied with the facilities available.

- 9.4% of respondents in Sandhurst suggested that improvements ought to be made to leisure and recreation facilities.
- Respondents who were from a range of household composition and had lived in the area from 2 to 60 years regarded leisure and recreation as an issue in Sandhurst.

Respondents in Sandhurst were reasonably satisfied with parks and open spaces (65.1%). 12.3% of respondents in Sandhurst thought Parks and Open spaces were an important service.

- Half of those respondents were from a two-parent family with children (see figure 13).

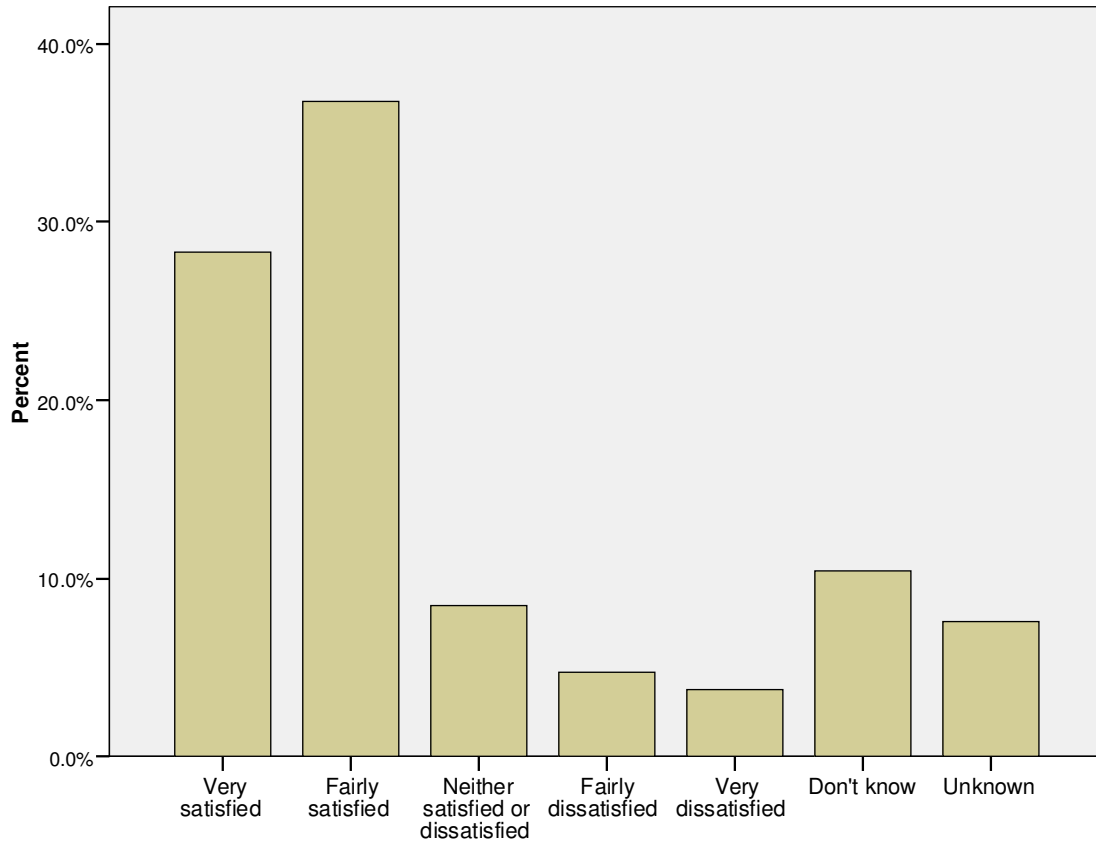


Figure 13: Satisfaction with parks and open spaces

6.7 Community Safety

The need for police presence and community safety was regarded as one of the top five issues in Sandhurst.

Rating how safe respondents felt

When asked how safe respondents felt in their local area, the majority of respondents felt 'fairly safe.'

- 86.8% felt 'very safe' or 'fairly safe' in Sandhurst.

Level of crime

Respondents were also asked whether they considered any change to have occurred in the level of crime in the past year. Around half of respondents thought that the level of crime had stayed the same in the Sandhurst area (56.6%).

One fifth of respondents in Sandhurst were not sure whether there had been any change in the level of crime. This suggests that a number of respondents were not sure what type of crime this question referred to.

- 98% of respondents in Sandhurst who thought that there had been no change in the level of crime in the past year, felt 'very safe' or 'fairly safe' in their local area.
- 84.6% of those who thought there was a little more crime, still felt 'fairly safe' in their local area.

This could suggest that the criminal activity that occurred in the past year was either a specific form of crime or in a particular area.

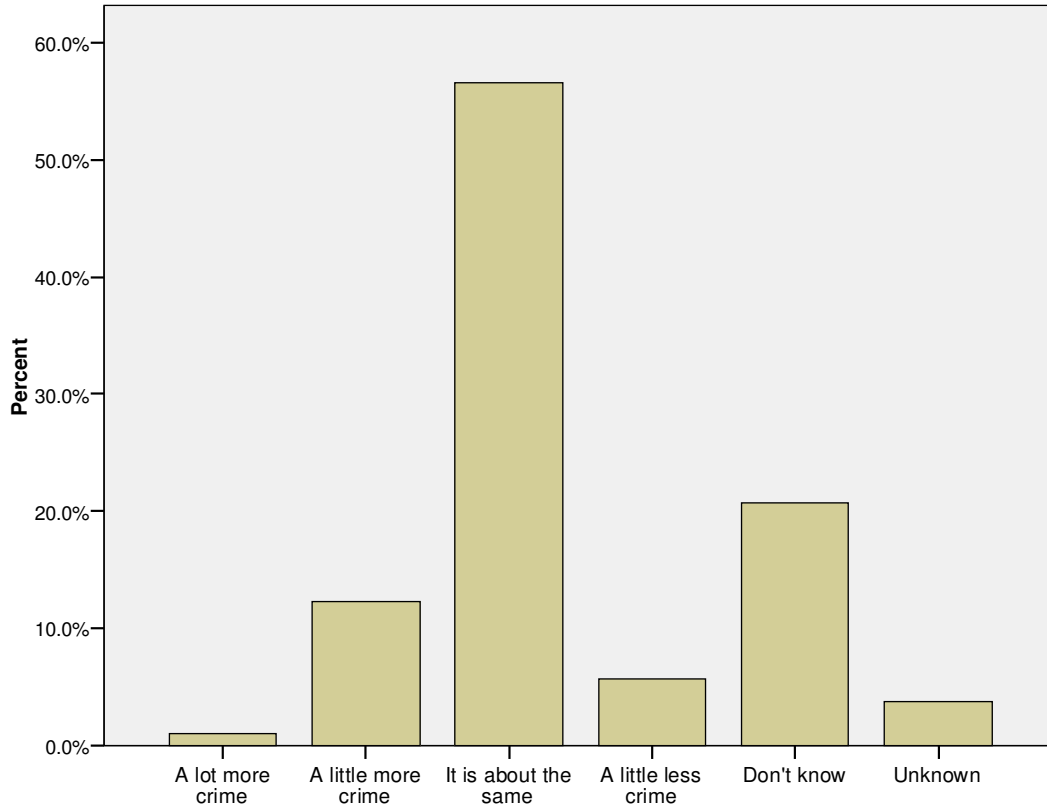


Figure 14: Has level of crime changed in past year?

Out of those who regarded police presence and community safety as a key issue in Sandhurst, 63.6% owned their property outright and were part of 'two adults both 60 years or over.'

- One third of respondents who raised police presence and community safety as a key issue were female.

Of which the majority had also lived in the local area for over ten years, which suggests that there may have been some change in the level of crime, in the past ten years.

6.8 Health Services

Nearly 60% of Sandhurst respondents were satisfied with current access to a GP but a number had to travel quite a distance into neighbouring districts. Satisfaction with access to health services was somewhat less. Nearly thirty percent of respondents were 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied.'

Much of this dissatisfaction related to the lack of NHS Dentists in the local area. Another common issue raised by respondents was how lack of transport affected the ability to travel to Doctor's appointments in Hawkhurst or nearby towns.

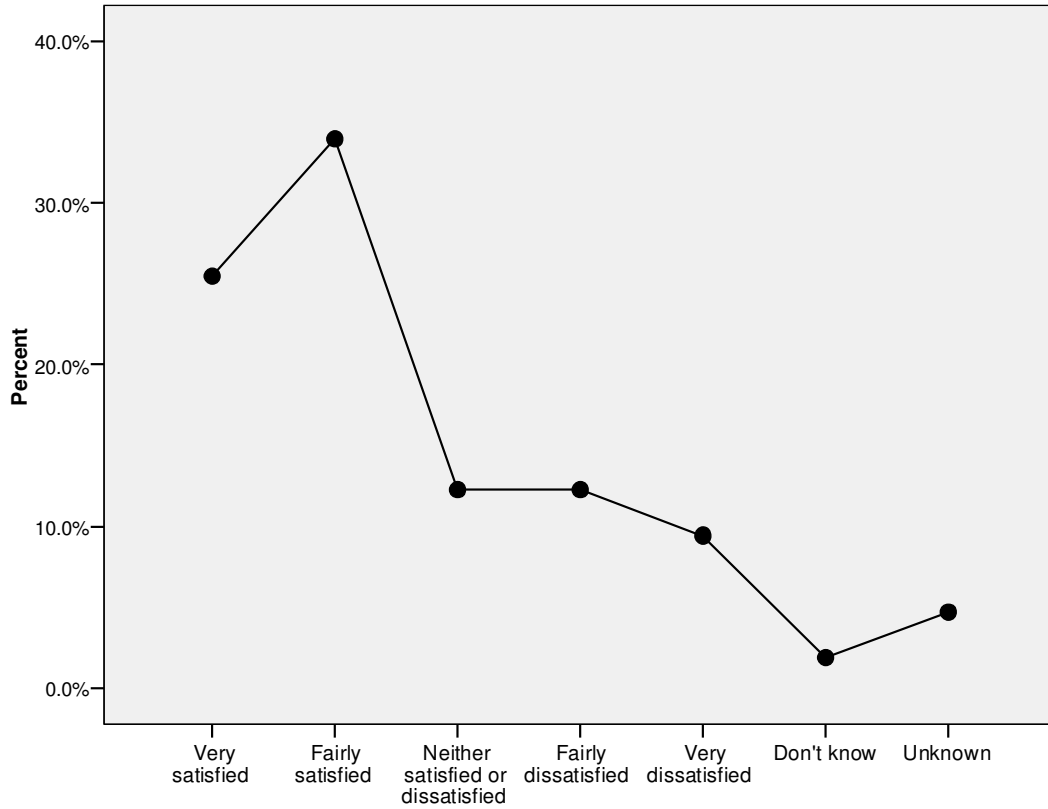


Figure 15: Satisfaction with access to GP services

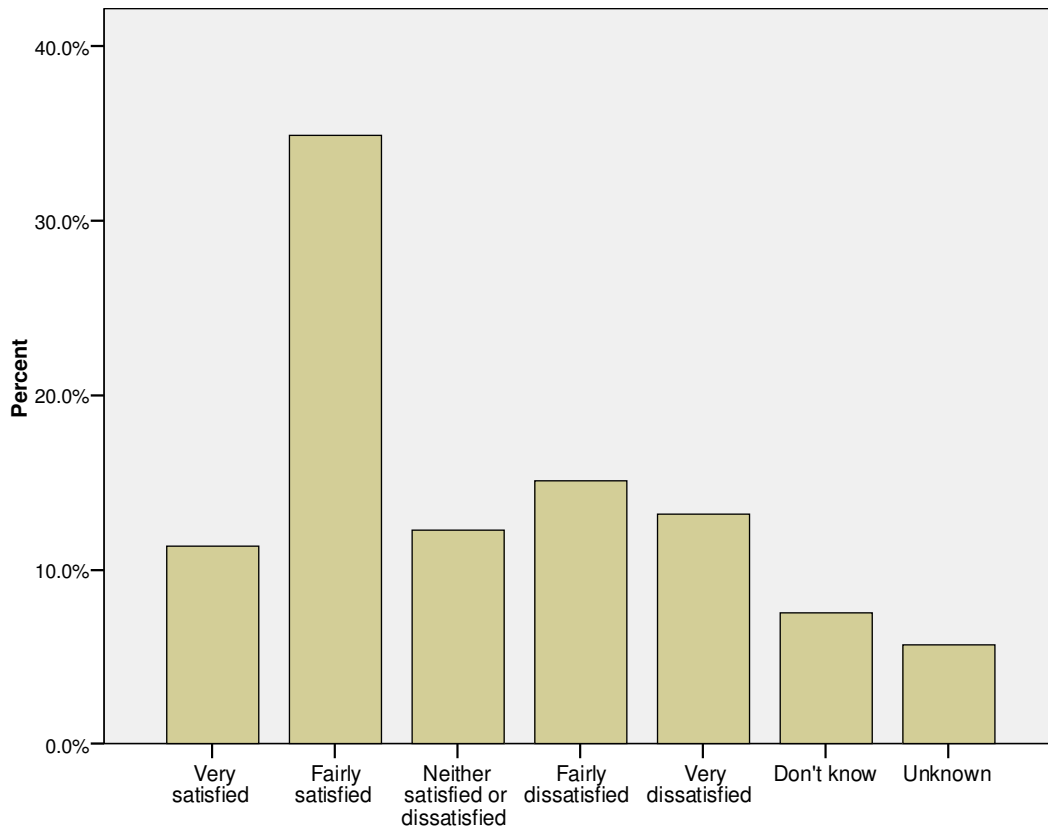


Figure 16: Satisfaction with access to all health services

6.9 Education

Respondents were generally satisfied with access to good schools in the Sandhurst area (figure 17).

- 71.7% of respondents in Sandhurst were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied.'

When respondents were asked what services they thought were most important in their local area, 4.7% in Sandhurst stated Education.

- 22.6% of respondents regarded Schools as one of the best things about living in the area.

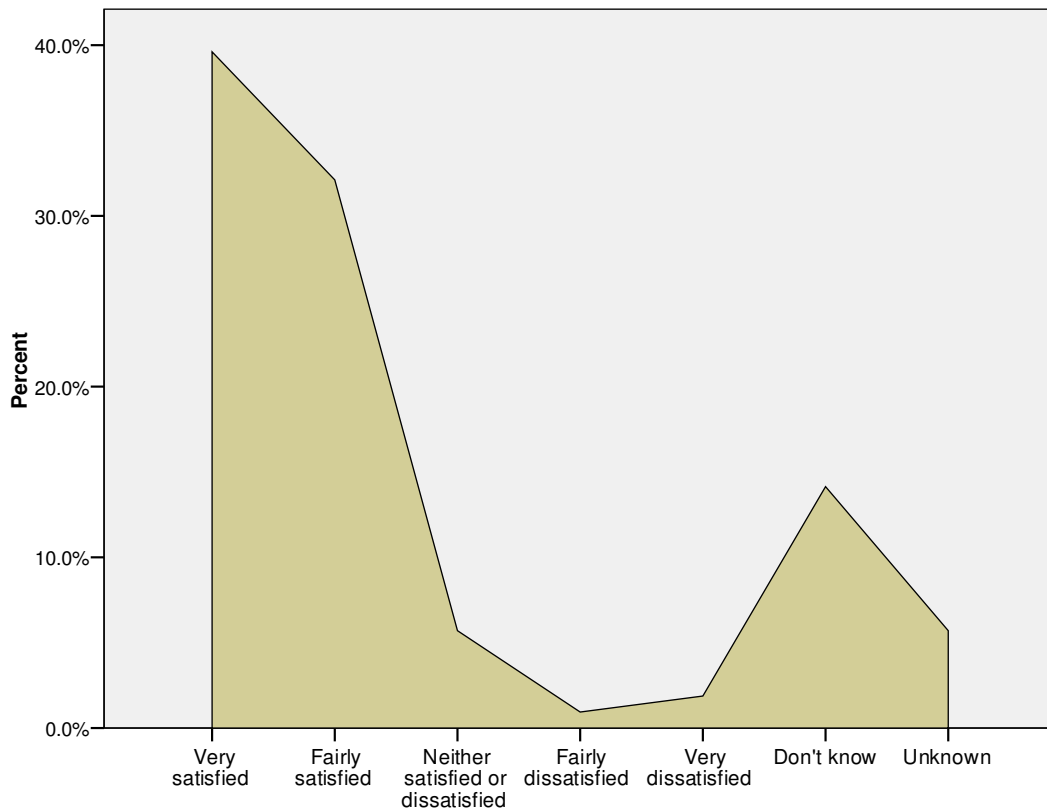


Figure 17: Satisfaction with access to good schools

6.10 Planning and Development issues

A number of respondents discussed the impact of planning and development in their local area.

Sandhurst respondents discussed a recent planning application for development in their village. Others thought there ought to be more flexibility on development in the rural area and felt there was a requirement for affordable housing, for the young people of the village.

- 6.7% regarded planning and development as a key issue in Sandhurst

7. CROSS – CUTTING ISSUES

7.1 Customer Service

Satisfaction with the way Tunbridge Wells Borough Council runs things

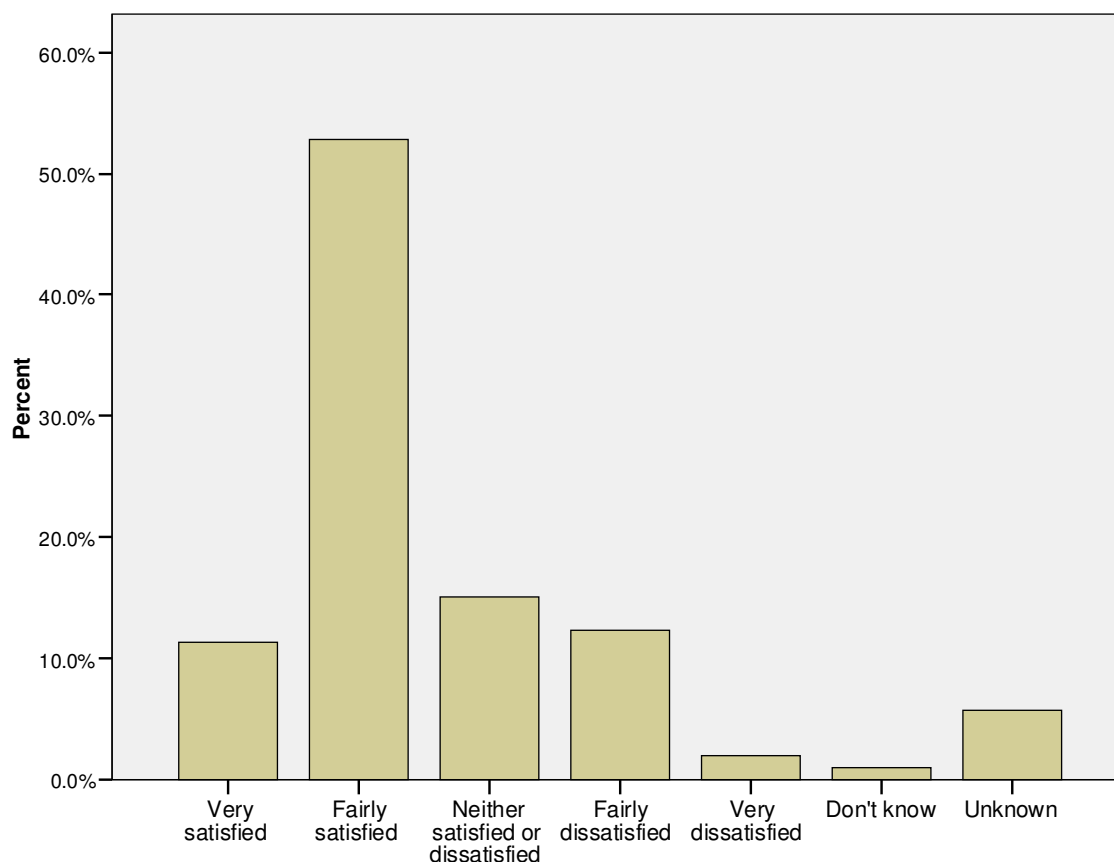


Figure 18: Satisfaction with the way Tunbridge Wells Borough Council runs things

- Approximately half of the respondents in Sandhurst were 'fairly satisfied.'
- 14.2% were 'very dissatisfied' or 'fairly dissatisfied' with the way the Borough Council runs things

This level of response is similar to that of the BVPI General Survey 2006/07, when 62% of respondents felt 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the way the Council runs things.

How well does the Council keep you informed

Only a small percentage of respondents felt that the Council provided limited information in Sandhurst (11.3%).

- 66.9% of respondents felt 'very well' or 'fairly well' informed.

Contacting the Council

Approximately 57.5% of respondents in Sandhurst had made contact with the Borough Council in the past year. The methods these respondents used to contact the Council are listed in figure 19. As the table represents, nearly three quarters of those respondents who contacted the Council, used the telephone as means of contact. This shows that is still by far the most popular method of dealing with enquiries.

Method of contact used	Sandhurst (%)
In person	18.0
By phone	72.1
By letter	3.3

By email	1.6
Through a Councillor	1.6
Through someone else	1.6
Through Council website	1.6
Other	0.0
Total	100.0

Figure 19: What method respondents used when contacting the Council

Preferred sources of information used to obtain information

Respondents were able to identify three sources of information that they preferred to use to learn about local issues.

Top three preferred sources in Sandhurst were:

- Council newsletter (iLOCAL or parish magazine) – 61.3% of respondents
- Local Newspapers – 45.3% of respondents
- Leaflets delivered to the door – 20.8% of respondents

Approximately 77.1% of respondents who preferred local newspapers when learning about local issues felt 'very well' or 'fairly well informed' by the Council. This high percentage suggests that it is important to ensure a balance of positive and negative articles are presented in the local newspapers as residents in the rural area may rely on this source. It may also suggest that other forms of publicity about the work of the Council are not reaching residents in the Sandhurst area.

- 67.7% of respondents in Sandhurst that preferred using the Council newsletter (Borough and Parish), felt 'very well' or 'fairly well informed.'
- Nearly a third of respondents who preferred this source, still felt they were given 'only a limited amount of information' or 'not told much at all.'

7.2 Young People

Facilities for young people appeared within the top five issues in the Sandhurst area.

- 12.3% of respondents thought that facilities for young people were an important service
- Out of that 12.3%, 84.6% were aged over 40 and 38.5% were aged over 60.

Particular issues that were raised regarding young people in Sandhurst related to the need for a new village hall and facility to carry out activities with young people.

Also those respondents who raised leisure and recreation facilities as an issue were often referring to the provision of services for young people. In particular, respondents noted the lack of facilities and activities for young people in their local area and the difficulties in reaching facilities further away due to limited transport.

7.3 Community Involvement

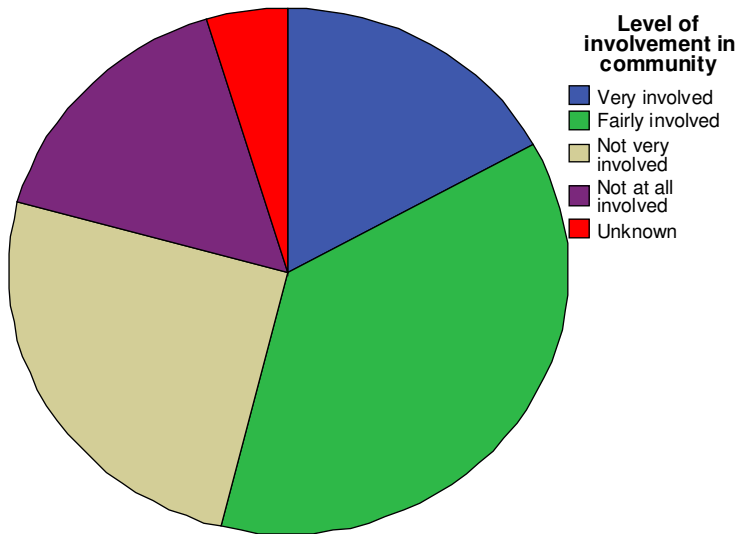
Community Centre/ Village Hall

The village hall featured as one of the top five services that need improving by Sandhurst respondents. Respondents felt there was a need for a new village hall or community centre for the local community to use.

- 14.2% of Sandhurst respondents suggested that a community centre was required or new village hall, when asked how services could be improved.

Respondents also provided suggestions for what might be required to get more people involved in the community.

Level of involvement



- 53.8% of respondents in Sandhurst felt 'very involved' or 'fairly involved' in their community.
- 76.9% of Sandhurst respondents who felt 'fairly involved' had lived in the area for 11 years or more.
- Household composition and age did not impact on the level of involvement in Sandhurst.
- Respondents from ethnic groups other than White British felt either 'fairly involved' or 'not very involved' in Sandhurst.

8. CONCLUSION

Overall, respondents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live and to raise children. Respondents were predominantly attracted to the area through family but other issues also drew them to these areas; such as the countryside.

The main five issues raised in Sandhurst were; refuse and recycling, traffic calming and road maintenance, facilities for young people, the need for increased police presence and public transport.

The majority of respondents felt fairly satisfied with the way the Council runs things and fairly well informed about the services it provides. However this pilot shows that there is still room for improvement as a proportion of respondents reported that the Council gives a limited amount of information. Many respondents in the area thought there was a need for an improved community centre or village hall and this would improve community involvement.

The pilot successfully met the aims set within the project plan. Both Councillors and Council staff were involved in the pilot and interviews were successfully completed across a spread of roads in the area. To conclude, some of the positive comments made by residents are detailed below.

- *'Good that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council doing a survey'*
- *'Ward Walks – very good, it encourages interaction.'*
- *'Need more ward walks about what people think'*
- *'This sort of consultation is excellent. It lets you get your point of view across'*
- *'Ward walk card is very eye catching!'*