

WARD WALKS REPORT

FRITTENDEN

June 2008



**WARD WALKS – JUNE 2008
FRITTENDEN**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Following the success of the pilot in 2007, Cabinet gave approval for the Ward Walks programme to be rolled out across the borough, with the aim of targeting four areas per year in the months of June and September. For the 2008 programme, we proposed to target Sherwood, Frittenden, Pembury and Goudhurst. As with the pilot, the programme involves Council staff and Councillors interviewing residents face to face about the key issues in their area. Information gathered from the interviews provides valuable information on how services can be improved, how residents feel about their local area and the services provided.

The ward walk 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, Councillors and relevant partner agencies, followed by community feedback events to inform residents of the key issues raised and provide an opportunity to discuss their issues in more detail with agencies that provide services in their area.

The June 2008 programme also invited representatives from partner agencies to take part in the interviewing process. Representatives from Town & Country Housing, Kent Fire & Rescue, West Kent Police and Kent Community Wardens took part in the Sherwood and Frittenden areas.

Interviewers spoke to 98 households in Frittenden, of which 14 households just raised important issues or partially completed the questionnaire. This report provides a clear but in depth overview of the results from the programme and makes recommendations where necessary.

2. AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

The ward walk 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 use the information gathered 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 also advocates the 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, making improvements to service delivery and more importantly customer satisfaction.

3. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

3.1 Location of ward walks

Frittenden was one of two areas chosen for the June 2008 programme and represented a rural setting.

The parish of Frittenden is located to the far east of the borough and also borders the neighbouring districts of Maidstone Borough Council and Ashford Borough Council. The parish has 322 households and 897 residents (Census 2001).

3.2 Sampling

Due to the size of the parish and small number of households, the majority of the parish was selected to visit, with the exception of a couple of outlying lanes. The sample targeted a range of properties from old to new and flats to detached with the aim of reaching various household set ups.

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

Location	Date	Time
Frittenden	Thursday 19 June 2008	4.30pm - 7.30pm
	Friday 20 June 2008	10am – 2pm
	Saturday 21 June 2008	10am – 1.30pm

Figure 1: Date and times of ward walks

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

3.3 Interviews

The 2008 programme also invited partner agencies to take part in the interviewing process. Representatives from KCC Community Wardens, West Kent Police, Town & Country Housing and Kent Fire & Rescue worked alongside Council staff, Parish, Ward and County Councillors to interview residents in this area.

In total, 18 Council staff took part in the Frittenden area, representatives from the above mentioned partner agencies, five Borough Councillors (including the Deputy Leader) and five members of Frittenden Parish Council. In fact the ward walk session on Friday 20 June, saw the arrival of 19 interviewers, which the largest number in attendance to any ward walk so far.

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 households interviewed
Frittenden			
Thursday 19 June	Evening – 3 hrs	5	25
Friday 20 June	Daytime – 4 hrs	8	41
Saturday 21 June	Morning – 3.5 hrs	5	28
Received via online suggestion box and by phone	N/A	N/A	4

Figure 2: Interviews completed at each ward walk

The questionnaire was created in partnership with Ipsos MORI (research consultants) for the pilot in 2007. The questionnaire focuses on a number of issues relating to the resident's local area and the services provided and a few alterations

have been made following feedback from the pilot. Questions concentrate on the following:

- First attraction to area
- Best and worst things about the local area
- Rating of 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
- Longer term issues that need to be addressed

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 305 were delivered in the parish of Frittenden. An article was placed in the local newspaper and posters were put up in local facilities, such as Frittenden Memorial Hall, the shop and parish 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 is eye catching and a number of residents commented on the promotion campaign in 2007. Interviewers were also required to carry a name badge during each Ward Walk and wear a Ward Walk t-shirt, to make interviewers identifiable to residents.

3.5 Process involved

Briefing sessions were provided for officers from the Council and partner agencies and Councillors were provided with an evening briefing session prior to the Ward Walks. The briefing session for Councillors was held on Thursday 22 May 2008 and two sessions were held for officers on Tuesday 27 May 2008 which 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.

3.6 Analysis of results

Responses from the completed questionnaires were coded and placed onto the analytical software package SPSS in order to make comparisons and produce an accurate report for each area.

4. LEVEL OF RESPONSE

4.1 Interviews completed

Approximately 98 households were consulted during the Ward Walks in Frittenden, of which 14 only partially completed the questionnaire and just raised urgent or key issues in their area. Approximately 305 postcards were delivered to households to advertise the programme in the selected sample area, which means the programme generated a 32.1% response rate and accounted for a third of the households in this parish.

This is a very reasonable response in the short time proposed to carry out this type of consultation. A small number of residents were not interested, but there were also a large number who were not available during the designated times. The number may have increased, if there were more interviewers available for the evening session on Thursday 19 June 2008. However properties were interviewed in each of the selected roads, which produced an even sample across the area. Interviewers were also provided with a pack of 'no one in' cards to drop through the letterboxes of households who were not in. Firstly this confirmed to the resident that interviewers had visited their property and secondly despite missing the visit, residents could still make their suggestions or complete an interview by phone or online.

The detail and amount of information made available from this consultation provided an excellent basis for analysis on how residents feel about their local area and the services provided in Frittenden.

4.2 Age and gender of respondents

Frittenden recorded a slightly higher ratio of male to female respondents, with 54.3% of respondents being male and 45.7%, female (figure 3).

In Frittenden, interviews were completed with a spread of age groups. The age groups interviewed most frequently were 40-59 (39.3%) and 60-74 years (36.9%) and a large proportion of the 40-59 age group interviewed were male.

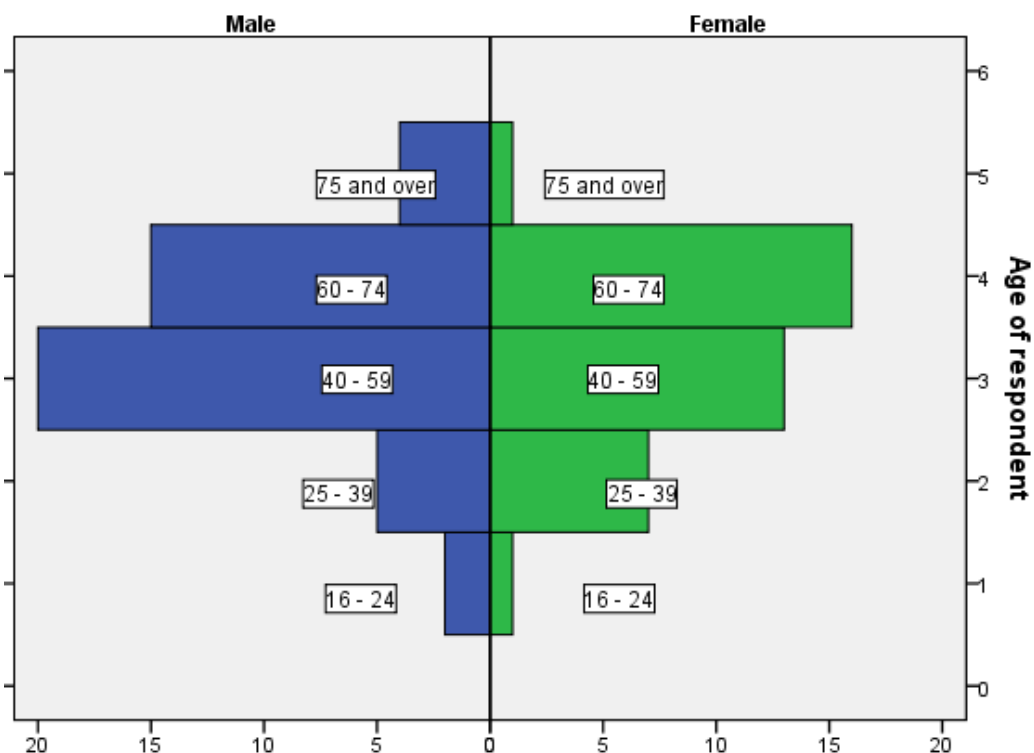


Figure 3: Spread of gender and age of respondents in Frittenden

4.3 Household composition

Interviews were completed with a range of households but the main three types were 'two adults both under 60 years (24.4%)', 'two adults both 60 years and over' (23.1%) and 'two parent families with children, at least one under 18 years' (17.9%). Refer to figure 4 to see the overall comparison.

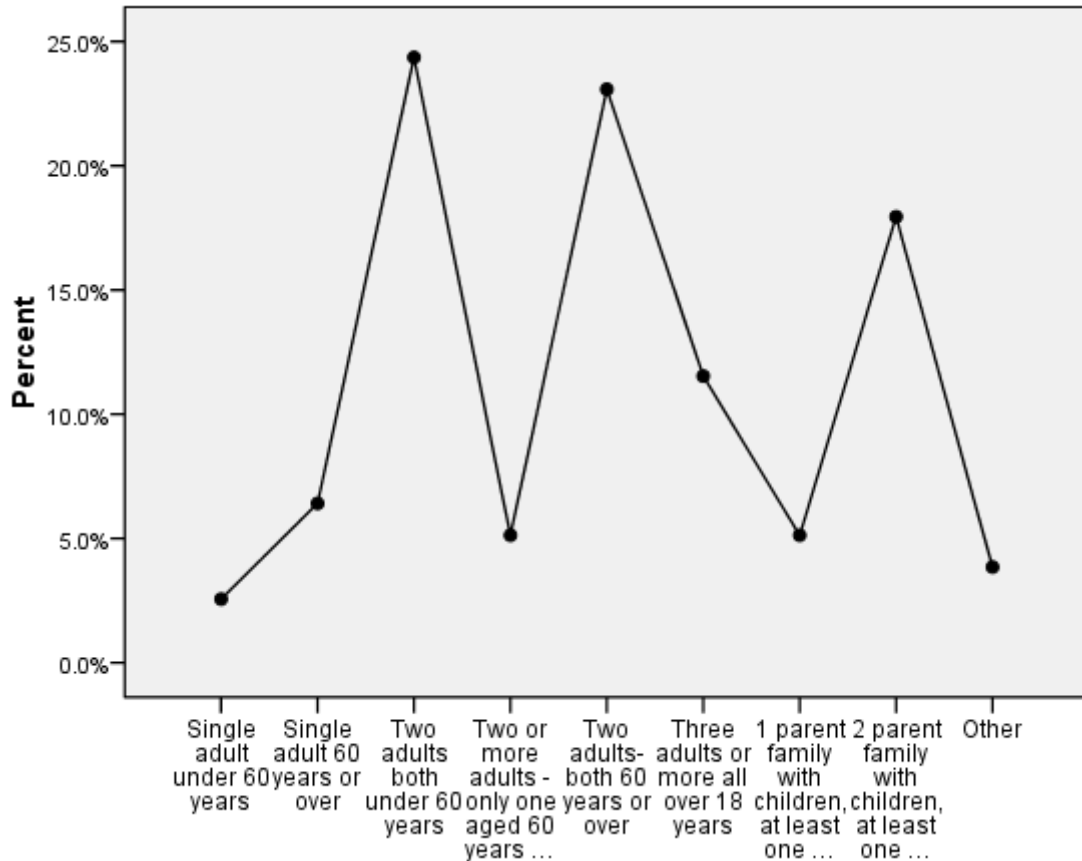


Figure 4: Household composition of respondents in Frittenden

4.4 Household tenure

As figure 5 indicates, the majority of respondents interviewed in Frittenden owned their property (78.2%) and the two largest single groups interviewed either owned their property outright (55.1%) or owned their property with a mortgage (23.1%).

Household tenure	Frittenden (%)
Own outright	55.1
Own with mortgage	23.1
Rent from housing association	10.3
Rent from private landlord	10.3
Other	1.3
Total	100.0

Figure 5: Household tenure of respondents in Frittenden

Even though a smaller proportion of respondents rented their property from a Housing Association or private landlord, the response received actually provides a representative sample of the parish in accordance with 2001 census data. In 2001, 10.9% of the households in the Frittenden parish were social rented and 13.3% were privately rented.

4.5 Ethnicity

The vast majority of respondents were 'White British' (90.6%) and the second largest ethnic group interviewed was that of 'White Other' (2.4%). A number of respondents also refused or did not complete this question (6.9%). See figure 6 below for more detail:

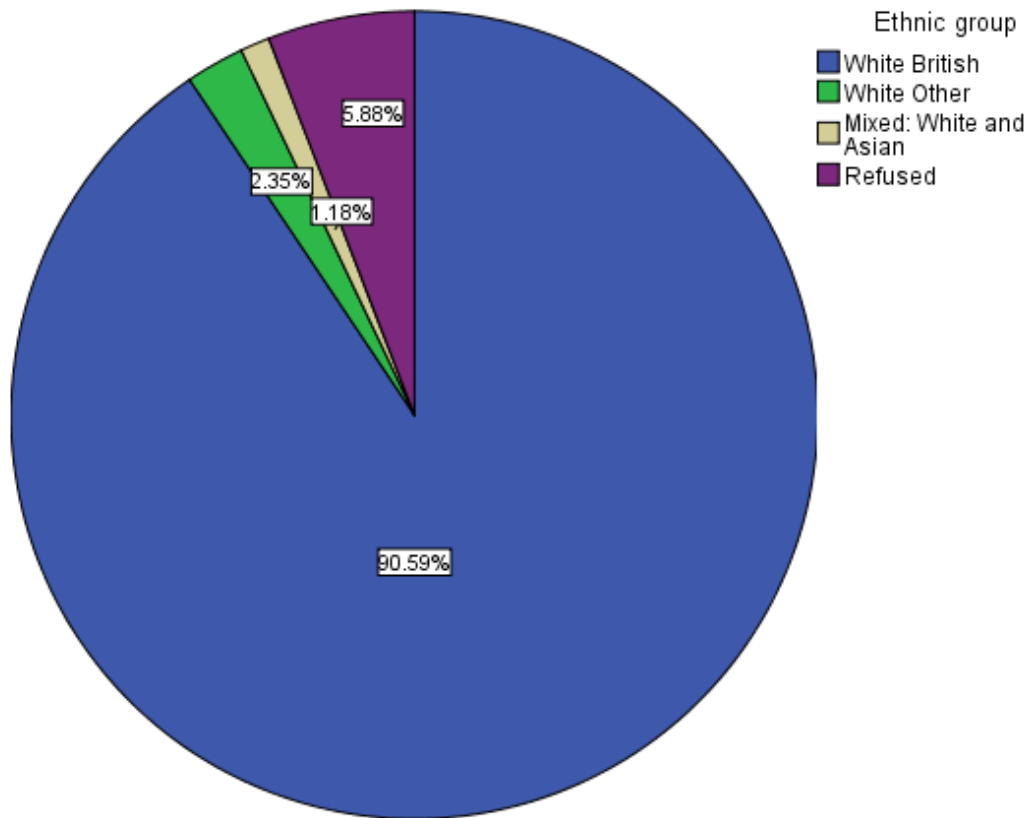


Figure 6: Ethnic origin of respondents in Frittenden

5. SATISFACTION WITH THE LOCAL AREA

5.1 Features that attracted residents to Frittenden

- About two thirds (67.6%) of respondents had lived in Frittenden for more than ten years.
- 23.7% of respondents had lived in the Frittenden area for five years or less, of which three quarters had lived there between two and five years.

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 Frittenden are listed in figure 6, of which, the countryside played a very important part.

Frittenden	
1	Countryside (21.3%)
2	Peace and quiet (11.8%)
3	Family in the area (10.3%)

Figure 6: Top three reasons for locating to Frittenden

In addition, 3.7% of respondents said that one thing that attracted them to the area, was the low level of crime. In fact all the respondents who noted this as an attraction had lived in the Frittenden area for less than 10 years. Otherwise there was no correlation between the length of time respondents had lived in the local area and what first attracted them to Frittenden. Therefore the top three reasons had been longstanding attractions.

5.2 Best and worst things

Respondents identified a range of good and bad things about living in the Frittenden area.

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

- 1) Countryside (27.5%)
- 2) Community spirit (19.1%)

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

- 1) Public transport (21.3%)
- 2) Other (8.2%)

'Other' worst things included issues such as lack of mains gas and sewerage, flooding issues and fly tipping.

5.3 Raising children

Frittenden was rated as a good place to raise children by over three quarters of respondents (see figure 7):

- In fact, 18.8% rated the area as 'good' and a further 69.4% rated the area as 'very good.'
- A small number of respondents were unable to answer this question, as they did not have children (4.7%).

Respondents from various household set ups regarded the area as a good place to raise children and in general very few households thought it was a poor area to raise

children. The few households who did rate the area as 'poor' to raise children were within the age group '40-59 years.'

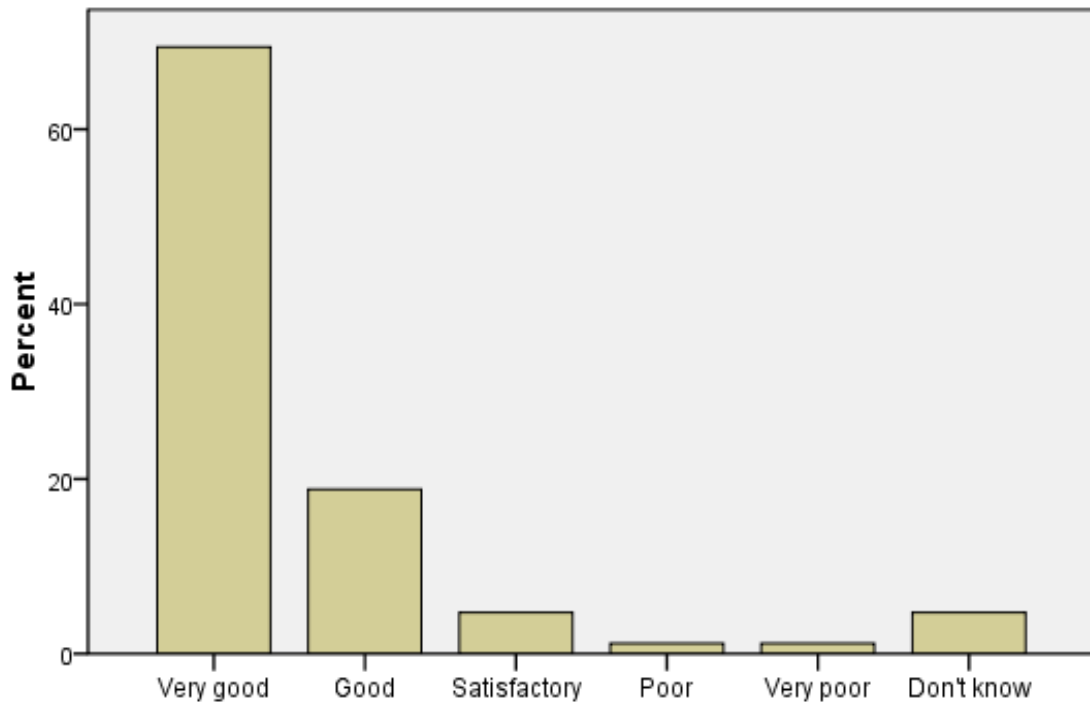


Figure 7: Rating the local area as a place to raise children

There was little correlation on the rating given to the local area as a place to raise children and the length of time respondents had lived in the area. However those who rated the area as 'satisfactory' or 'poor' had tended to live in the area for more than five years.

5.4 Place to live

Respondents were enormously satisfied with their local area as a place to live (figure 8):

- 96.4% felt 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied.'

Due to the large majority of respondents who were satisfied with the Frittenden area as a place to live, there was no significant group (age, household composition or household tenure) that was more satisfied than another.

The very small percentage of respondents that were dissatisfied had lived in the area for more than 10 years.

Furthermore, all of those respondents who did not raise an urgent issue were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the local area as a place to live.

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

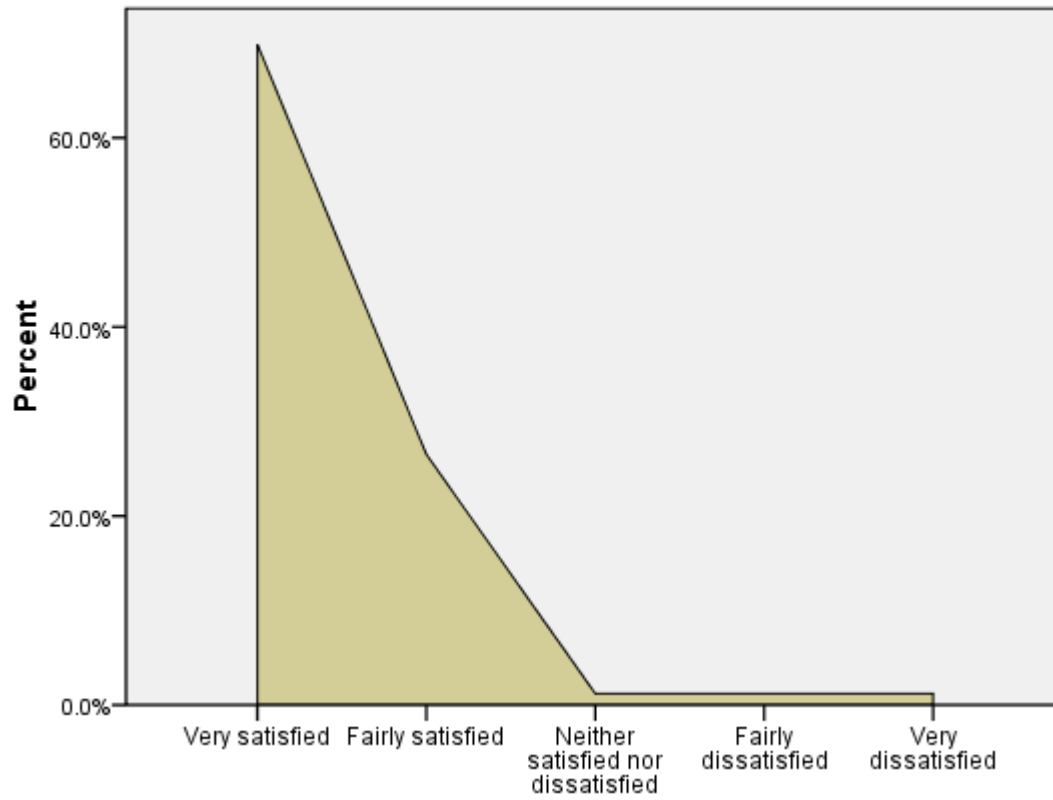


Figure 8: Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live

6. SATISFACTION WITH THE SERVICES PROVIDED

6.1 Key issues and important services

Top five urgent issues to be addressed in the Frittenden area:

A number of respondents did not feel there were any urgent issues in the Frittenden area, but the list below highlights the top five urgent issues raised:

- Public transport (bus service)
- Road maintenance
- Traffic calming and road safety
- Parking
- Other issues

Top five long term issues for the Frittenden area:

- Public transport
- Affordable housing for young and local people
- Traffic calming and road safety
- Planning and development
- Other issues

Top five services that need improvement in Frittenden

- Public transport
- Recycling facilities
- Refuse collection
- Road maintenance
- Other issues

Top three services regarded as most important:

- Refuse collection
- Road maintenance
- Other services (such as local shop, post office etc)

6.2 Road maintenance, street cleaning and traffic calming

Road maintenance was considered one of the top five urgent issues that needed to be addressed in the Frittenden area and also featured within the top five services that needed improving.

Road maintenance was also considered one of the top three most important services provided in the Frittenden area.

Only one quarter of respondents in Frittenden felt 'satisfied' with road maintenance in comparison to nearly three quarters of respondents who were either 'very dissatisfied' or 'fairly dissatisfied' with the service provided (72.6%). Issues such as potholes and maintenance of the roads caused dissatisfaction generally, but specific issues relating to ridges in the road at Knoxbridge, maintenance of a bridge and the need to reinstate verges to some lanes in the south of the parish were also mentioned.

- Around three quarters (77.9%) of those who were 'very dissatisfied' or 'fairly dissatisfied' with road maintenance, had lived in the Frittenden area for more than 10 years.'

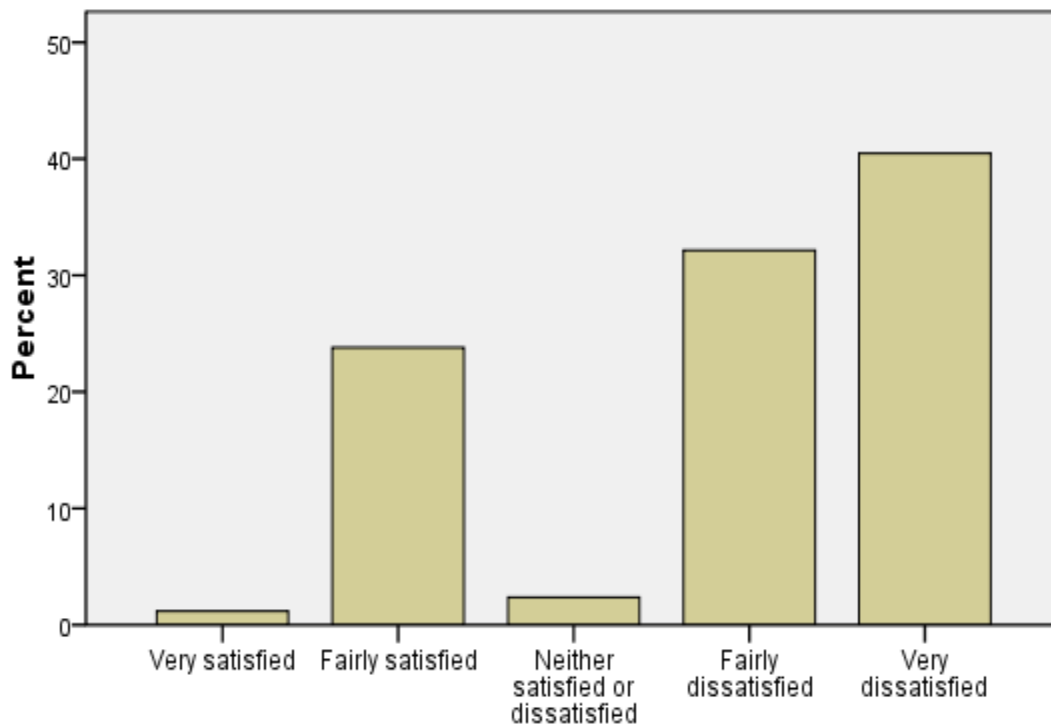


Figure 9: Satisfaction with road maintenance

Level of satisfaction with street cleaning

Half of the respondents in Frittenden felt 'fairly satisfied' with street cleaning and a further 17.9% were 'very satisfied' (figure 10).

This compared to the 14.3% of respondents who were dissatisfied with the street cleaning service provided (9.5% fairly dissatisfied and 4.5% very dissatisfied).

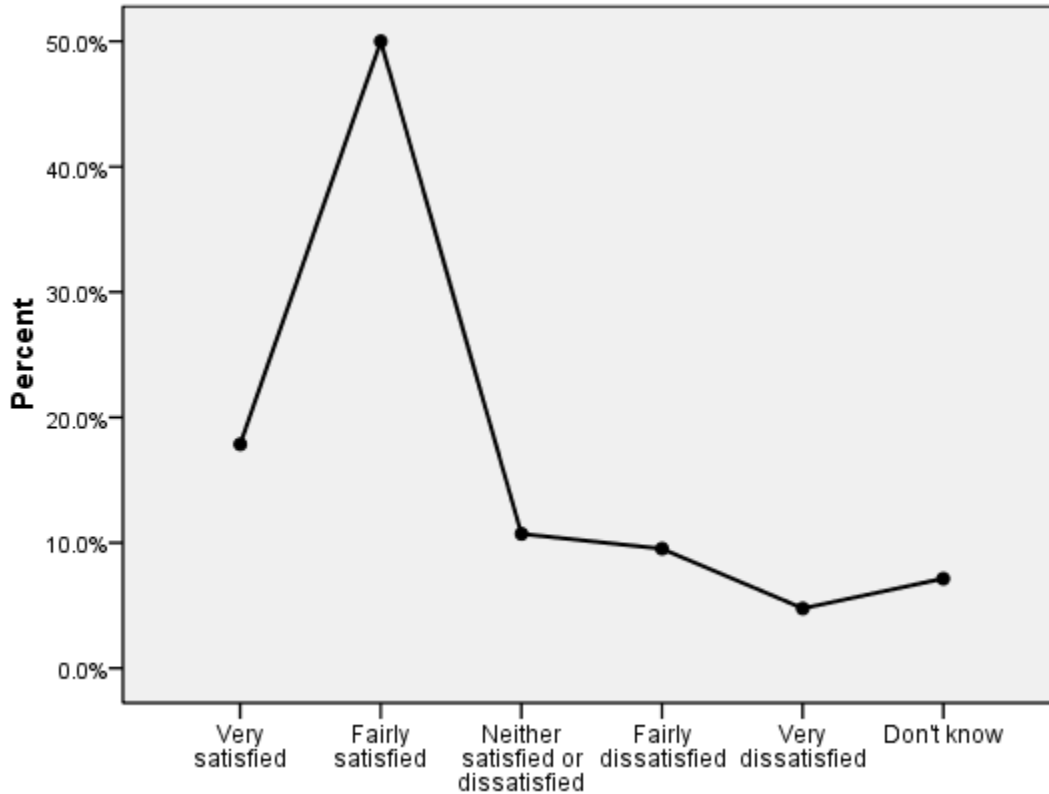


Figure 10: Satisfaction with street cleaning

Traffic calming and road safety

Traffic calming and road safety was regarded as one of the top five urgent issues to be addressed in Frittenden and also one of the top five long term issues to be addressed. Speed restrictions or safety measures were thought to be required on the following roads:

- **Knoxbridge** – 50mph speed limit should be continued through Knoxbridge. Numerous accidents on this stretch of road (A229) and some children who live along road, have to cross to get school bus.
- Speed of traffic through **Cranbrook Road and The Street** through to Headcorn – dangerous near school.
- Mirror required at some junctions in the lanes to improve visibility (**Dig Dog Lane and Cranbrook Road, Rocks Hill**)
- **Grandshore Lane** being used as a diversion route from A229- not suitable.

A range of households in terms of age, household composition and length of time that the respondent had lived in the area thought that traffic calming was a key issue in the Frittenden area.

6.3 Public transport

Public transport featured in the top five urgent issues to be addressed in the Frittenden area and as one of the top five long term issues to be addressed in this area. Public transport, in particular the bus service was also regarded as one of the top five services that needed improving in the Frittenden area.

This is because there is currently no bus service provided through the village.

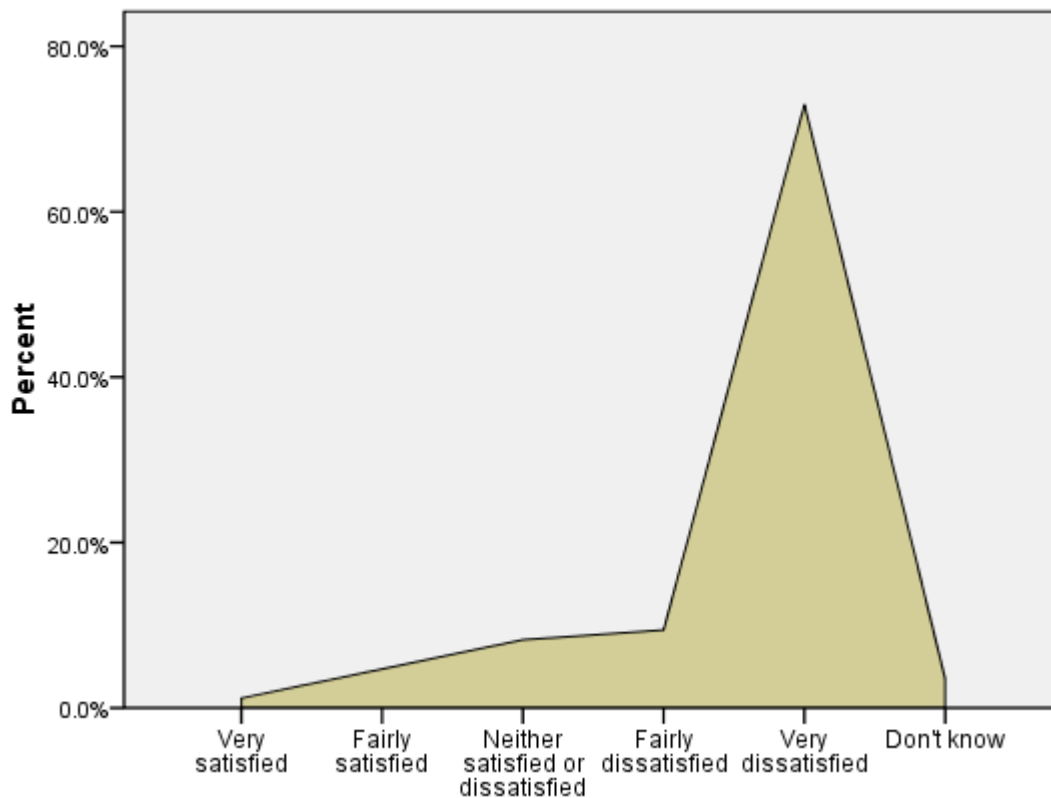


Figure 11: Satisfaction with access to public transport

- 82.3% of respondents were either 'very dissatisfied' or 'fairly dissatisfied' with access to public transport.
- Those who were dissatisfied tended to be those aged 40 years and over.
- Also there was a significant relationship between those who rated the area as a 'poor' place to raise children and those who were dissatisfied with access to public transport.

Residents made suggestions as to how improvements could be made. Some examples are provided below:

- Shuttle bus service needed to connect to next village or **nearby railway stations**
- Transport service required particularly for **older people** to go shopping and access healthcare
- Put bus service on Friday and Saturday evenings into Maidstone, for **young people** to access recreation facilities

6.4 Parking issues

Parking was regarded as one of the top five urgent issues that needed to be addressed in the Frittenden area.

A number of respondents raised issues regarding the congestion caused by on street parking at school times and near the central junction in the village.

The particular areas that were thought to be causing parking issues are highlighted in blue in figure 12 below.

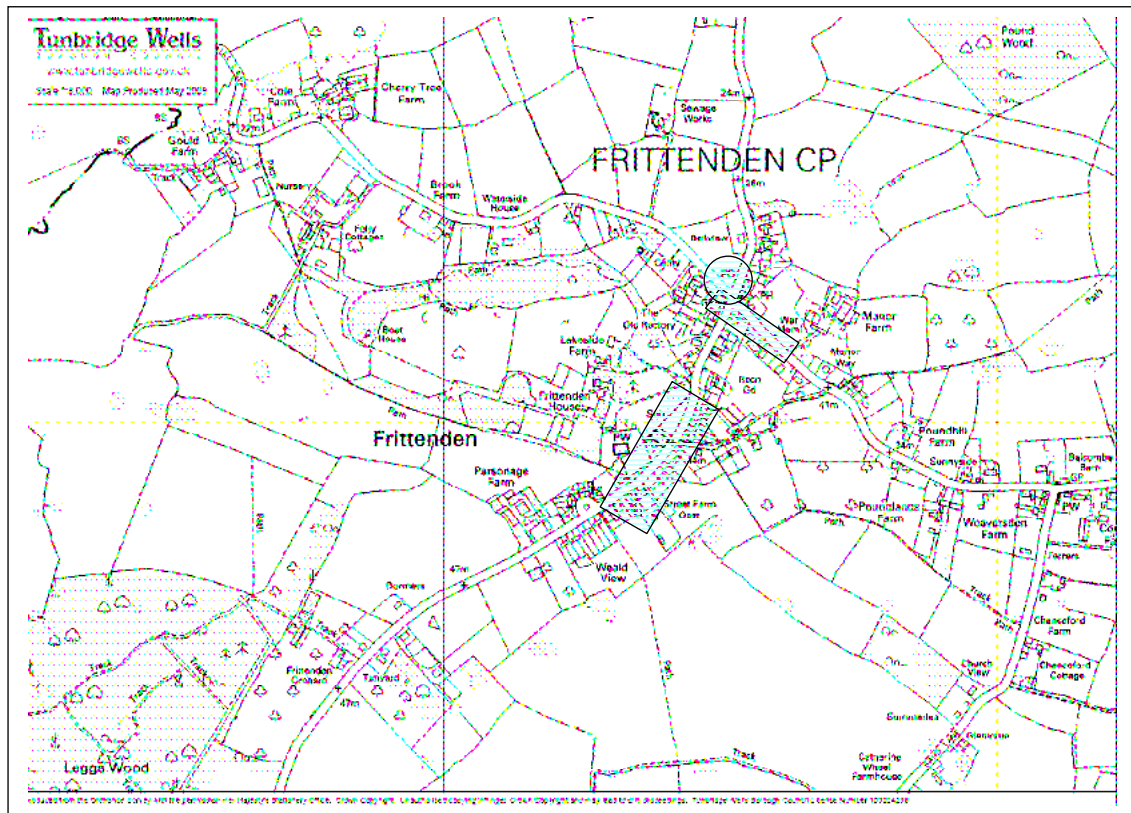


Figure 12: Map representing location where parking was considered to be an issue.

6.5 Refuse collection and recycling facilities

Refuse collection and recycling facilities both featured within the top five services that needed improving, in Frittenden. Refuse collection was also regarded as the most important service provided in the Frittenden area. A number of respondents made particular suggestions about how these services could be improved.

- Recycling facility required for **plastics** (bring site to be placed in village)
- Locate **recycling collection points** on recreation ground to give more room and space for plastics recycling bin.
- **Weekly refuse collection** is problematic in the summer months.

Respondents from various groups (age and household composition) regarded the current state of refuse collection and recycling facilities as a service that required improvement in their local area.

6.6 Leisure and Recreation

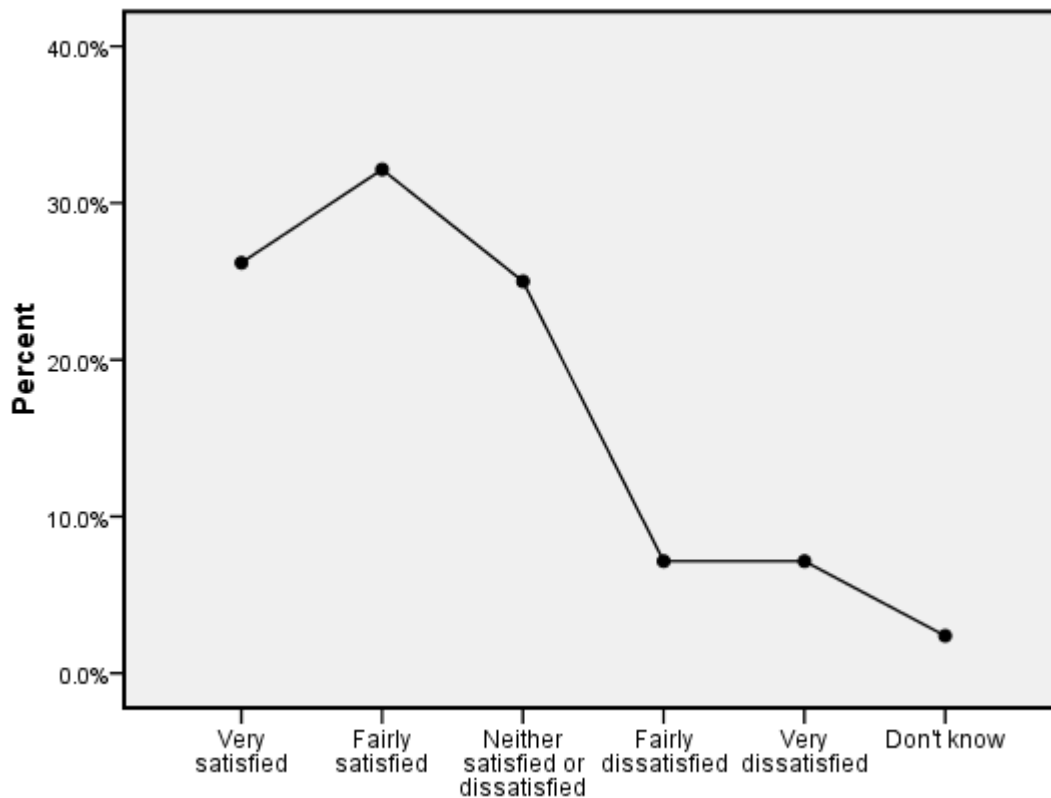


Figure 13: Satisfaction with cultural and recreation facilities

As figure 13 indicates, respondents were generally happy with the cultural and leisure facilities provided in the area; 58.3% of respondents in Frittenden were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with local facilities.

There was also a significant proportion of respondents who were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.' This may be due to the rural nature of Frittenden and need to travel further a field to access the facilities available. Generally a good spread of households were satisfied with the services provided, but it was noted that out of those respondents who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the cultural and leisure facilities in the area, over two thirds were from 'two parent families with children.' So this may suggest that this age group is content with their current lifestyle and therefore not fully utilising the leisure and cultural facilities in the area.

Respondents were reasonably satisfied with parks and open spaces (figure 14); 77.4% were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied.'

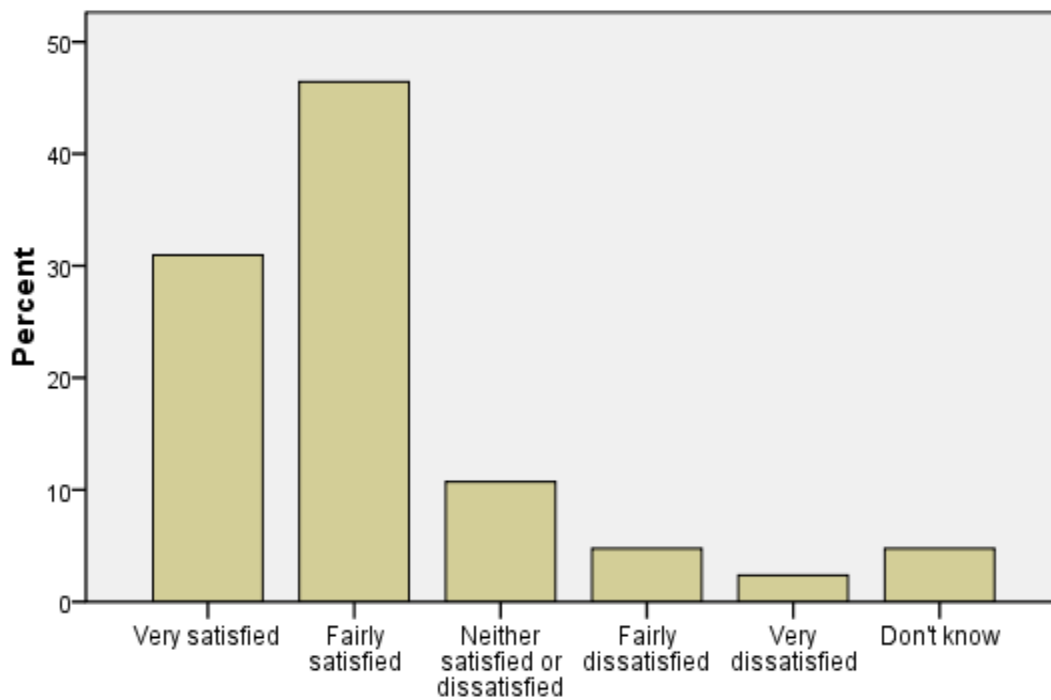


Figure 14: Satisfaction with parks and open spaces

6.7 Community Safety

Crime and anti-social behaviour was not regarded as a key issue in the Frittenden area.

Rating how safe respondents felt

This was reinforced when respondents were asked how safe they felt in their local area. In fact nearly all respondents felt 'safe.'

- 94.1% felt 'very safe' or 'fairly safe' in Frittenden

The few respondents who felt 'a bit unsafe' were located in a small range of roads; Biddenden Road, Grandshore Lane and Mill Lane.

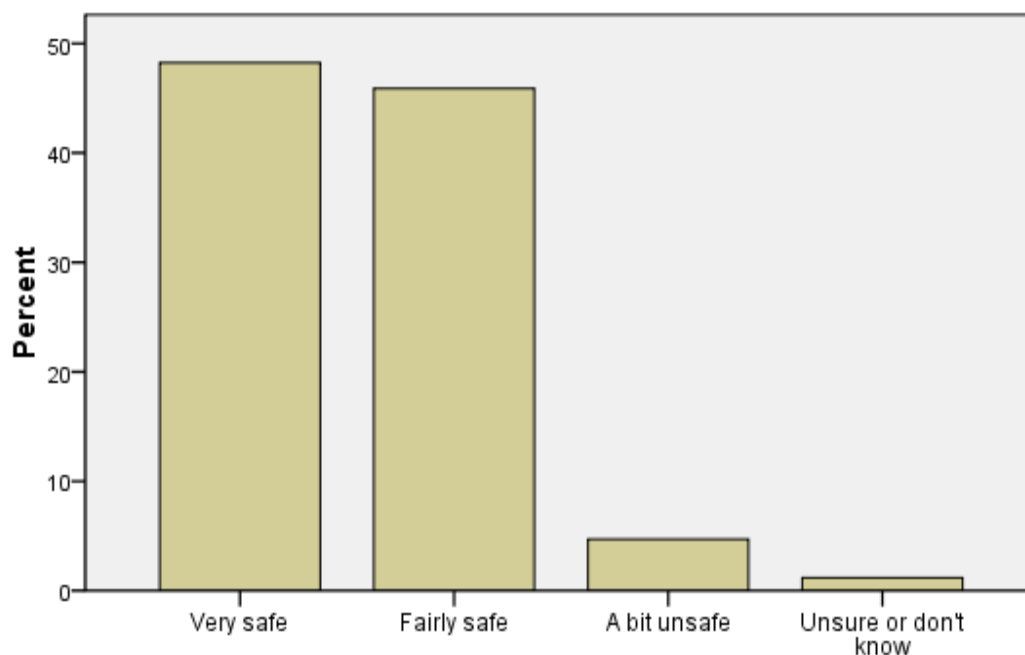


Figure 15: Rating how safe respondents felt in their local area

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 two thirds of respondents thought that the level of crime had stayed the same (65.5%) in the Frittenden area.

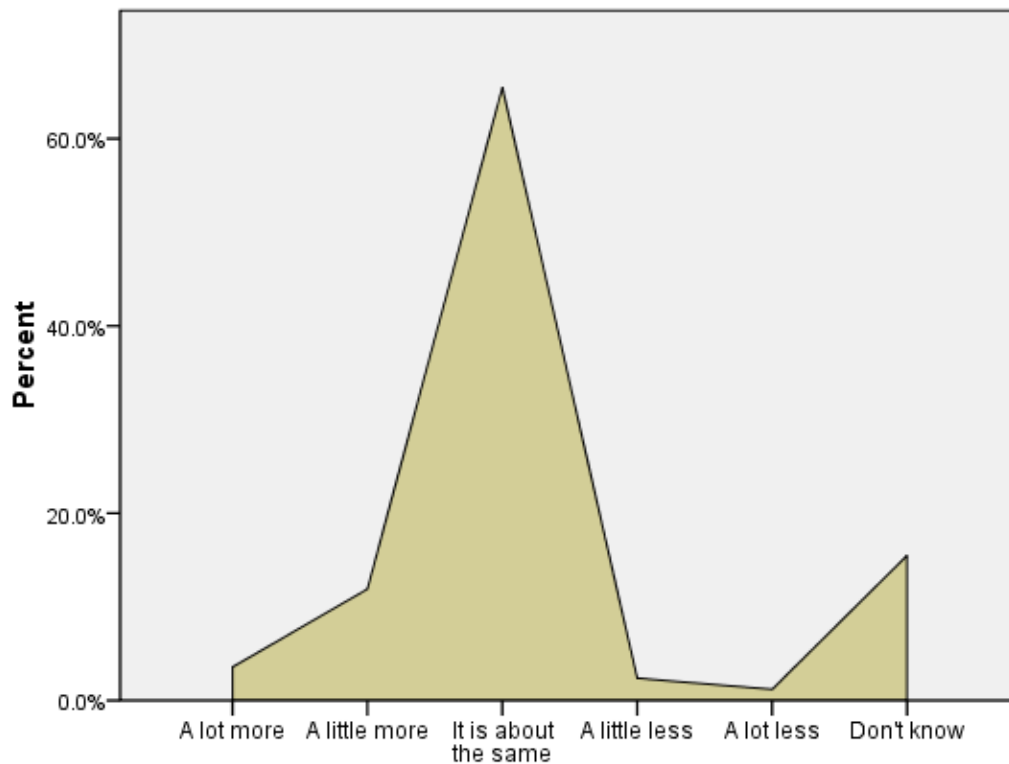


Figure 16: Has level of crime and anti-social behaviour changed in past year?

There were no significant areas of the parish in which respondents thought there was 'a lot more' or 'a little more' crime and anti-social behaviour. A number of respondents also commented on the presence of the local KCC Community Warden and how the Warden assisted the community and helped to make residents feel safe.

Safety in the home

There were no respondents in Frittenden that felt 'very unsafe' in their home from risk of fire. In fact an exceptional 98.8% of respondents felt 'very safe' or 'fairly safe' in their home from risk of fire.

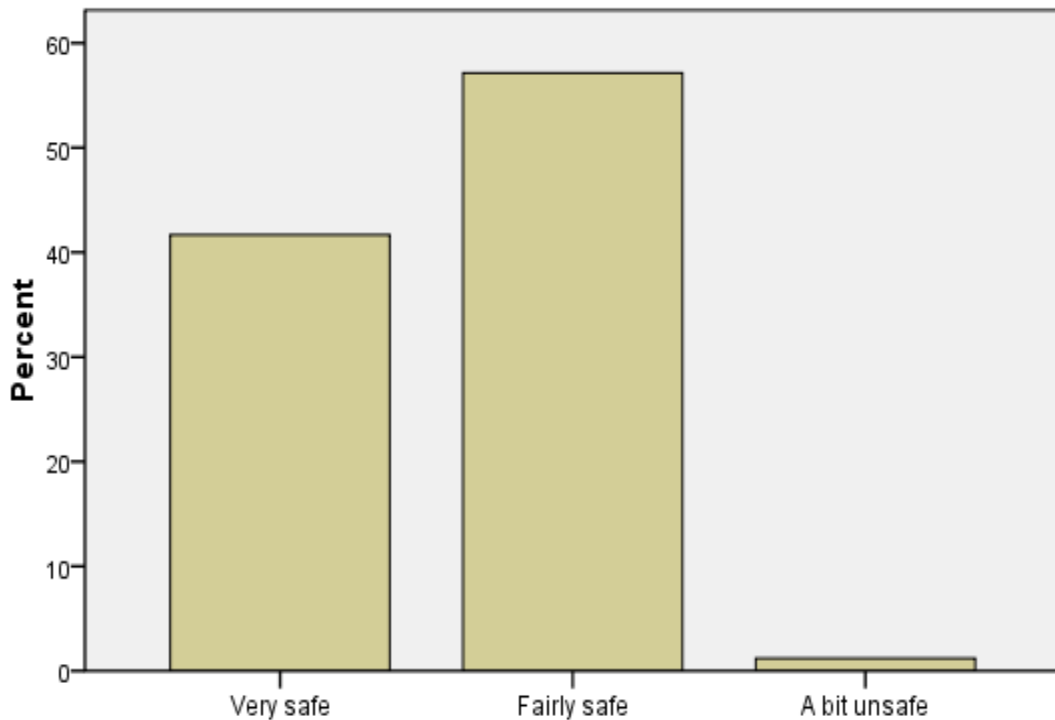


Figure 17: How safe do you consider your home to be from risk of fire?

6.8 Health Services

Respondents from Frittenden were reasonably satisfied with current access to GP services (see figure 18):

- 77.4% of respondents felt 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied.'

A number of issues were raised in relation to Health, in particular regarding the lack of out of hours service provided in this area.

Respondents were also reasonably satisfied with access to a hospital:

- 57.1% of respondents felt 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with access to a hospital.

Out of those respondents who were dissatisfied with access to a hospital, the majority tended to be aged 60 years & over and female.

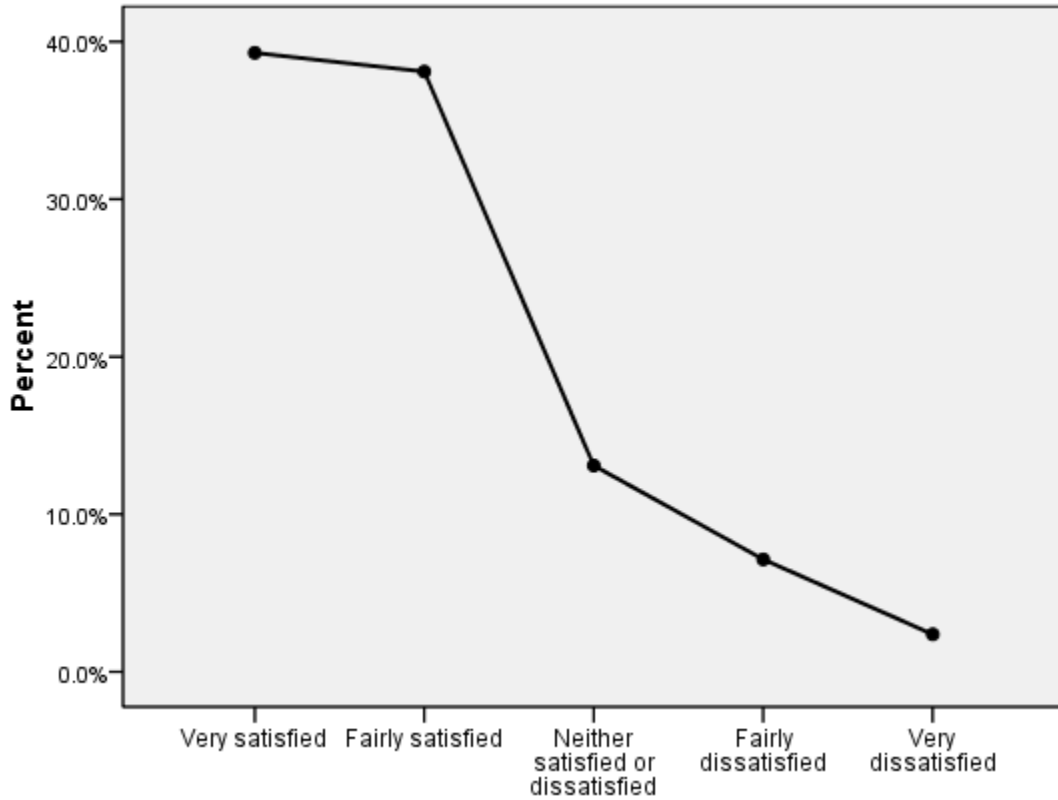


Figure 18: Satisfaction with access to GP services

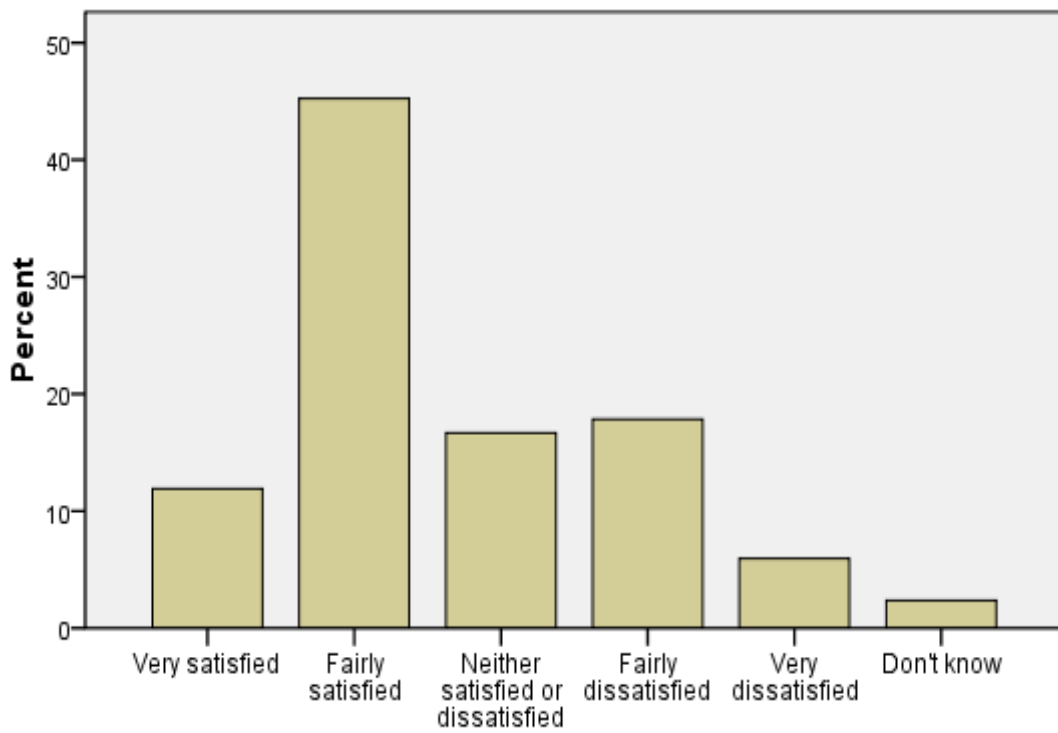


Figure 19: Satisfaction with access to a hospital

6.9 Education

Over three quarters of respondents were satisfied with access to good schools in the Frittenden area (figure 20):

- 54.1% of Frittenden respondents were 'very satisfied' with access to good schools.
- 27.1% of Frittenden respondents were 'fairly satisfied' with access to good schools.

There was quite a strong correlation between satisfaction with access to good schools and rating the area as a place to raise children.

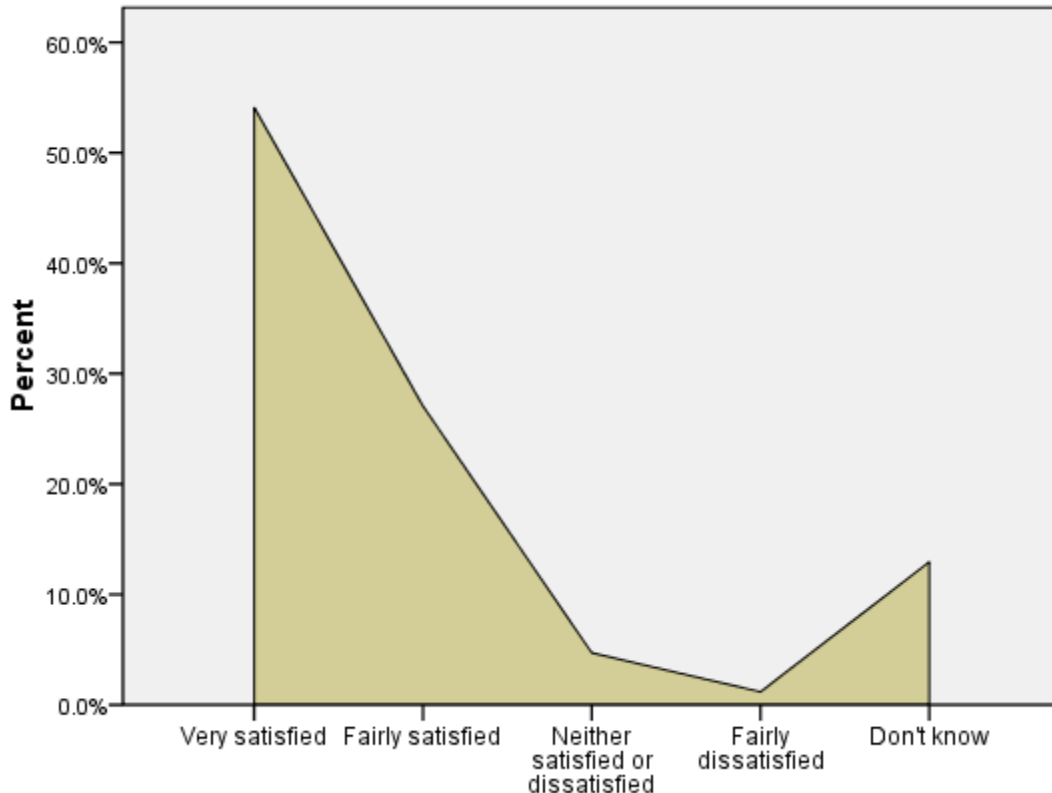


Figure 20: Satisfaction with access to good schools

6.10 Planning and Development issues

A number of respondents discussed the impact of planning and development in their local area and the need to preserve the local environment.

Some respondents discussed future planning and development issues, looking at the need to maintain housing and employment opportunities for the young, whilst taking into account the local character of the rural countryside.

- 6.2% regarded planning and development as long term issues for consideration in the Frittenden area.

When asked how satisfied respondents were with access to quality housing, only 35.7% were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied.' This question focused on suitability and access to housing and received a varied response. Affordable housing was regarded as one of the top five long term issues for the area, which could explain the reason for 30.1% of respondents stating that they were dissatisfied with 'access to quality housing' (refer to figure 21).

Respondents were aware of the house prices in the Frittenden area and felt that housing in the parish was inaccessible to first time buyers and local people on low incomes.

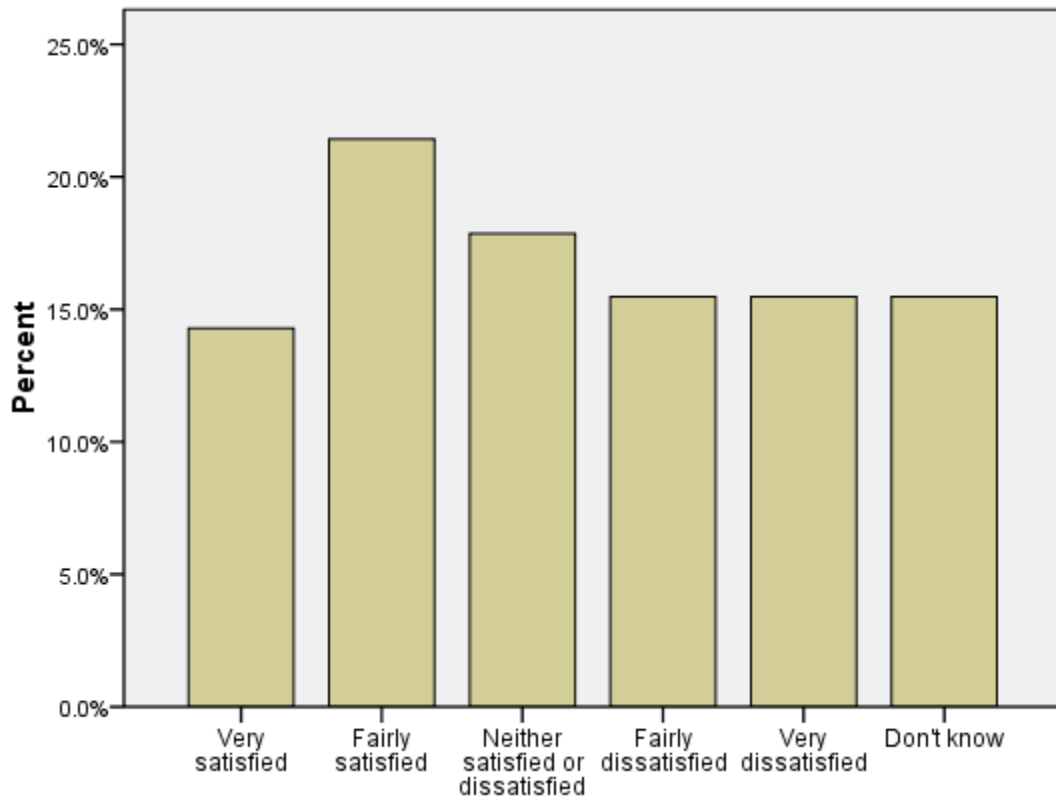


Figure 21: Satisfaction with access to quality housing

7. CROSS – CUTTING ISSUES

7.1 Customer service

Satisfaction with the way Tunbridge Wells Borough Council runs things

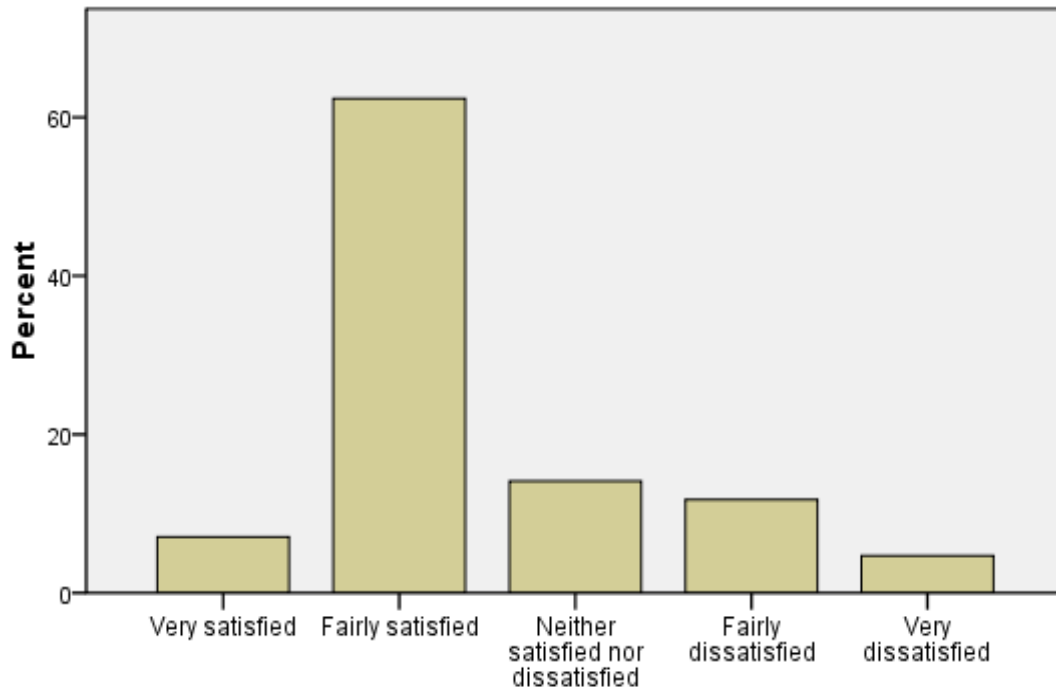


Figure 22: Satisfaction with the way Tunbridge Wells Borough Council runs things

- 69.5% of respondents were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the way Tunbridge Wells Borough Council runs things.

This level of response is higher than that of the BVPI General Survey 2006/07, when 62% of respondents across the borough were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the way the Council runs things.

How well does the Council keep you informed

Some respondents (18.1%) felt that the Council provided only a limited amount of information. However a great proportion of respondents were satisfied with how the Council keeps them informed, with 72.3% stating that they felt 'very well informed' or 'fairly well informed' in Frittenden.

Preferred sources of information used to obtain information

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

Five sources were generally preferred to find out what was happening in the local area.

The top three preferred sources in Frittenden were:

- Council newsletter (iLOCAL or parish magazine) - 23.5% of respondents
- Local newspapers - 21.8% of respondents
- Friends, neighbours and relations - 11.8% of respondents

7.2 Community Involvement

Level of involvement

Half of respondents felt 'very involved' or 'fairly involved' in their local community (52.4%). This compares to the two thirds of respondents (39.3%) who thought they were 'not very involved' or 'not at all involved.' Please see figure 23 below.

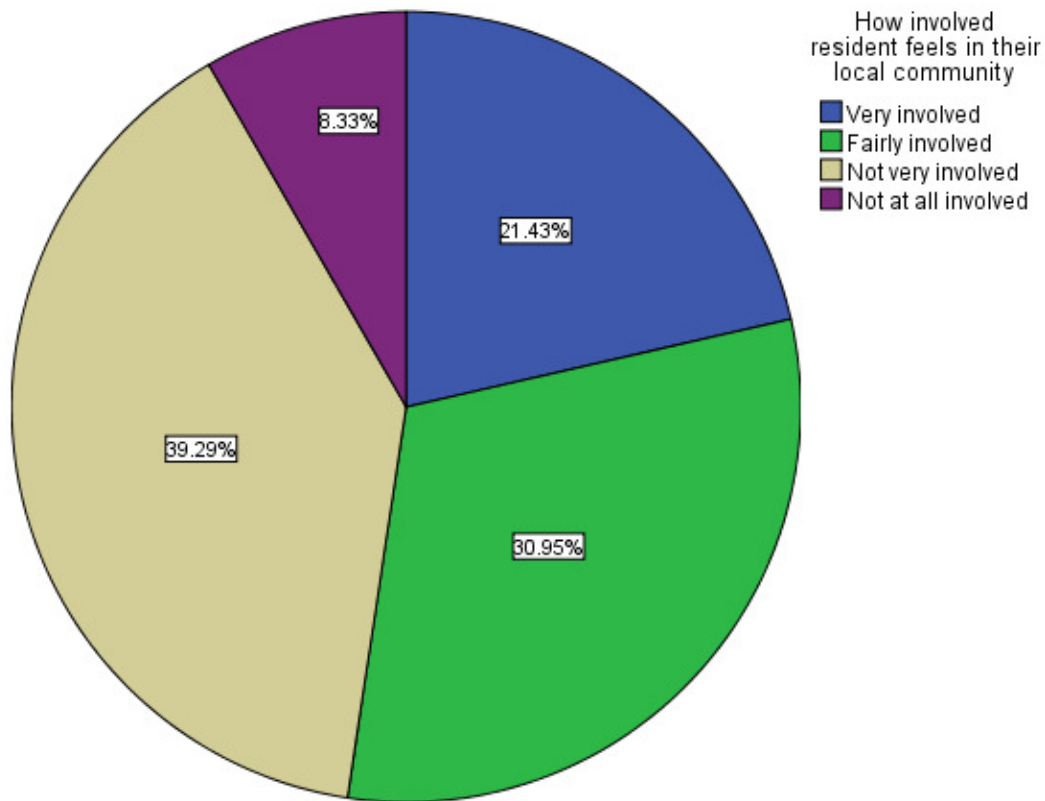


Figure 23: Level of community involvement

There was little correlation between the level of involvement and the age group or household composition of respondents.

Factors affecting community involvement

Respondents were asked what was their main reason for not getting more involved in the local community. A number of reasons were given.

The top two main reasons for not getting more involved:

- Lack of time (49.2%)
- Other (26.2%)

The 'Other' suggestions given by respondents, included issues such as age, lack of knowledge about what is happening in the area or specific personal issues.

Knowledge of local facilities

As part of the interview, residents were asked whether they were aware of certain community facilities in the Frittenden area and whether they or a member of their household had used the facilities in the last 12 months.

There was greater awareness of local facilities than usage and in some cases this was due to the age group of the respondent and whether they had children.

The facilities referred to in this exercise were:

- Frittenden Memorial Hall (village hall)
- Frittenden Cricket, Sports and Social Club
- Frittenden Primary School (for out of school activities)
- Paddock play area
- Parish field
- Tennis courts
- Acorn Village stores (village shop)
- Post office in the pub
- Forge Garage

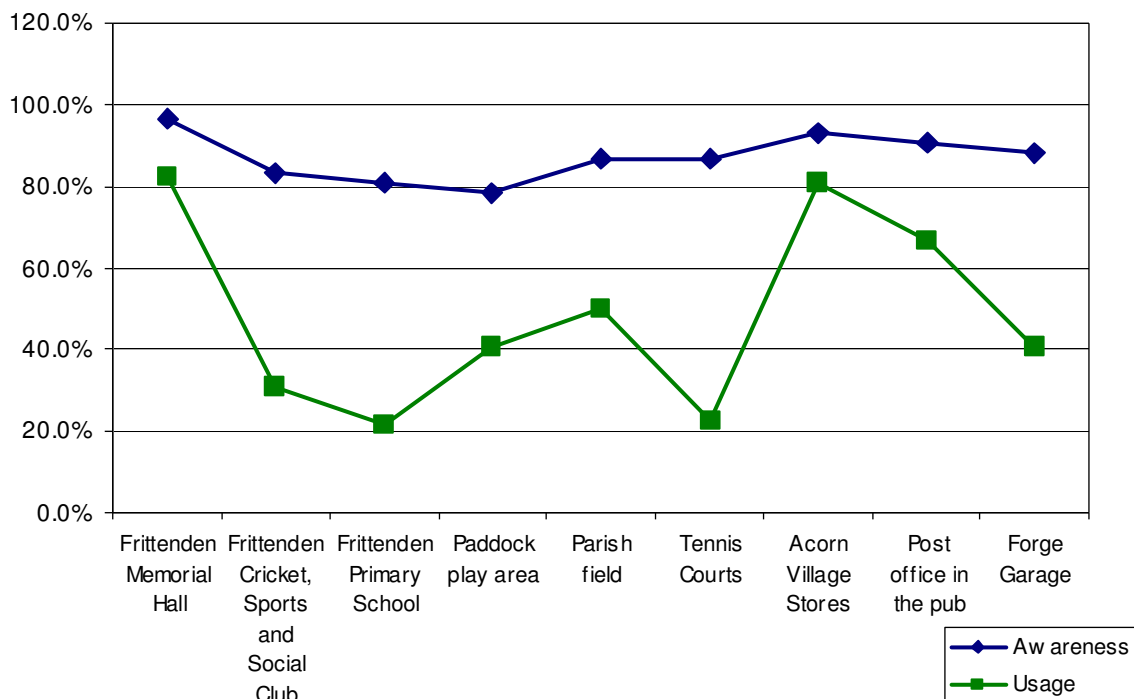


Figure 24: Awareness and usage of community facilities in Frittenden

The facilities that received the highest level of awareness were:

- Frittenden Memorial Hall (96.4%)
- Acorn Village Stores (92.9%)
- Post office in pub (90.5%)

In terms of use, the response was significantly lower, except for the use of Frittenden Memorial Hall and Acorn Village Stores. The facilities that recorded the highest level of use were:

- Frittenden Memorial Hall (82.1%)
- Acorn Village Stores (81.0%)
- Post office in pub (66.7%)

Therefore these three community facilities are both widely acknowledged and used by residents living in the Frittenden area.

8. CONCLUSION

Overall respondents were very satisfied with the Frittenden area as a place to live and as a place to raise children. Respondents mainly moved to the area for the countryside and peace and quiet and two thirds of those interviewed had lived in the area for more than 10 years.

The main five issues raised in Frittenden were:

- Public transport (bus service)
- Traffic calming and road safety
- Road maintenance
- Affordable housing for young and local people
- Other issues

Nearly three quarters of respondents felt well informed about the services and benefits that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council provides, plus 69.5% of respondents were also satisfied with the way the Borough Council runs things. In general, respondents had a good awareness of the local facilities available in the parish but results suggest that there is still the need to encourage local residents to use these facilities more.