

## **Appendix C – Results of the online survey**

### **Background:**

It has been identified that Oxford City Council have to make an annual saving of £50,000 from their public conveniences budget. In order to find out people's views on strategies for improving public toilet provision in Oxford, the City Council used an online survey as part of an overall consultation exercise on public toilets in Oxford. A copy of the survey questions is available in Appendix A.

The online survey was open from 21<sup>st</sup> July until 21<sup>st</sup> August and invitations to the survey were sent out to specific interested parties (a list organisations that were invited to the online consultation is in Appendix B). Additionally the survey was available to all members of the public via the Oxford City Council website. The survey was then made available from 3<sup>rd</sup> September to 11<sup>th</sup> September.

The total number of respondents for the online survey was 133.

Not all respondents provided demographic information, but for the respondents who did give details, a summary is as follows:

Male 31%

Female 69%

White British 93%

White Other 4%

Other mixed 2%

Disabled 18%

Not disabled 82%

Aged 16 –18 0%

Aged 19-24 0%

Aged 25-44 30%

Aged 45-59 23%

Aged 60-74 23%

Aged 75+ 24%

## **Summary**

People's experiences and feelings about the public toilets provided in Oxford are very mixed, but there were several main themes in the responses we received:

- Dissatisfaction with the current provision of public toilets in Oxford, especially with respect to the high level of tourism.
- Feeling that more toilets of a decent standard would be preferable to a smaller number of higher standard toilets.
- Most people would be happy to pay 20p for usage – although there are some concerns this could marginalise some groups and lead to a rise in street urination.
- Concern that closures might also lead to an increase in street urination.
- Call for toilets to have longer opening hours - including 24hr access in some areas.
- The need for improved signage so that people can find the existing facilities more easily.
- Concern for elderly/disabled/children who are seen to have greater need
- Support for more attended toilets in order to curb anti-social behaviour and improve cleanliness/safety.
- Concern that cuts should not be made from public conveniences budget, which should be a high priority service area.
- Community Toilets Scheme was well supported, although there are concerns about its implementation and about getting enough businesses interested.
- Refurbishment of Gloucester Green gets some mixed reactions, but mainly positive, with an overall 65% of respondents viewing it as either as a 'good' or 'excellent' idea.
- Automatic Public Conveniences get less support with 35% of respondents seeing them as a 'poor' idea.

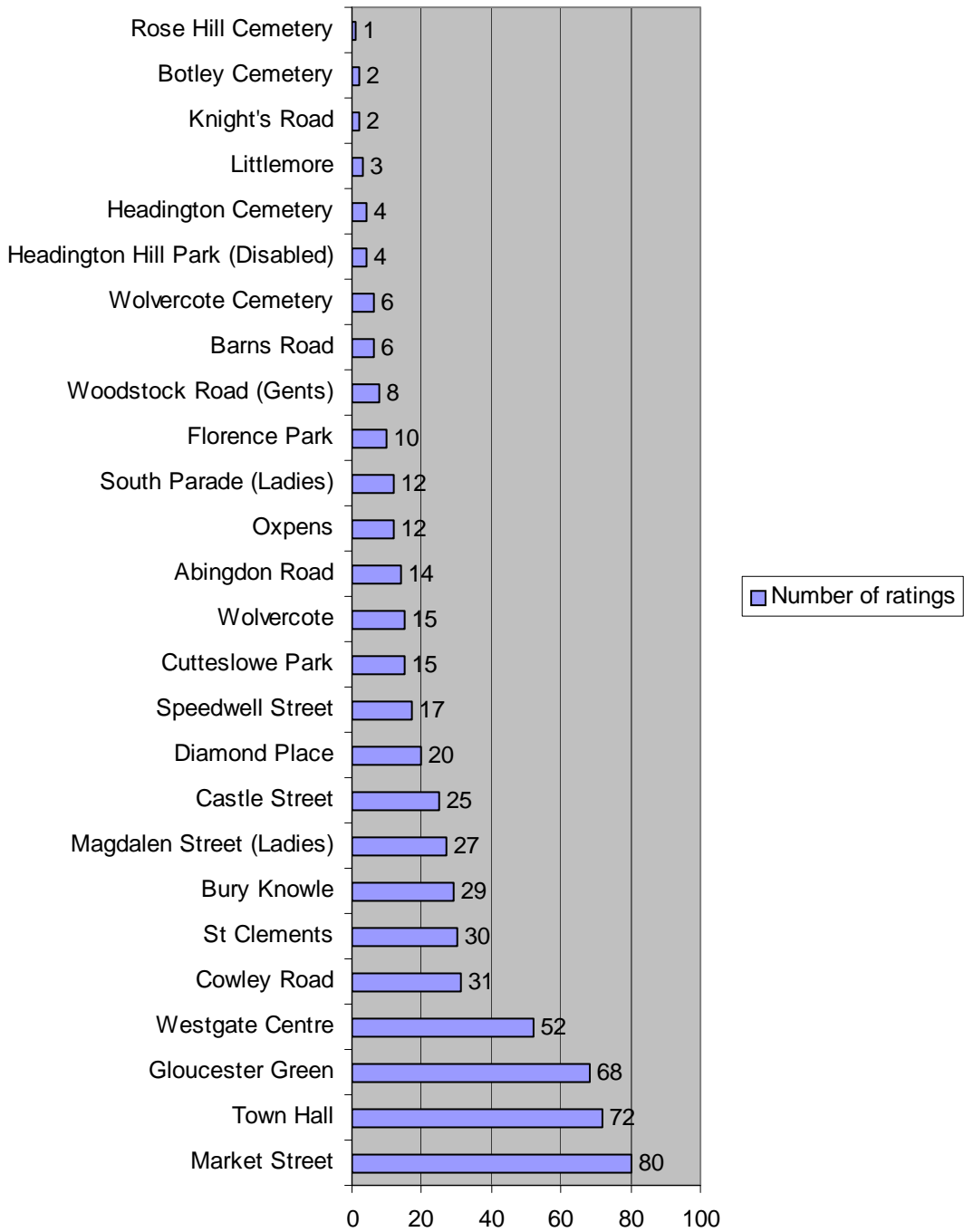
## **Breakdown of survey responses**

### **Question 1: Usage and quality ratings for different facilities**

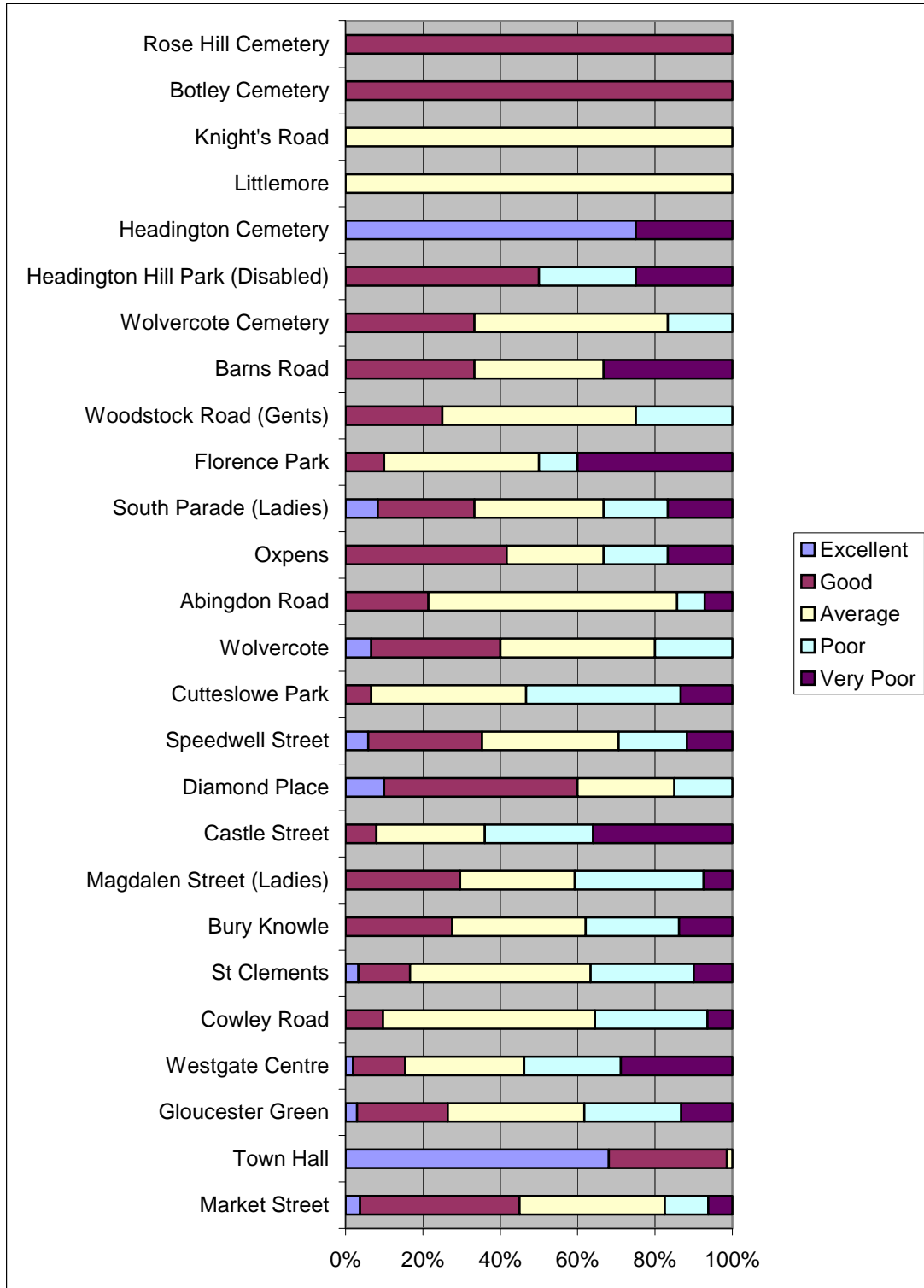
Respondents were asked to rate the toilets they had visited in the past 12 months for their overall impression. Quality was rated on a scale of Excellent through to Very Poor.

This table below shows the number of ratings each facility received – this therefore roughly reflects the usage levels over the past 12 months. City Centre toilets at Market Street, Town Hall, Gloucester Green and Westgate Centre received the most visits, and the suburban toilets and those in cemeteries were visited the least.

Number of ratings



The chart below represents the ratings given to each facility. The highest ratings received were for the Town Hall toilets, which were rated as 'Excellent' by 68% of those who had visited. In contrast Castle Street, Florence Park, Barns Road and the Westgate Centre were all rated as 'Very Poor' by large numbers of respondents.



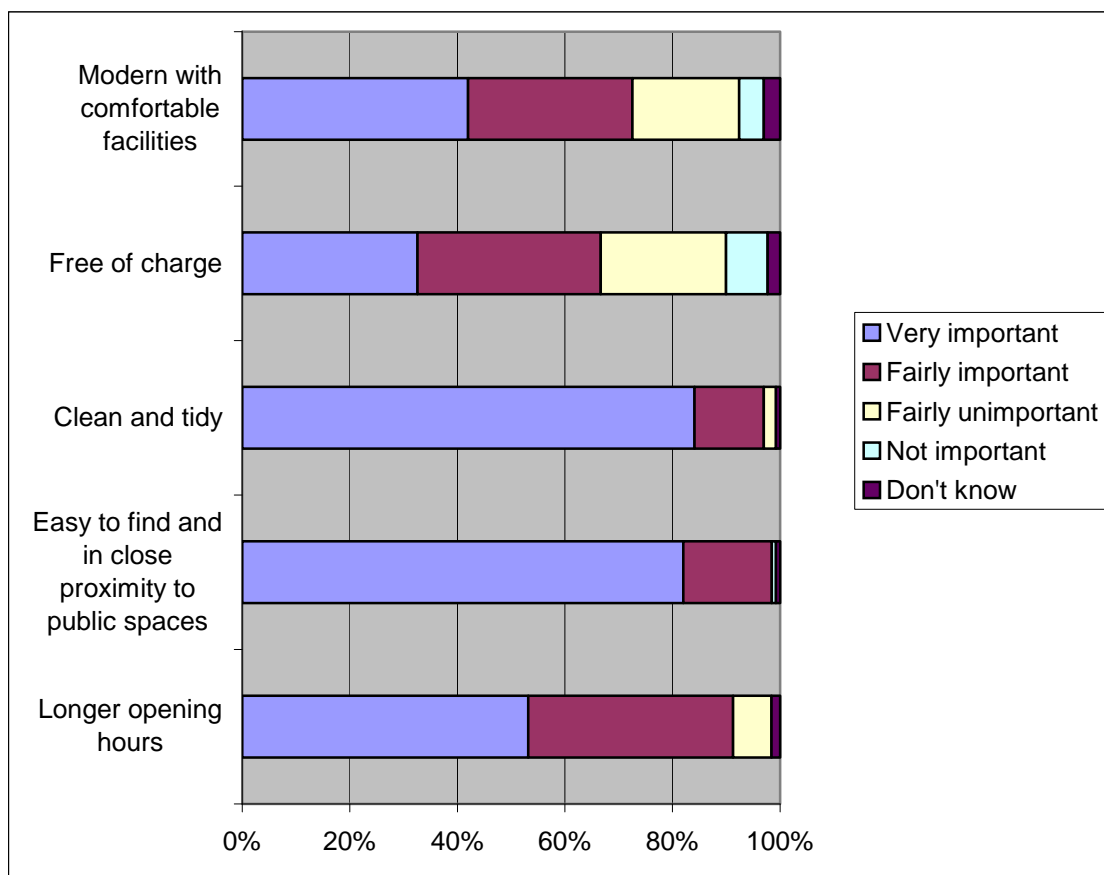
### Question 2: RADAR keys.

Respondents were asked if they had a RADAR key, which is a key that allows disabled people access to certain facilities. 5% of those who answered this question said they did have a RADAR key.

Interestingly, although 19 people who gave demographic information described themselves as having a disability, only 7 people said that they had a RADAR key.

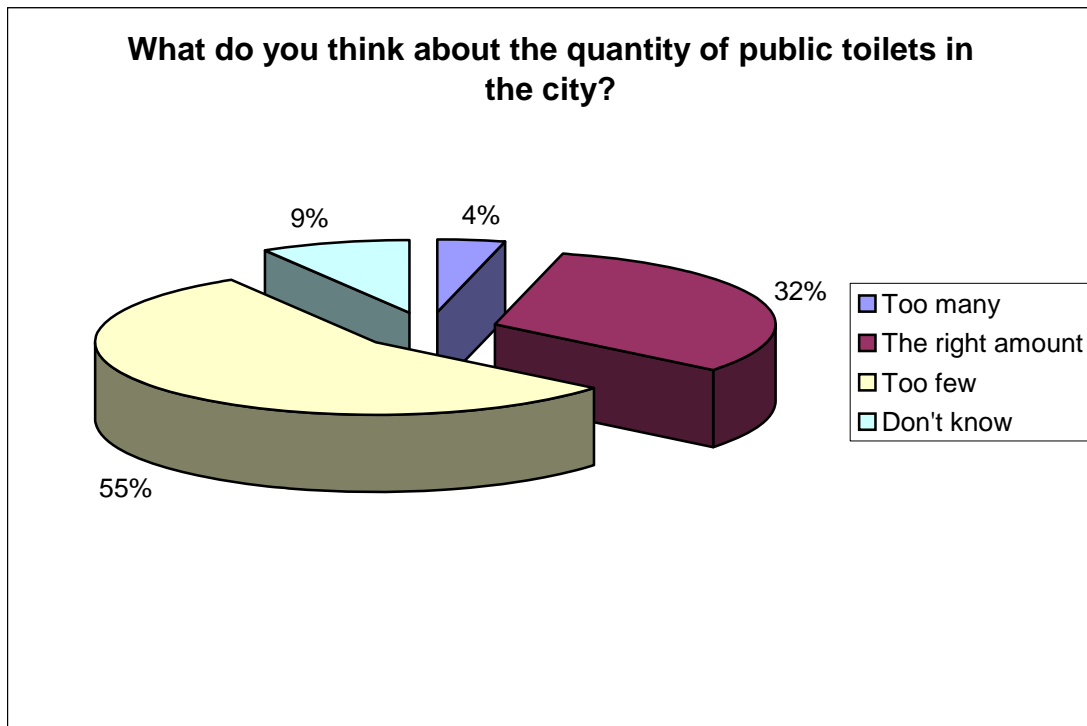
### Question 3: Priorities.

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of toilet provision in order of preference. The results showed that the two most important features are that toilets were clean and tidy and that they were easy to find and in close proximity to public spaces – more than 80% of respondents felt these factors were 'very important'. These were seen to be of higher importance than whether the toilet was free of charge or had longer opening hours.



#### Question 4: Quantity of public toilets.

We asked what people thought about the quantity of public toilets available in Oxford. Over half of respondents (55%) felt there are too few public toilets in Oxford, whereas only 4% of respondents felt that there were too many. Around one third of people in the survey (32%) thought the number of toilets provided was the right amount. These percentages were not significantly different for RADAR key holders and people without RADAR keys.



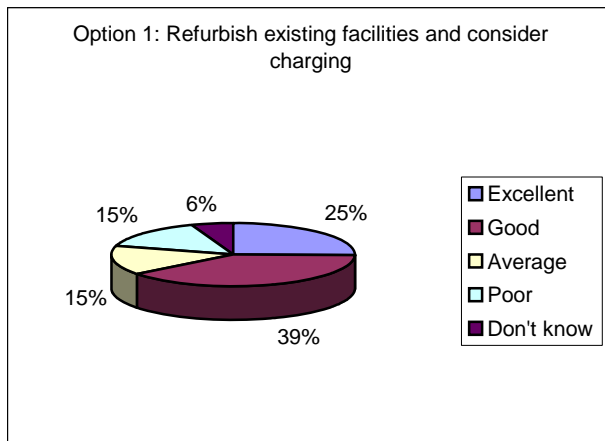
#### Question 5: Options for future improvements

In this question, three options were presented as proposals for improving the provision of public toilets in Oxford; respondents were asked to rate these ideas and were invited to make any comments or suggestions of their own. It was also suggested to the respondents that the ideal solution might be a combination of more than one of the options.

The option with the most support was the Community Toilet Scheme, where the Council works in partnership with local businesses and encourages them to allow members of the public to use their facilities without any obligation to use their services or make a purchase. This option was rated as excellent by almost half of the respondents (47%).

Option 1 – to refurbish existing facilities and charge for use – was also well supported; 25% of respondents thought this was an 'excellent' idea, with a further 39% supporting it as a 'good' idea.

The least popular option was the installation of Automatic Public Conveniences, with the majority of respondents (34%) saying this idea was poor. However, all of the proposals had a positive overall response.

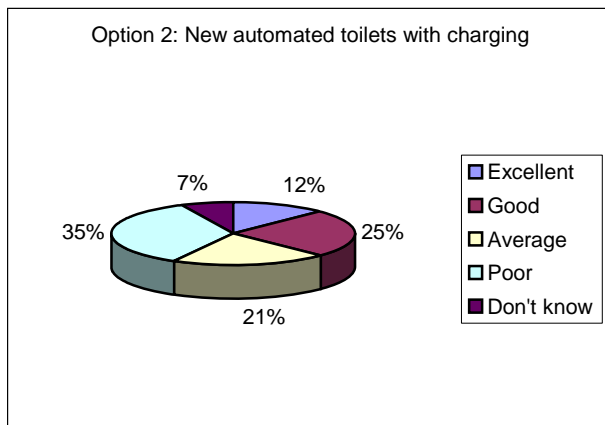


Views are mixed on the level of refurbishment that might be required for places like Gloucester Green:

*"It is imperative that top-class facilities be introduced within the old city centre"*

*"Spend the money on keeping existing facilities open and clean. No upgrades and forget "world-class!" provision in Gloucester Green - waste of money. I like the idea of using pubs etc I have seen it working well in London."*

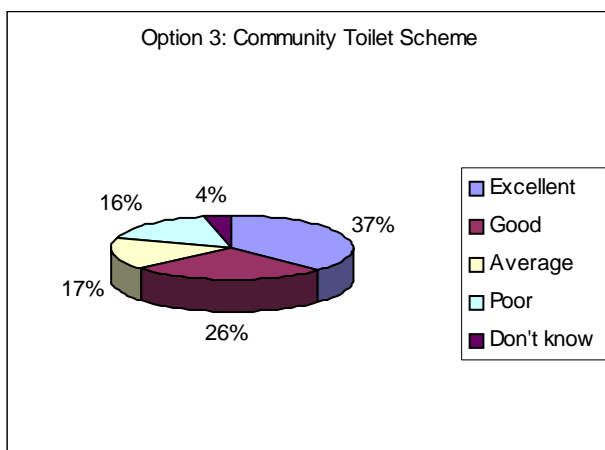
*"Toilets do not need to be 'world-class', just somewhere to go."*



Views on Automatic Public Conveniences seems to be largely based on their appearance or experiences elsewhere:

*"The free-standing/paying cubicles are a good option, but would need to be placed where they are not an eyesore"*

*"Free-standing cubicle toilets are ugly and big and would be a disaster in Oxford"*



Community Toilets seem like a popular option, although there are some reservations:

*"I support the Community Toilet Scheme – but it would only work if sufficient businesses over a wide area and with a good proportion open later in the evening"*

*"I note that one of your options is to ask local businesses to make their toilets available... this is totally impractical for a coach load of around 50 people."*

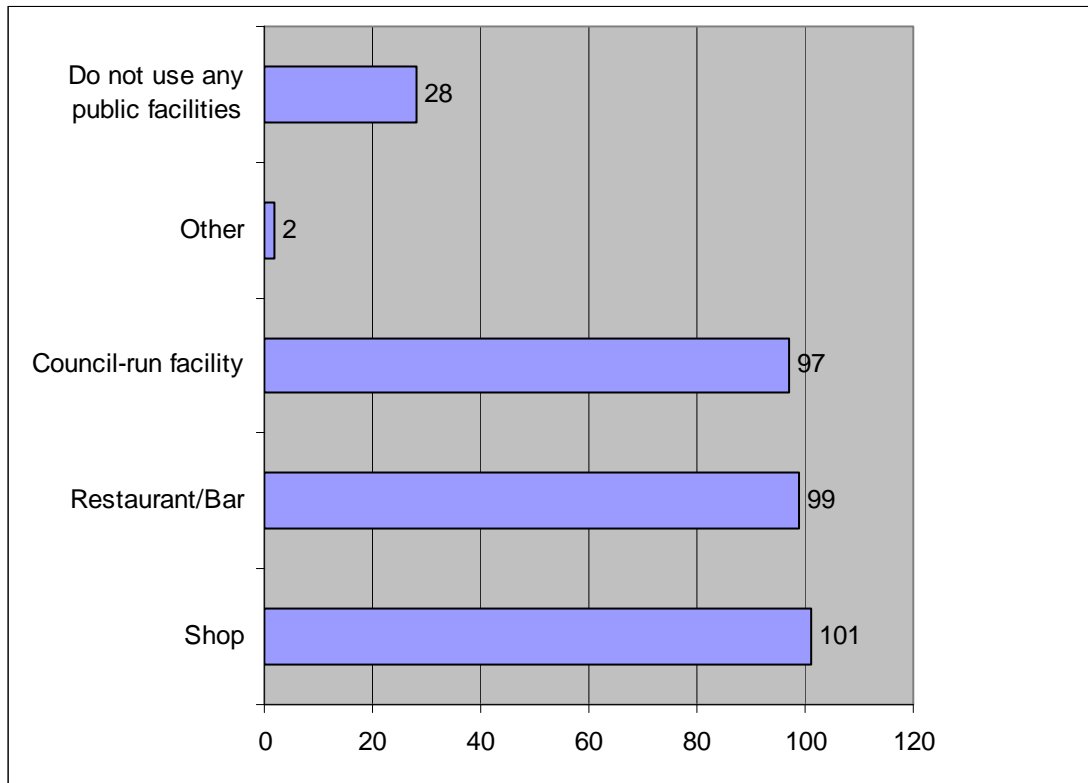
Other innovative options that were suggested included:

*"Put Amsterdam-style weekend urinals on Cowley Road, George Street and Walton Street"*

*"Get local businesses to sponsor toilets to raise money to keep them clean and maintained – adverts in the toilets"*

### Question 6: Where do you use toilets when away from home?

The survey asked where people were likely to use toilet facilities whilst away from home. Numbers were very similar for the amount using shops (102 people), restaurants or bars (99 people) and the Council-run facilities (97 people).



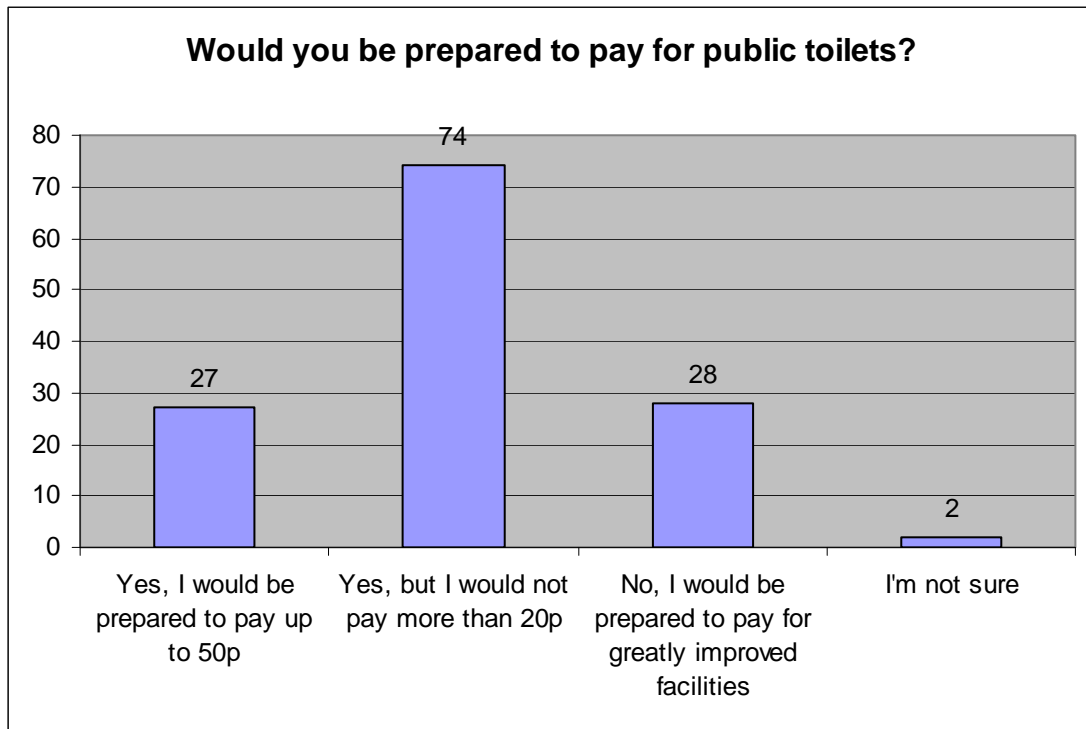
A large number of people also regularly make use of public toilets in museums, garages, train stations, libraries and leisure centres.



### Question 7: Would you be prepared to pay to use public toilets?

According to our survey, 77% of the total number of respondents were happy to pay to use public toilets – and of these, approximately 25% would be prepared to pay up to 50 pence.

Approximately 20% of respondents would not be prepared to pay to use public toilets.



On this particular issue, people commented that :

*“Would be happy to pay 50p, but only if some free toilets were also supplied, if one did not have the fee available. Public toilets should be free.”*

*“If you charge for this service, which I support, you must ensure that the facilities are properly maintained and that the money taken stays within that service.”*

*“Charging for toilets is a bit hard on pensioners and very hard on some, such as homeless and unemployed”*

*“If men’s urinals were charged, many men would find somewhere else to pee – to everyone’s disadvantage. As a matter of public hygiene, public WCs should be free.”*

*“Whilst I personally might pay more than 20p, I think that may deter some, which would not be fair.”*

### **Question 8: Any other comments on the public toilets in Oxford?**

At the end of the survey, respondents were able to express any further comments and opinions relating to Oxford's public toilets and here are a selection of responses that were given:

It was frequently mentioned that better signage is much needed so that people know where to find the existing facilities:

*"Better advertising of toilets as I've lived here for 8 years and still didn't know about most of those listed"*

*"Could you publicise better where the public toilets are? I had no idea that there were any toilets in the Westgate, and I have lived in Oxford since before the Westgate was built!"*

*"Why not just have toilets people can actually find, that are open and clean?"*

*"I am often on foot in Oxford and have struggled to find toilets on occasion: I feel better signposting would in some areas avoid really miserable experiences!"*

Many people responding to the survey are not happy with current provision:

*"The current situation is terrible – a very poor reflection on the city"*

*"Compared with other towns that I visit, Oxford's public toilets are awful"*

*"I have only ever taken my children into the public toilets as an absolute last resort, they're an eyesore, too often ill-kempt and one never feels entirely safe."*

*"We must have good, clean, up-to-date toilets. Think of all the visitors and people that live here. Think forward and not back."*

*"It's absolutely essential that clean public toilets are available in areas of high foot traffic. It's a mark of a civilised society."*

However, quantity of toilets is quite often viewed as more important than quality:

*"Better to have more 'adequate' facilities than fewer 'world-class' ones."*

*"It's far, far better to have simple smaller loos scattered throughout the city than concentrating all your resources in one place."*

*"Quality is less important than an abundance of free toilets"*

A commonly expressed view in this section was that the public toilet provision should be a Council priority and not an area for making budget cuts:

*“ Savings should be made elsewhere, and the provision of clean and safe public toilets is a fundamental role of a City Council, at the expense of leisure and arts budgets.”*

*“Toilets not to be regarded as an either/or, but as necessity, with additional funding from other budgetary areas”*

Many people recognise that charging may be a sensible compromise:

*“A modest charge for longer opening hours 7 days a week”*

*“I think a civilised society –especially one that has so many tourists – should provide a reasonable number of toilets free. But if economies have to be made, then it would be better to maintain existing facilities with some charging.”*

Other people suggest a shared responsibility for providing toilet facilities:

*“I would like to see businesses that provide good serviced toilets rewarded for their efforts”*

*“Require all supermarkets above a certain size to provide customer toilets, including disabled”*

## Appendix A – Questionnaire used in the online survey.

### **Who is asking the questions?**

Our City Works department who are responsible for running and maintaining the public toilets in the city.

### **What do we need to know?**

What you think of the current quality and provision of public toilets in the city. There are currently 25 public toilet sites open across the city; of these 22 are operated and maintained by City Works (5 in the City Centre, 13 outside the City Centre, and 4 in cemeteries). There are also 2 public toilet sites, which are currently maintained by the Parks department. Additionally, the toilet facilities in the Town Hall are open to the public

Some of the Council's public toilet facilities are not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act and so require significant investment. Within our current budget, the Council will struggle to make additional improvements such as this.

### **Why are we asking you?**

We need to make significant savings from the public toilets budget in the coming years while also ensuring we provide residents and visitors to Oxford with a good standard of public toilet facilities.

This is likely to lead to the closure of some facilities. The site of potential closures is likely to depend on several factors, including whether the public toilets are regularly used or not and whether alternative facilities are available nearby.

Consultation will take place with local residents in areas where a public toilet site has been earmarked for potential closure. We want to work with residents to help us decide where public toilets should be and where there is cause for closure.

The closure of some facilities could lead to the improvement of some of the other existing facilities as resources would be concentrated across a smaller number of facilities. We would also explore alternative ways to provide public toilets.

### **What will happen to the results?**

We will use the results of this survey to help in making recommendations to the City Executive Board (this is a decision-making board made up of Councillors) in September.

1. For each of the council-run facilities that you have visited in the last 12 months, please indicate the overall quality of this facility.

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very Poor</b>	<b>Not Used</b>
Barns Road						
Littlemore						
Knight's Road						
Cowley Road						
St Clements						
Bury Knowle						
Abingdon Road						
Diamond Place						

South Parade (ladies)						
Woodstock Rd (gents)						
Wolvercote						
Oxpens						
Speedwell Street						
Cutteslowe Park						
Headington Hill Park (disabled only)						
Florence Park						

### City Centre

Westgate Centre						
Market Street						
Gloucester Green						
Magdalen Street						
Castle Street						
Town Hall						

### Cemeteries

Botley						
Rose Hill						
Headington						
Wolvercote						

1. Do you have a RADAR key and use the disabled facilities at the public toilets listed above? (The RADAR scheme is for people who are registered disabled, allowing access to public convenience facilities)

Yes  No

2. Please rate the following feature in order of priority for you:

	Very important	Fairly important	Fairly unimportant	Not important	Don't know
Longer opening hours					
Easy to find and in close proximity to public spaces					
Clean and tidy					
Free of charge					
Modern and comfortable facilities					

1. What do you think of the quantity of public toilet sites in the city?

Too many

The right amount

Too few

Don't know

2. In order to provide a sufficient amount of higher quality public toilets, we have developed 3 potential proposals for the future. A combination of all 3 proposals is also a possible option. Please can you rate the options below.

**Option 1 - Refurbish and charge for improved facilities.**

Existing facilities are currently being evaluated for their potential to be refurbished. In particular we propose to refurbish the facilities at Gloucester Green to provide a world-class facility that will be convenient for both residents and tourists. We would consider charging for these improved facilities.

Excellent

Good

Average

Poor

Don't know

**Option 2 - Automatic Public Conveniences**

Several local authorities have already used automated public toilets, which are free-standing cubicles loaned and maintained by private contractors.

These facilities are available on a 24-hour basis, with an entrance fee, and could overcome previous concerns about the current limited opening hours of our public conveniences.

Excellent

Good

Average

Poor

Don't know

**Option 3 - Community Toilet Scheme**

In order to provide quality facilities at low cost several other local authorities have successfully introduced Community Toilet Schemes whereby local businesses receive incentives in order to freely open their toilet facilities to the public.

The public are made aware of the location of these and the businesses provide their facilities during their normal opening hours with no requirement to make a purchase of their goods or services

The benefits of this scheme are numerous accessible, high-quality facilities for the public at a low cost to the Council.

Excellent

Good

Average

Poor

Don't know

Please let us know if there are any other options you would like us to consider

1. If you need to use public toilet facilities when you are away from home, where are you likely to use them?

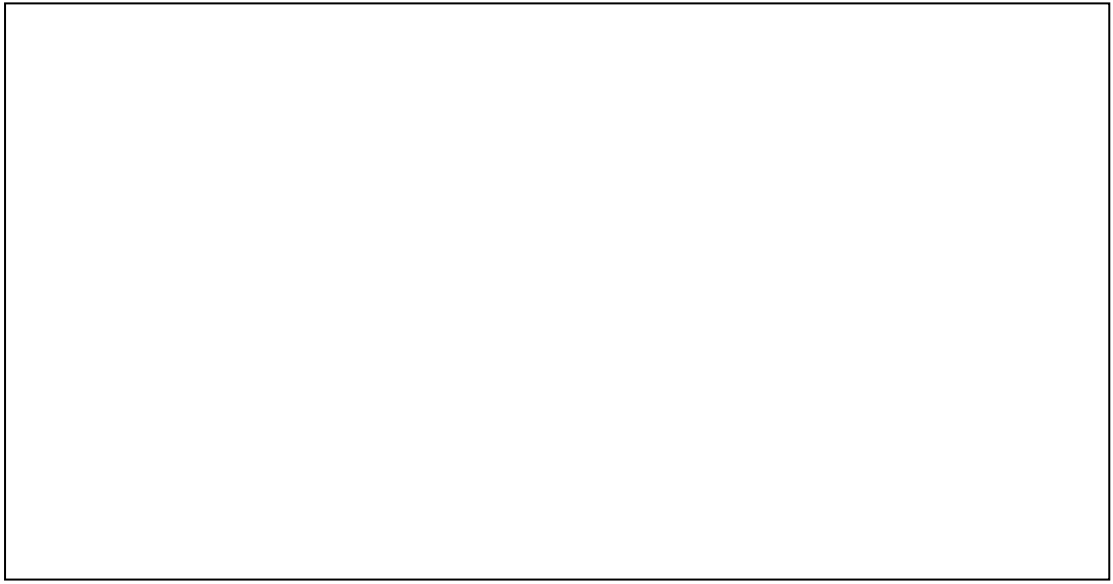
- Shop
- Restaurant/Bar
- Council run facility
- Other (please specify)
- Do not use any public toilet facilities

2. In common with many other cities and towns in the country, we may consider introducing charges for public toilets in the city centre. Charging would provide us with the resources to introduce a new, modern public toilet facility that offers better lighting, new fittings and redecoration among other features.

Please tick the statement that best applies to you regarding charging.

- Yes, I would be prepared to pay up to 50p
- Yes, but I would not pay more than 20p
- No, I would not be prepared to pay for greatly improved toilet facilities
- I'm not sure

8. Do you have any other comments that you would like to add in relation to the provision of public toilets in Oxford?





Appendix B – Interested groups that were specifically invited to take part in the online survey

Cyclox
Old Marston Parish council
Risinghurst & Sandhills PC
Blackbird Leys Parish Council
Littlemore Parish Council
Thames Travel
Night shelter
Oxford Brookes Student Union
Oxford University Student Union
OCVC student union
Oxford Bus Company
Business groups (the Oxfordshire Town Chambers Network)
Market Traders (CMTA)
Advice centres
Oxford Association of Hotels & Guest Houses
Oxford Pedestrian Association
Tourist Guides
Oxford Strategic Partnership
Public Realm Seminar Group
Oxfordshire Community for Voluntary Action
Transport for All
Age Concern Oxfordshire
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Centre
Mencap – Oxford
My Life My Choice
Oxford Access Forum
Oxford Carers Centre
Oxfordshire MIND
Oxford Association for the Blind
User Led Organisation