

Customer Contact Consultation Sep 13 to Jan 14- Findings

1. Introduction

The consultation took place between Sep13-Jan 14 and aimed to find out from our customers what is important to them in their contact with us and what issues may affect their experience. We sought to understand how they wish to access services and how we can proactively encourage access via the web and promote the advantages of self-service.

We used the following methods to reach the widest number of customers we could:

- An online survey advertised on the front page of the Council's website
- A paper survey made available to all customers who used our offices in St Aldates Chambers and Templars Square and other community buildings
- The survey was sent to all relevant stakeholders & businesses that we hold on our database
- Some of the questions in our survey were included in the 2013 Autumn Talkback survey

We received a total of 332 responses either via the online survey, through our reception points or in the post. On evaluation we were pleased to note that we had a representative sample of the residents that make up our customers when compared against our demographic information from the Census 2011. We had less success getting responses from other stakeholders and businesses with just 29 taking part. Although the 900+ members of the Talkback Panel are representative of Oxford; the 323 respondents to the Autumn Talkback Survey were not in respect of age and ethnicity.

2. Summary of Findings

- Across all three surveys few customers reported a problem in making contact with the Council. The telephone came out as the preferred method of contact in all the surveys, followed by face to face appointment and face to face drop-in on the main survey. Email and via the Council website however, were the 2nd most popular methods of contact for respondents on the talkback survey and from the business/stakeholder customers.
- On the main survey the telephone is preferred contact for personal correspondence closely followed by letter and email; email is the preferred contact for general correspondence. The letter and email also scored highly in both the Talkback Survey and in the business/stakeholder survey.
- Those with an age range of 65+ overwhelming prefer personal correspondence via a letter.
- Across all three surveys customers view being polite, professional and efficient as the most important element of Customer Service.
- Having multi-skilled operatives is the most important improvement to customers experience on the telephone. Resolving queries at the first call, and answered quickly (i.e receive a call back rather than being put on hold) all featured highly.
- St Aldate's Chambers is the place that customers normally get help or information closely followed by the Council Website.
- Overall a small majority stated that they would not; or probably would not; use video conferencing if it was available.
- A majority of people access the internet via their home broadband with access via mobile phone second and work or place of study third for respondents on the main survey. As expected business/stakeholder customers accessed the internet mainly at work. Although there was a low number who did not; or had no plans to use the

internet; it was nonetheless a significant enough number to conclude that our normal channels of contact are important to these customers.

- Overall of those asked who had accessed the Council's website in the last 6 months, a majority reported that it was a good experience.
- Those surveyed definitely know that Council Tax services can be accessed online but were not so aware of other services that we offer online.
- A majority expressed that simpler online forms requiring fewer clicks, would encourage them to access services online.
- The overwhelming majority of respondents do not access Oxford City Council's Facebook or Twitter accounts.
- The majority of tenant respondents from the main survey and the talkback survey said "yes" or "maybe" they would like to be able to report and book repairs online.
- E-mail was one of the preferred forms of contact for businesses/stakeholders.
- 32% of businesses responding said they didn't use e-billing and although this was only 9 responses out of 29 it is fact that as a whole few businesses have taken up the option; we need to understand why this is and promote the service better.
- Businesses/Stakeholders reported that simple on-line forms, minimal clicks and quicker response times would help their experience with using the web (similar to residents).
- Just under half of those respondents on the main survey said they would or probably would use self-service terminals. The result was much lower on the talkback survey but it was encouraging to note, that when the results were further broken down it was noted that frequent users of Council services such as social tenants would be more amenable.

The detailed report from the main survey follows on pages 3-21. The report of the outcome of the customer contact consultation with businesses & stakeholders and an extract from the Talkback Survey Autumn 2013 that concerned Customer Contact are both available as background papers.

Customer Contact Consultation Survey Report - Residents

Aim:

The Council's Customer Strategy is being revised following the successful implementation of the Customer Service Centre and simultaneous development of the web. We are focused on putting customers' needs at the forefront, improving customer service and offering a quality experience across all the ways a customer might contact us. This survey aimed to find out from our customers what is important to them in their contact with us and what issues may affect their experience.

Highlights:

- Customers prefer to contact by telephone (22.38%) Face to Face Appointment (20.50%) and then Face to Face Drop – in (14.63%). Email and via the Council Website feature closely behind.
- The telephone is preferred contact for personal correspondence; email is the preferred contact for general correspondence.
- Those with an age range of 65+ overwhelming prefer personal correspondence via a letter (36.84%).
- 50.67% of those asked state that nothing has stopped them from making contact with Council services. 44.9% have experienced something that stopped them making contact with Council services.
- Oxford City Council's customers view being Polite, Professional and Efficient as the most important element of Customer Service.
- Having multi-skilled operatives is the most important improvement to customers experience on the telephone.
- St Aldate's Chambers (37.16%) is the place that customers normally get help or information closely followed by the Council Website (26.51%).
- A majority, 53.37%, stated that they probably would not use video conferencing if it was possible.
- A majority of people access the internet via their home broadband with access via mobile phone second on 23.38% followed by Work or place of study at 12.23%.
- A majority (59.74%) of those asked had access the Council's website in the last 6 months and a majority state that it was a 'good' or "very good" experience (63%).
- Those surveyed definitely knew about the Council Tax services that can be accessed online.
- 25.32% already access services online (25.32%).17.74% expressed that simpler online forms would encourage them to access services online.
- An overwhelming majority of those asked do not access Oxford City Council's Facebook or Twitter accounts.
- 67% of tenant respondents said "yes" or "maybe" they would like to be able to report and book repairs online.

1. Introduction:

This report shows the results of the Customer Consultation Survey titled '*Making Contact with the Council*' which was made available online and in paper form. The report details the personal data of the responses to qualify whether the survey was representative in relation to the 2011 Census. Following the personal data; the report details each question and results of the questions with specific references to secondary data comprising of the 2011 Census, Demographic Report further analysis (listed as a background paper). The report on

responses from Business/Stakeholder Customers is at Appendix 1. An extract from the Autumn2013 Talk Back survey that is concerned with Customer Contact is at Appendix 2. The full version of the Talkback Autumn 2013 survey is available as a background paper.

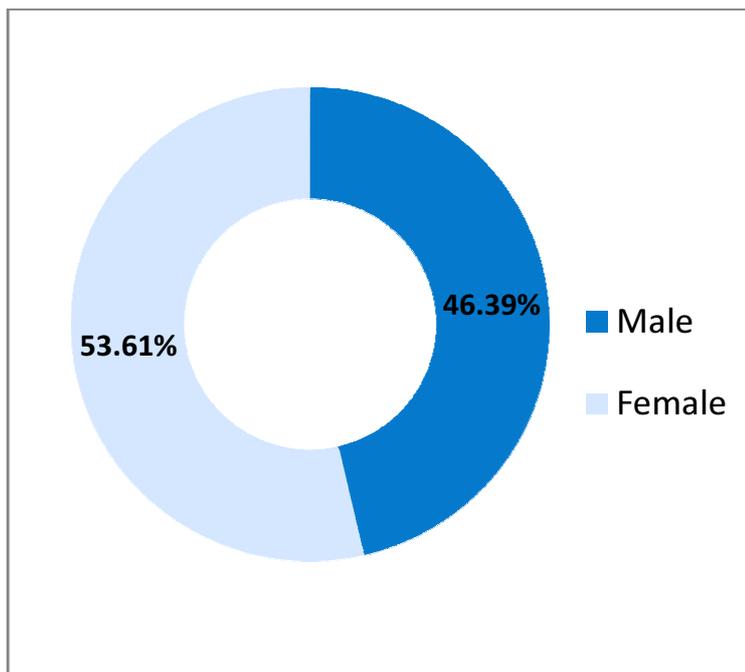
Personal Data:

For the consultation with residents we decided to collect personal data that the resident wished to disclose. This is to enable us to compare the results with the census data to reveal whether we have captured a true reflection of Oxford City residents.

The personal data allows us to analyse whether a particular age group, district, gender and ethnicity has a particular preference to Customer Contact. We can then ensure we are working to become more inclusive for our customers.

However, out of 332 respondents to the survey 79.2% disclosed their gender and age range. 52.1% gave us their postcode and 75.9% informed us whether their day to day activities are limited or not. 78% of respondents gave us details of their ethnicity which could mean we begin to identify hard to reach groups.

2.1 Gender:

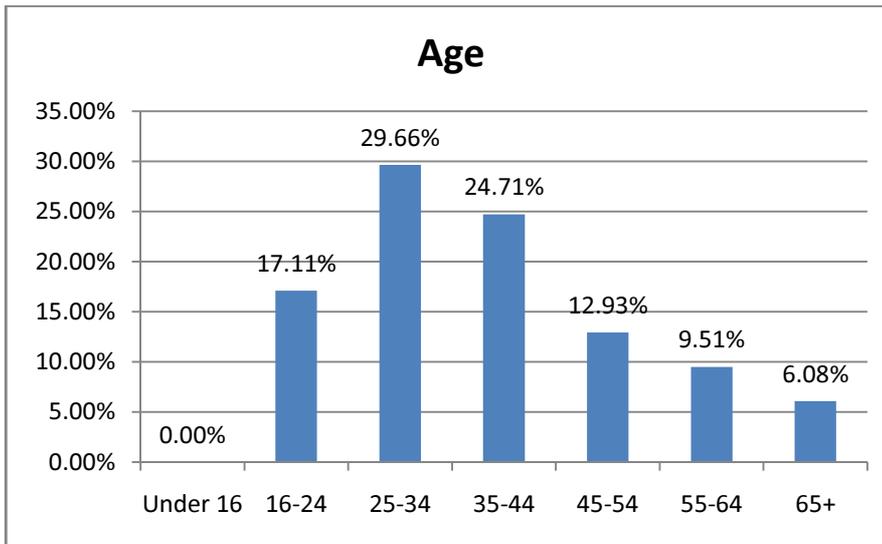


If we compare these figures to the 2011 Census data; 50.42% of the population are female.¹ Further to this, the Demographic Data Analysis indicates that 61.04% of our Customers in 2012 were Female and this trend appears to continue with the figures from August 2013.² Our records show that a majority of our customers are female; but, from our consultation, 53.61% classified themselves as female. Therefore, from a gender perspective, our results have a closer resemblance to the Oxford City population.

¹http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decC/Age_occw.htm

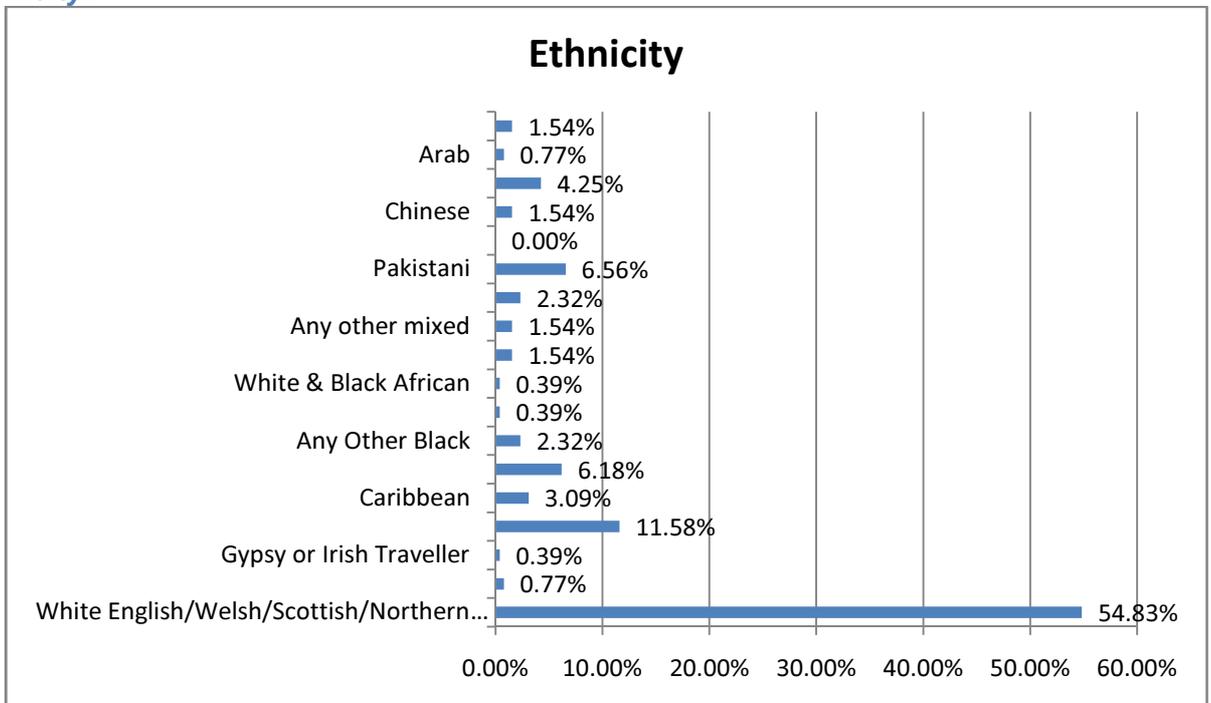
² Demographic Data Analysis, [See background papers]

2.2 Age:



The majority of the people who replied to our consultation were clearly in the age bracket of 25-35 (29.66%) with 35-44 age range closely behind at 24.71%. We do not have data from our own records of age; however we are able to compare this with the 2011 Census. The 2011 Census shows, in Oxford, 35% of the population are aged between 15 and 29 years which has the youngest median age of 29.9 years.³ As a result, our consultation results for 'Age' reflected the Census data. However, the 65+ age range was under represented in our Consultation with only 6.08% of respondents compared to the 2011 Census which shows 10.99% of Oxford City population being over 65 years old.

2.3 Ethnicity:



We do not have records of our customer's ethnicity; therefore we have to rely on the 2011 Census data to determine whether the Consultation was representative. An overwhelming majority of those surveyed classified themselves as White 'English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern

³http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decC/Age_occw.htm

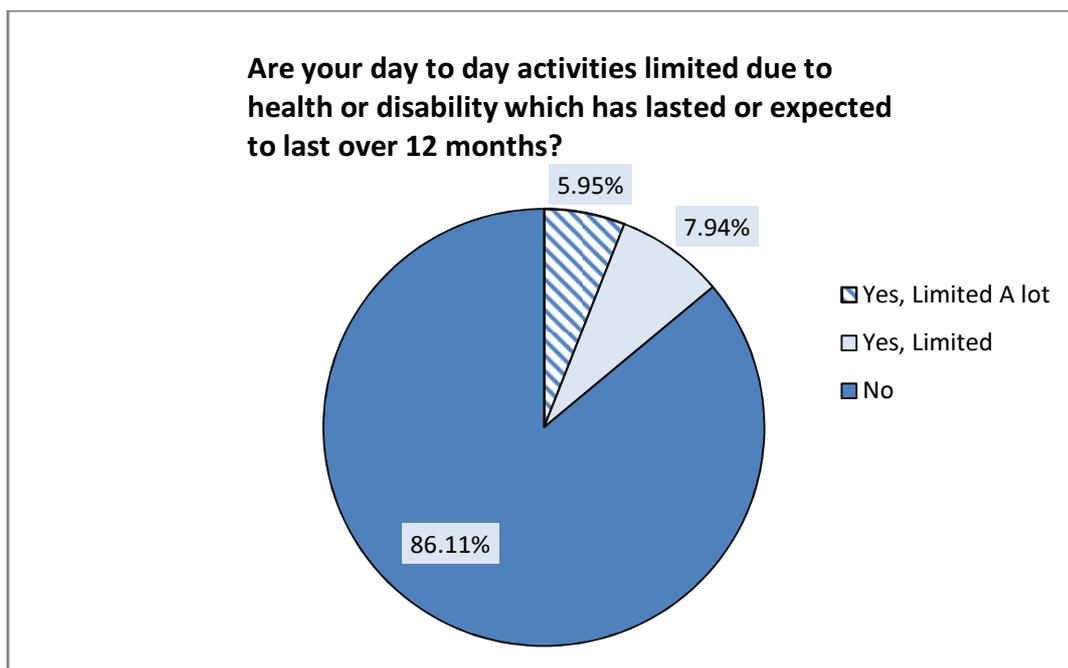
Irish/British' (54.83%). This is a lower majority than the ethnicity data from the 2011 Census which shows 63.61% of the population are 'White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British'. The 2nd highest classified ethnicity we surveyed was Any Other White at 11.58% which is similar to the 2011 Census figure of 12.37%.

Further details:⁴

- The 2011 Census shows the Pakistani ethnicity at 3.17% of the population and in our survey 6.56% classified themselves as Pakistani.
- The 2011 Census shows 2.92% classify themselves as Indian and in our survey 2.32% classify themselves as Indian.
- From our Consultation 6.18% classify themselves as African and the 2011 Census 2.93% classify themselves as Black African. The issue here is that our Consultation did not specify Black African it simply said 'African'. This may make it difficult to compare.
- Of those surveyed, 1.54% classified themselves as Chinese and in the 2011 Census 2.34 classified themselves as Chinese.

2.4 Limited Day to Day Activities:

We asked: *Are your day to day activities limited due to health or disability which has lasted or expected to last over 12 months?*

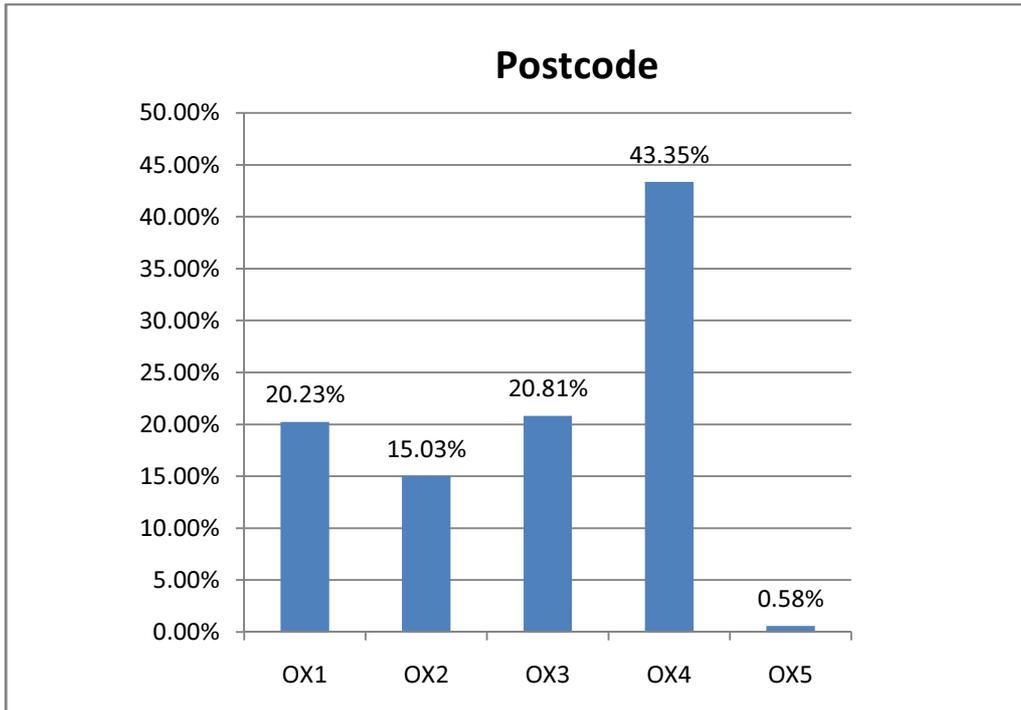


We are able to directly compare these figures with the 2011 Census as the same question was asked. In the 2011 Census 5% of the population stated that their Day to Day activities were limited a lot and 7% of the population stated their Day to Day activities were limited a little. Our consultation mirrors these figures.⁵

2.5 Postcode:

⁴http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decC/Ethnicity_occw.htm

⁵http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decC/Disability_occw.htm



A majority of those surveyed lived in the area of OX4 (43.35%) which covers wards *Littlemore, Rose Hill & Iffley, Blackbird Leys and Northfield*. Customers from the OX4 area have the highest amount of contact with Oxford City Council.⁶

Oxford City Council has few customers in OX5 where there are a small number of Council Housing but it is worth noting that this area is outside of the Oxford City Council boundaries.

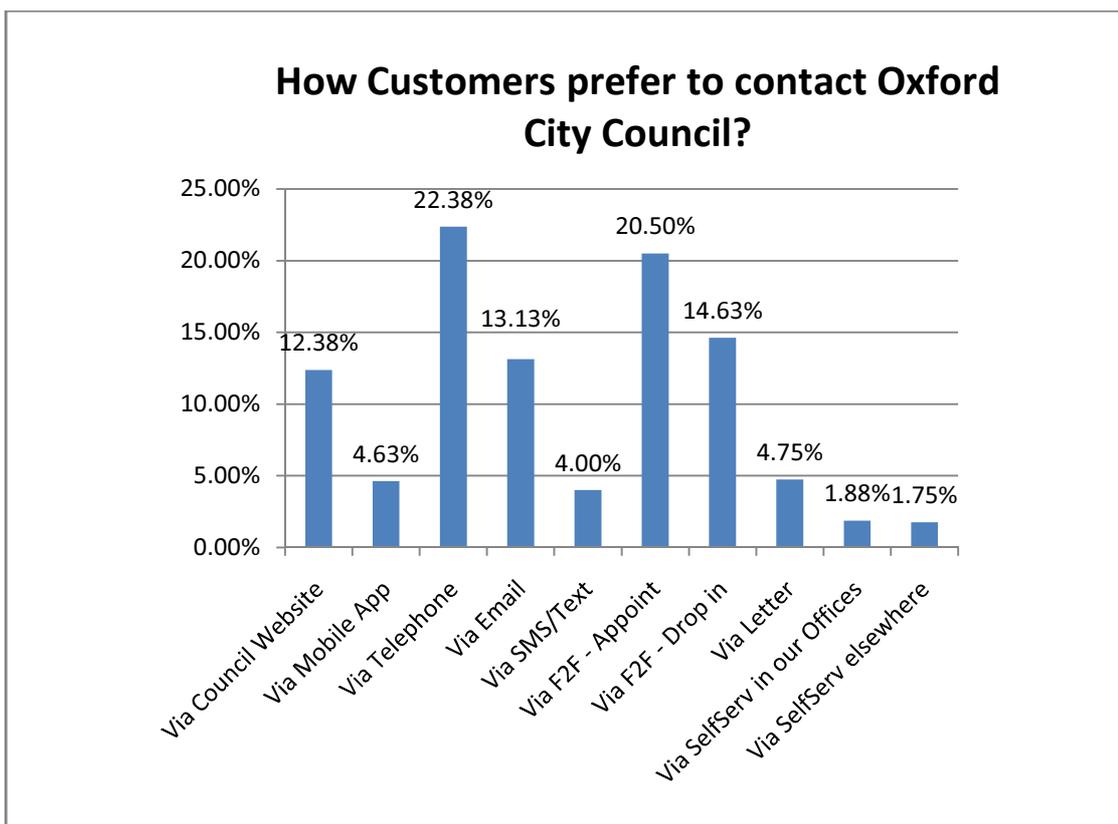
15.03% of those surveyed are from the OX2 area which is the lowest within the Oxford City boundary.

3. Making Contact with the Council

Discounting the personal data, the survey consisted of 15 questions – the report goes through each question asked.

3.1 How would you prefer to make contact with the Council?

⁶ Demographic Data Analysis, [See background papers]



According to the Consultation, our customers prefer to contact Oxford City Council by telephone (22.38%) followed by Face to Face Appointment (20.50%) and then Face to Face Drop – in (14.63%). Email and via the Council Website feature closely behind.

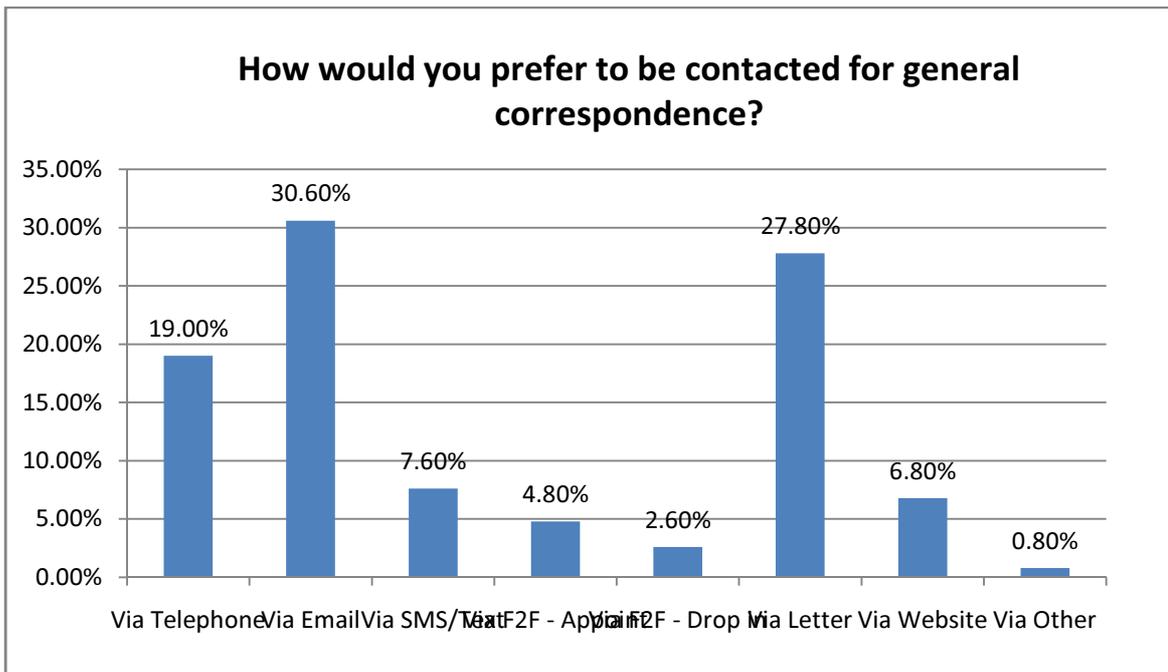
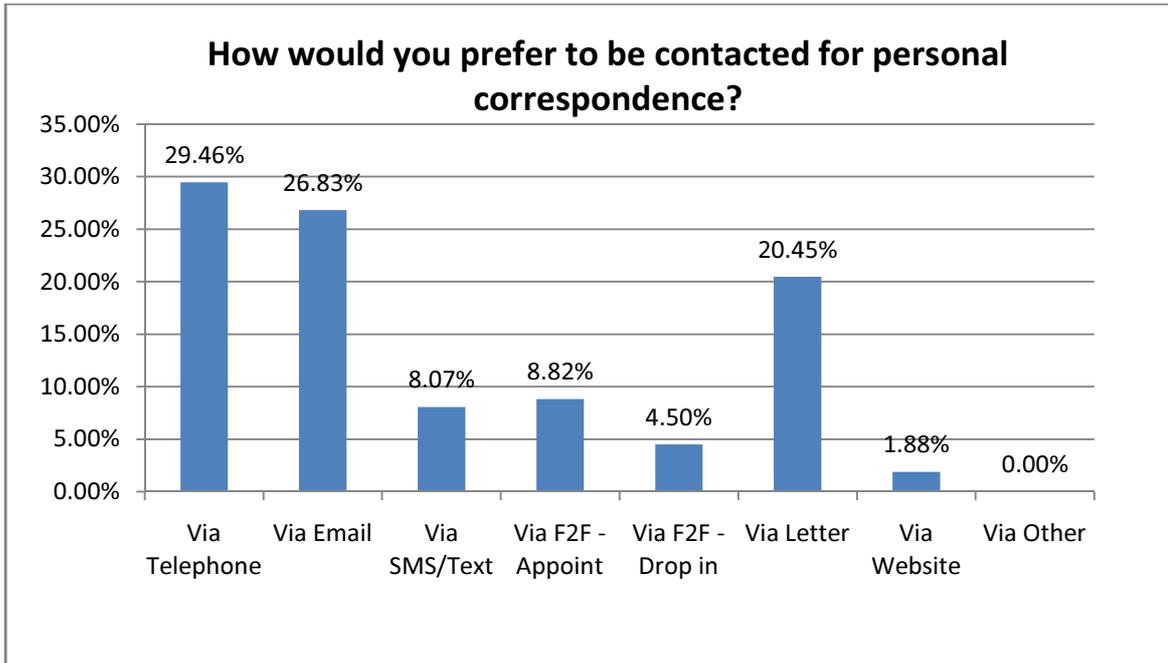
Closer analysis shows that every age group apart from the 16-24 year olds prefer to contact by telephone. The 16-24 years marginally prefer to contact the Council via a Face to Face Appointment followed by the telephone.⁷ Although the age range 25-34 year olds prefer to contact Oxford City Council via telephone and Face to Face Appointment (18.72%); 17.11% of those asked prefer to contact Oxford City Council via the website. Those over the age of 65 prefer to only contact Oxford City Council by telephone, face to face appointment or face to face drop in. No one over the age of 65 state that they prefer to contact via mobile app or SMS/Text.

People who consider that their day to day activities are limited a little prefer to contact the Council via a face to face appointment (25.64%).⁸ Those that consider they are not limited to day to day activities or limited a lot by day to day activities prefer to contact the Council via telephone.

3.2 If we need to contact you, how would you prefer us to make contact for personal correspondence and, for general correspondence?

⁷ See background papers for further breakdown of statistics.

⁸ See background papers for further breakdown of statistics.



We can see from these graphs that customers of Oxford City Council prefer the Council to contact them via telephone, email or letter on all occasions. The telephone is preferred contact for personal correspondence whereas; email is the preferred contact for general correspondence.

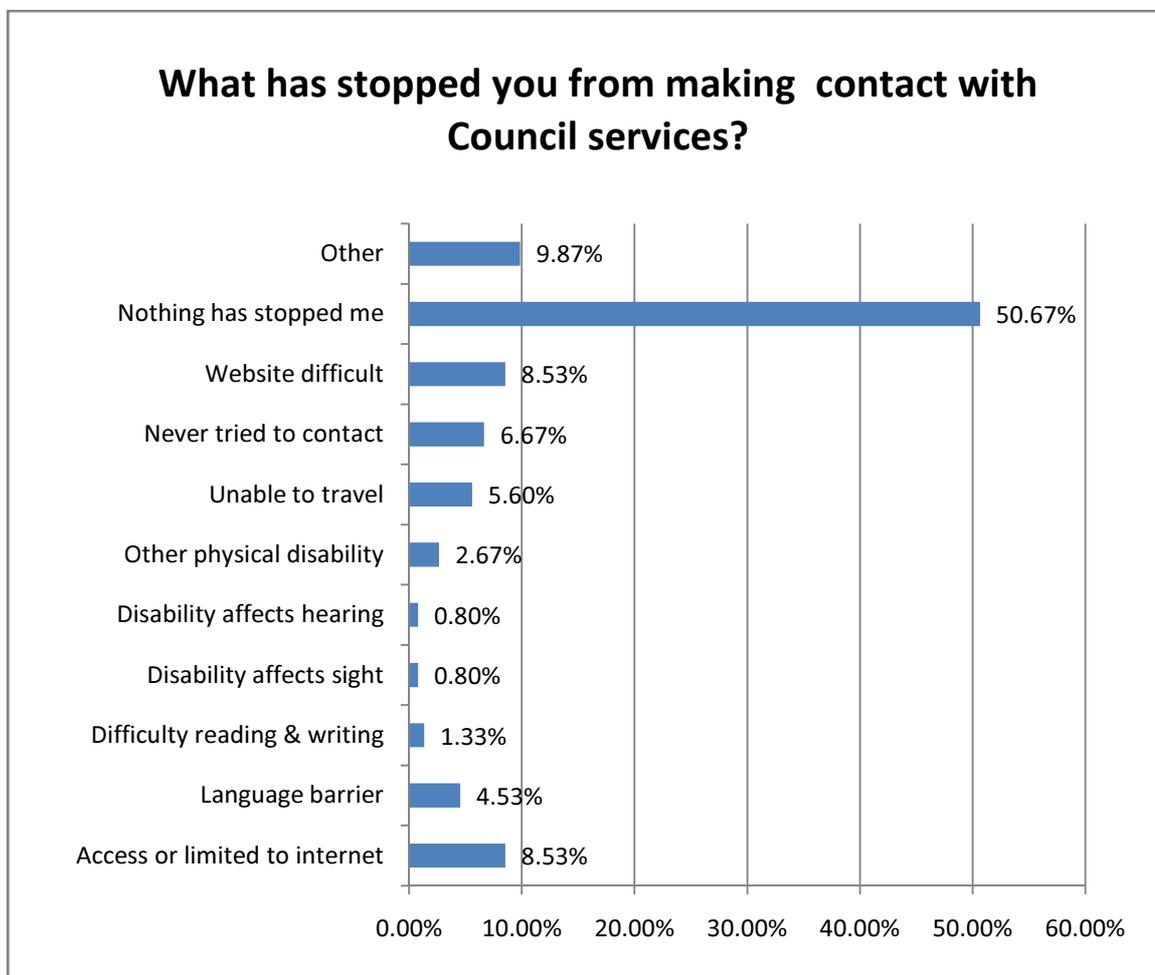
If we break these down by age ranges some differences occur.⁹

⁹ See background papers for further breakdown of statistics

- Of those surveyed those with an age range of 25-34 and 45-54 would prefer Oxford City Council to contact them about personal correspondence via email (32.77% and 33.66% retrospectively).
- Of those surveyed those with an age range of 65+ overwhelming prefer personal correspondence via a letter (36.84%).
- Of those surveyed those with an age range of 55-64 and 65+ prefer to be informed about general correspondence via letter (36.11% and 47.06% retrospectively)

The breakdown of the statistics for those that selected 'Yes, limited a lot' and 'Yes, limited a little' in their day to day activities; the results for the personal correspondence reflects the same as the overall statistics where telephone is the preferred option. However, for general correspondence those who consider themselves 'limited a lot' in their day to day activities have a high preference for communication via letter. Those who consider themselves 'limited a little' in their day to day activities score a majority for communication via letter with telephone closely behind. Individuals who consider they are not limited in their day to day activities prefer general correspondence via email.

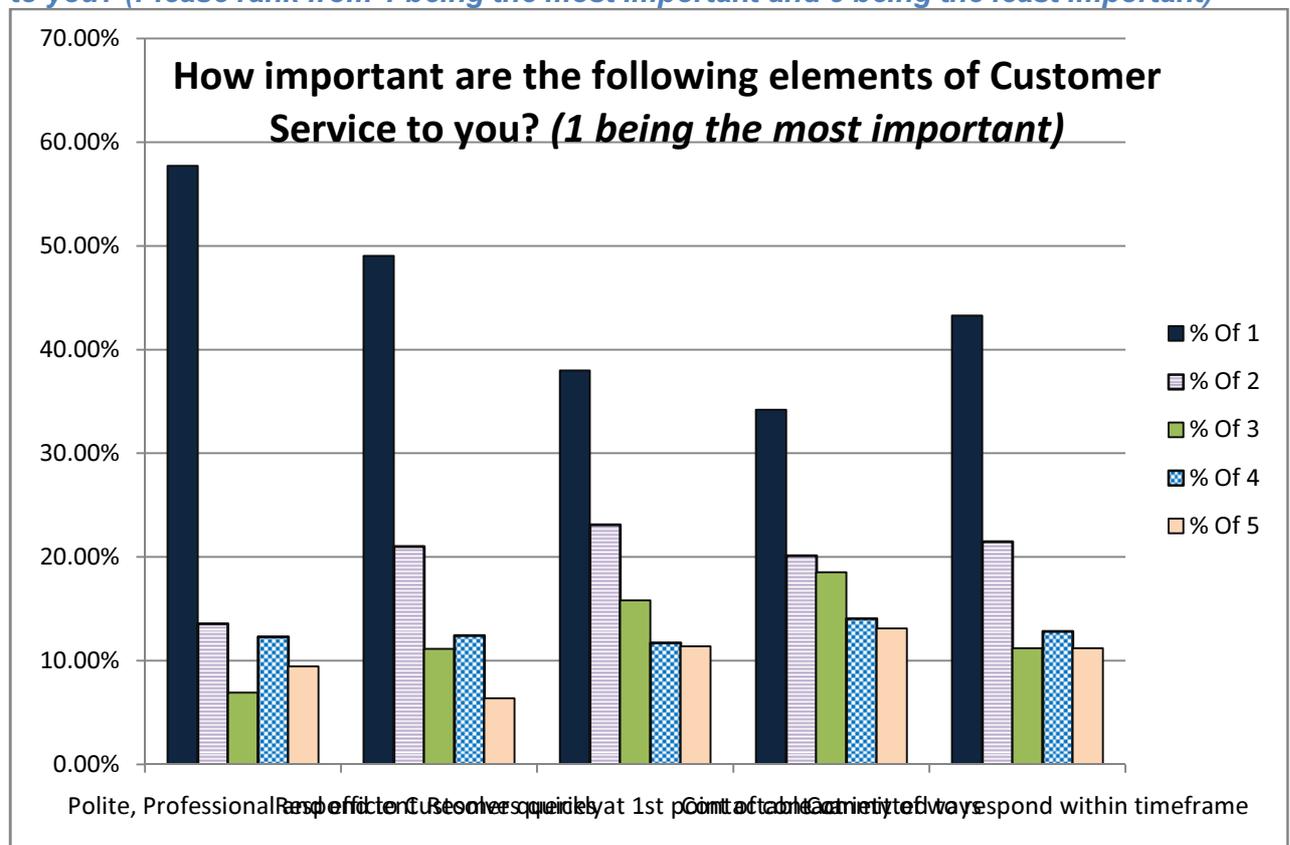
3.3 What has stopped you from making contact with Council Services in the way you want?



A majority of 50.67% of those asked state that nothing has stopped them from making contact with Council services.¹⁰ If we take out the figures of 'Never tried to contact', 44.9% of those asked have experienced something that stopped them making contact with Council services.

¹⁰ See background papers for breakdown of comments left by those surveyed when selected 'Other'

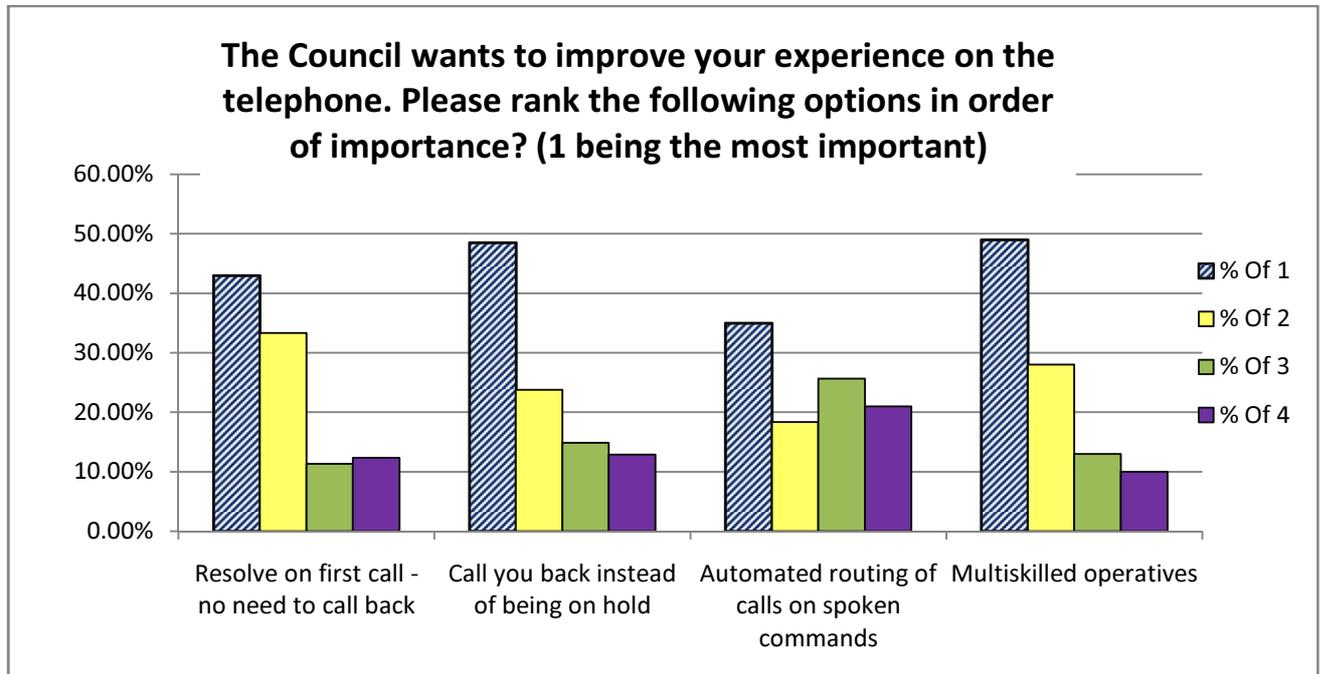
3.4 How important are the following elements of the City Council's customer service to you? (Please rank from 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important)



It is visible that Oxford City Council's customer's view being *Polite, Professional and Efficient* as the most important element of Customer Service. This is followed by *Respond to Customers quickly* and then *Committed to respond within timeframe*.

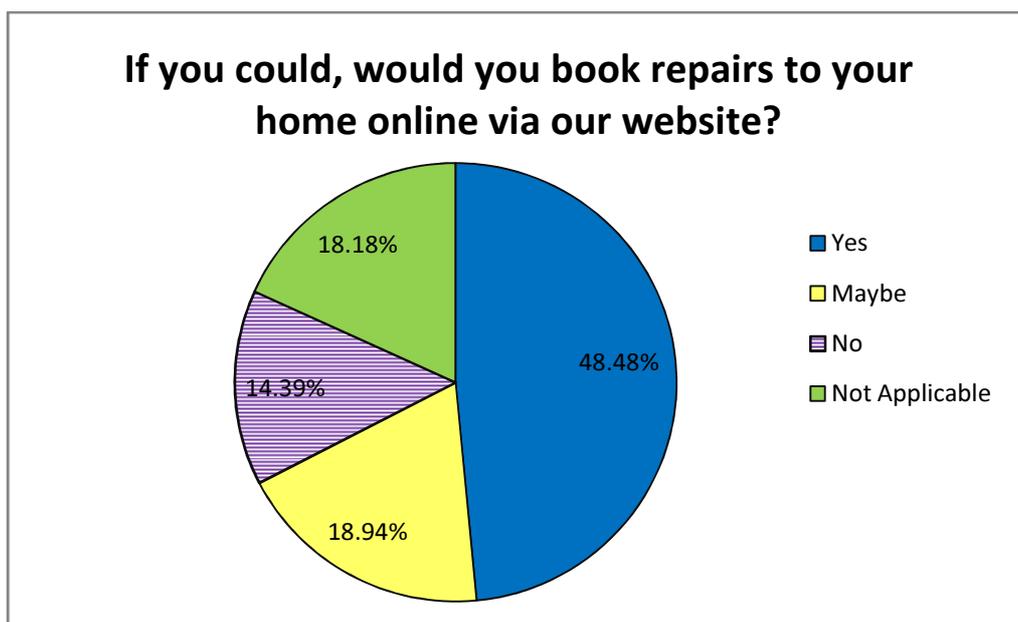
Being *Contactable in a variety of ways* appears to be the least important element of Customer Services as it scores the lowest for the '1' and the highest in the '5'.

3.5 The Council wants to improve your experience of contacting us by telephone. Please rank the following options in order of importance to you? (Please rank from 1 being the most important and 4 being the least important).



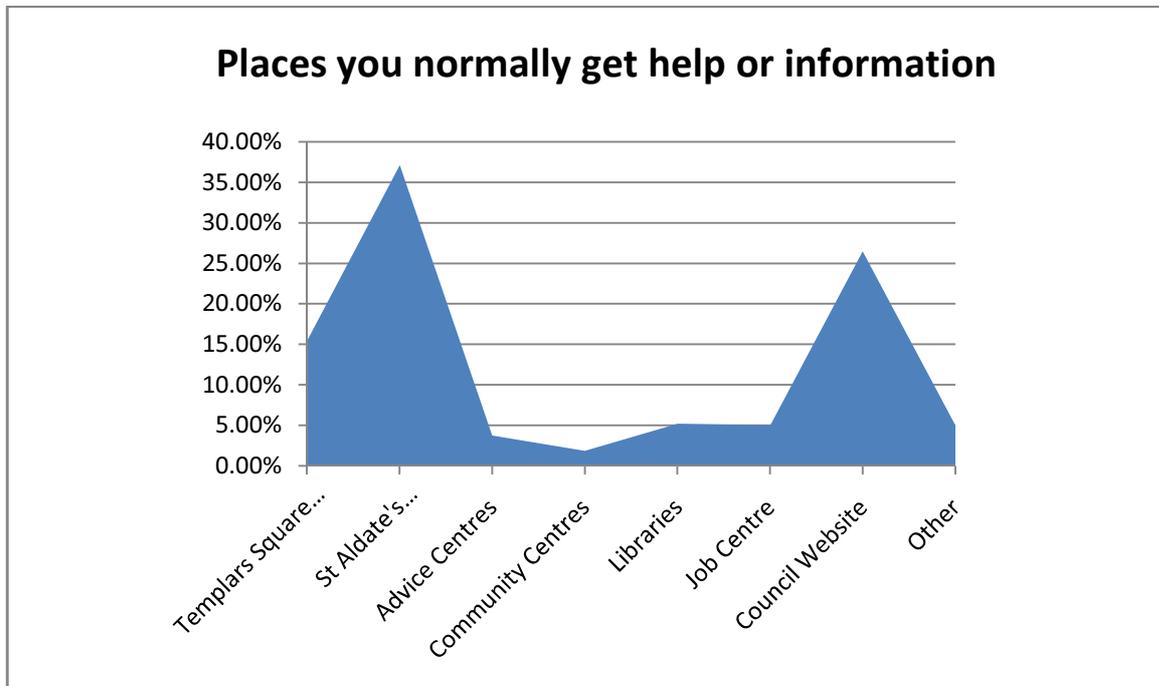
From those surveyed, having multi-skilled operatives is the most important improvement to customers experience on the telephone. But, this is only a narrow majority over *Call you back instead of being on hold* followed by *Resolve on first call no need to call back*. The statistics show that customers rank *Automated routing of calls on spoken commands* as the least important improvement to their experience.

3.6 If you could report and book repairs to your home online via our website, would you use this service [If you are a Tenant of Oxford City Council]?



A large majority of those who completed the question confirmed that if they could, they would book repairs to their home online via our website.

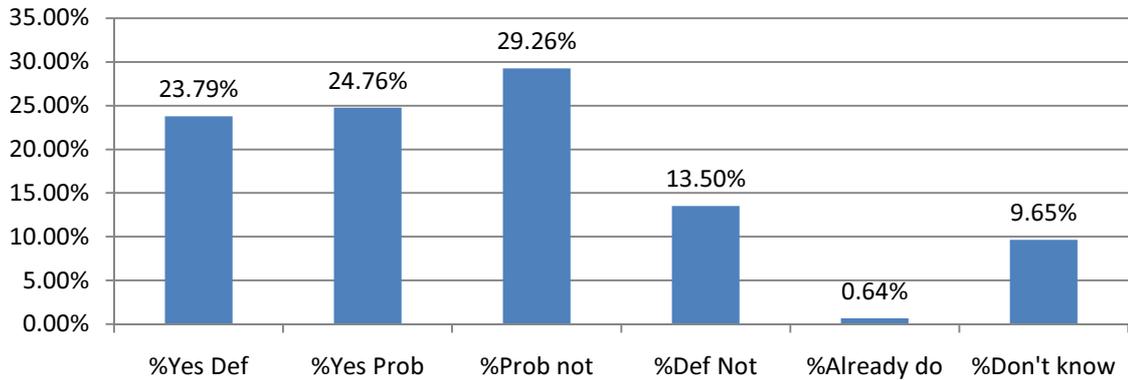
3.7 At which, if any, of the following places do you normally get help or information about Council Services?



The survey reveals that St Aldate's Chambers (37.16%) is the place that customers normally get help or information closely followed by the Council Website (26.51%). This reveals the importance of ensuring information is up to date on the website and that St Aldate's Chambers is efficient for customers to get the help or information quickly. From those surveyed; Community Centres are not places to get help or information on Council Services (1.88%).

3.8 If we were to place a self - service terminal (a computer where you can access and complete online Council forms) in a public building such as a community centre or library near you, would you use it?

If we put a Computer in public building would you use it?

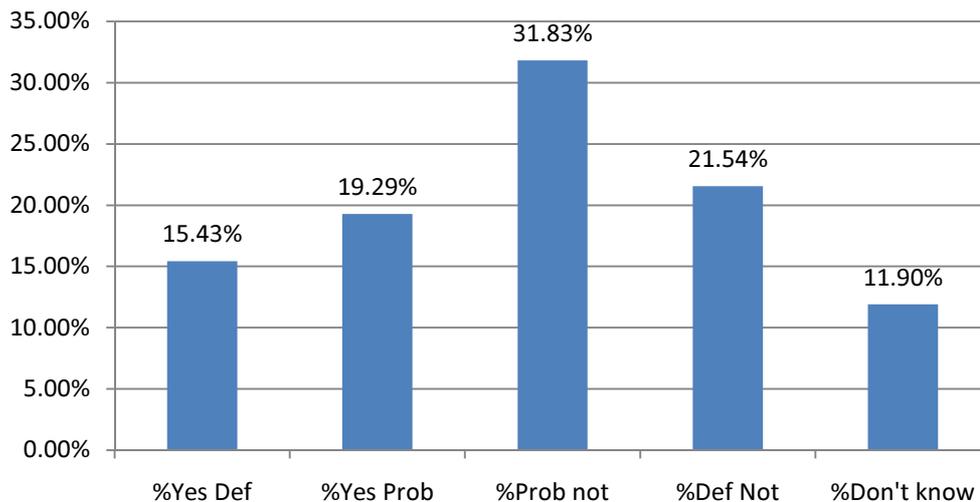


After the previous question, this is an unsurprising result. However, the ‘% Probably Not’ is not an overwhelming majority with ‘% Yes Definitely’ and ‘%Yes Probably’ closely behind.

Taking into account this question and the previous question – If the Council put self-service terminals in public buildings like Community Centres and Libraries would it mean people would be more likely to go to Community Centres or libraries for help and information on Council Services?

3.9 If it were possible to contact the City Council using video conferencing (face to face using your PC or in one of our self-service terminals), would you be likely to do this?

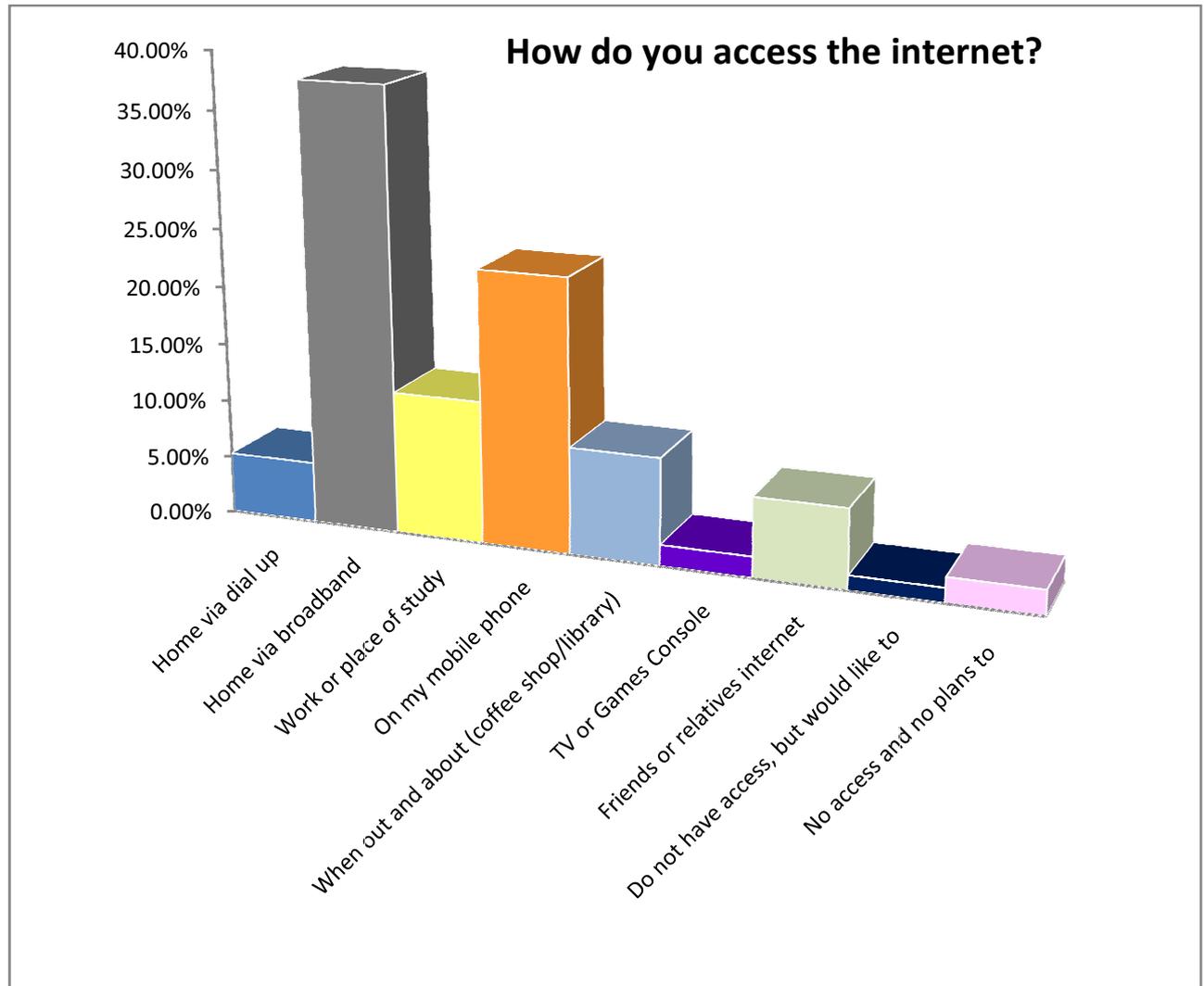
If it was possible to contact via video conferencing would you be likely to do this?



A majority of those asked stated that they probably would not use video conferencing if it was possible. This is followed by those that stated they definitely would not use video conferencing.

When the figures are broken down per age range all age groups have either *Probably Not* as the majority or *Definitely Not*. The age range that has the highest positive endorsement is the age range is 45-54 at 29.41% of *Yes Probably*. The age range that has the highest definitive endorsement is the age range 16-24 at 22.22%.¹¹

3.10 In which, if any, of the following ways do you access the internet?



Overall, a majority of people access the internet via this home broadband with access via mobile phone second on 23.38% followed by Work or place of study at 12.23%. This may seem predictable; but, when you divide this by age range there are some changes.¹²

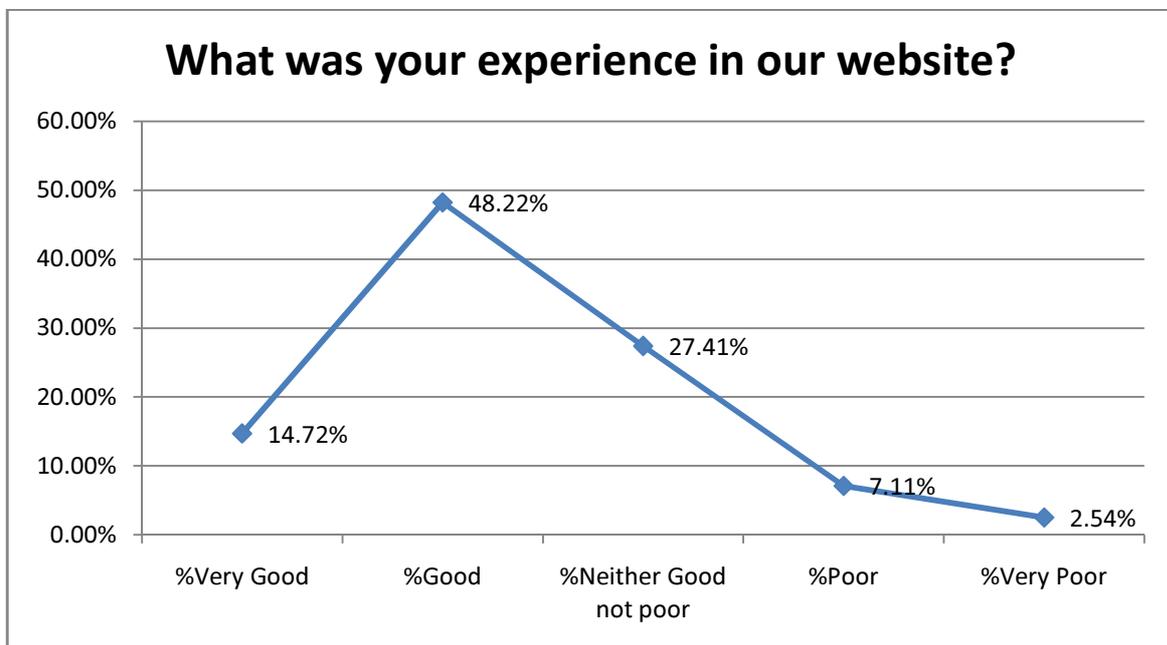
- A majority of 16-24 year olds asked access the internet via their mobile phone at 29.03%. This is followed by Home broadband (27.96%) and then When out and about in coffee shops/library (12.90%)
- Whilst 42.11% of 65+ stated that they use Home Broadband; 36.84% stated that they have no access and no plans to.

¹¹ See background papers for further graphs on the breakdown.

¹² See background papers for further breakdown of statistics.

For those whose day to day activities are limited a little and not limited the results are similar to the overall results where access via a mobile phone is in second place behind Home Broadband. For those whose day to day activities are limited a lot, Home Broadband dominates the choices with 'When out and about' and 'Friends or Relatives internet' behind in joint second.¹³

3.11 Have you accessed our website in the last 6 months? And, what was your experience?

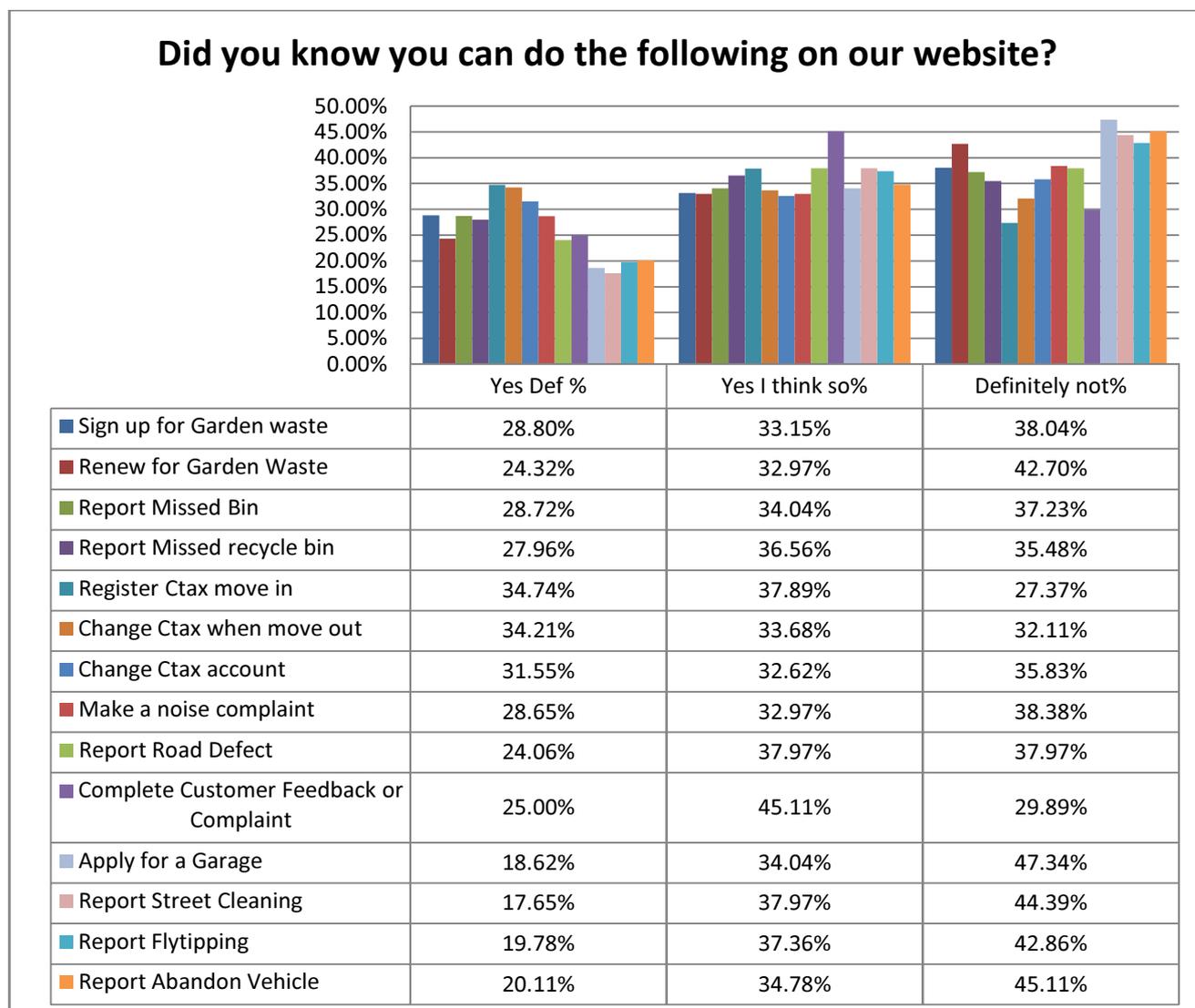


A majority (59.74%) of those asked had access the Council's website in the last 6 months and a majority state that it was a 'Good' experience (48.22%) or "very good" experience (14.72%).

¹³ See background papers for further breakdown of statistics.

3.12 Did you know you can do the following things on the City Council website www.oxford.gov.uk?

The survey lists a series of actions that can be carried out online and the individual is asked whether they a) Definitely knew they can do it online, b) Think they know they can do it online or c) Definitely did not know they can do it online.



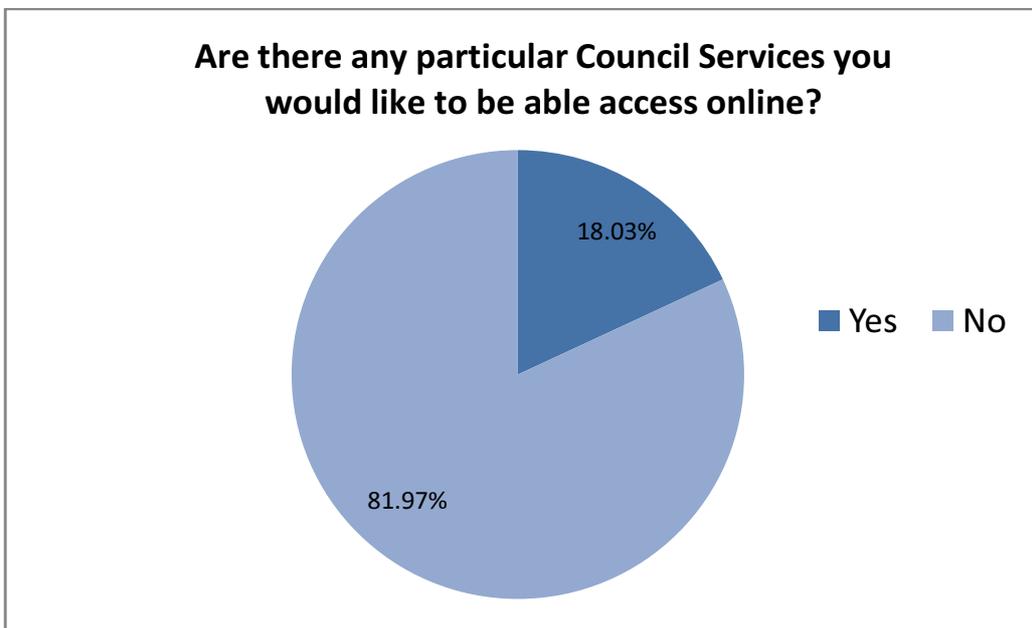
- *Applying for a Garage* scores the highest for 'Definitely Not' when people are asked whether they knew they can do this online.
- *Report Abandon Vehicle* scores the second highest for 'Definitely Not' when people are asked whether they knew they can do this online.
- *Report a Street Cleaning* scores the third highest for 'Definitely Not' when people are asked whether they knew they can do this online.
- Fourth and Fifth places are occupied by *Report Fly tipping* and *Renew Garden Waste* for 'Definitely Not'
- *Register a Council Tax Move in* is the service people definitely know they could do online.
- *Change Council Tax When You Move Out* is the second highest service people definitely know they can do online

- *Change Your Council Tax Account* is the third highest service people definitely know they can do online.

These results tell the Council that those who were surveyed definitely know about the Council Tax services that can be access online. However, what it does not tell you is whether they use these services online. The results illustrate that the Council needs to make customers more aware that the following services can be accessed online:

1. *Applying for a Garage*
2. *Report Abandon Vehicles*
3. *Report a Street Cleaning*

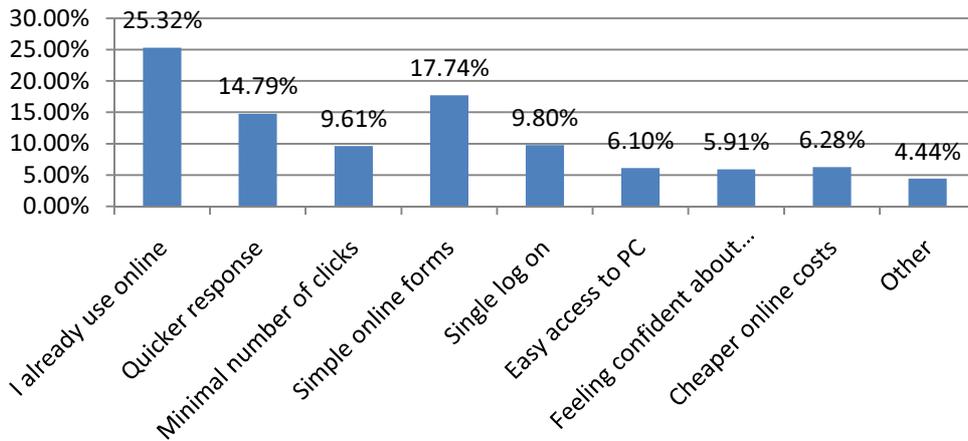
3.13 Are there any particular Council services you would like to be able to access online?



A large majority asked stated that there are no particular Council services they would like to be able to access online. Although, there is no indication on what other services the Council provides that is not available online. Following the previous question, the person asked may consider that all the services are covered. This may make this result difficult to analyse

3.14 What would encourage you to access services online?

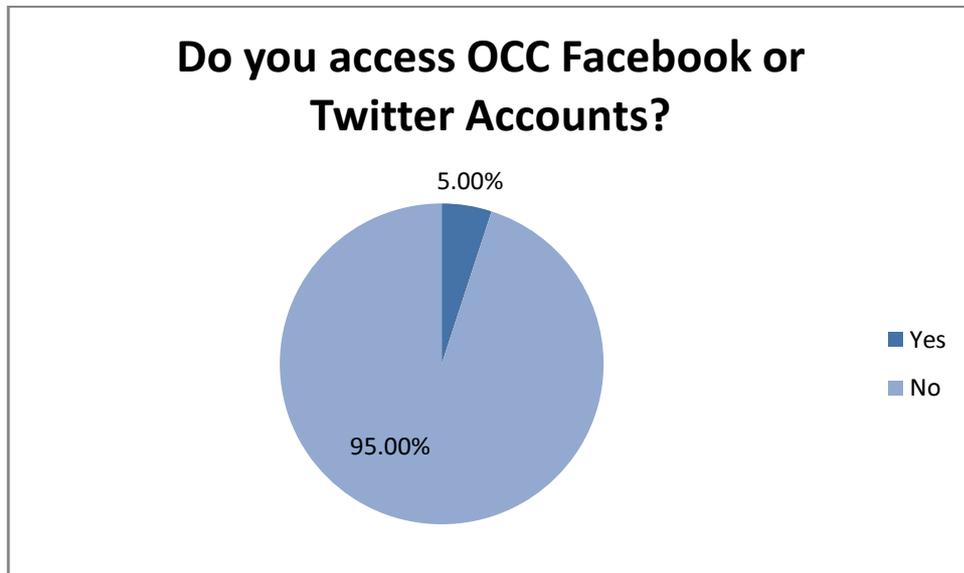
What would encourage you to access services online?



These results inform the Council that a majority of people asked state they already access services online (25.32%). Interestingly, 17.74% expressed that simpler online forms would encourage them to access services online. 14.79% of those asked stated that a quicker response time would encourage them to access services online.

Aside from the majority that already access services online; those surveyed, would like the Council to focus first on making simpler forms and have a quicker response time to encourage them to access services online.

3.15 Do you access Oxford City Council's Facebook or Twitter accounts?



It is quite clear that Oxford City Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts do not add that much value to Customer Service. An overwhelming majority of those asked do not access Oxford City Council's Facebook or Twitter accounts.

4. Conclusions:

- Despite surveying a relatively small section of the population of Oxford; it is clear in the report that the survey is representative, proportionally, with the various sections of the population (when compared with the 2011 Census).
- The report shows that, from the survey, people prefer to contact the Council via the telephone and closely followed by Face to Face Appointments. This does not change when you divide the results by the differing age ranges. When asked about how they would prefer the Council to contact them about personal correspondence, the respondents prefer telephone followed by email and then letter. This is switched when asked about how they would prefer to be contacted about general correspondence where email was the preference followed by letter and then telephone. When the report investigates these questions looking at the differing age ranges the 25-34 and 45-54 age ranges prefer personal correspondence via email. Whereas the 65+ age ranges prefer correspondence via letter for both personal and general correspondence.
- 50.67% of those asked state that nothing has stopped them making contact with Council services. Further work is required to find out who finds it difficult to contact the Council and what action needs to be taken to make it easier for those people to contact the Council, in particular website issues and language barriers.
- Those surveyed indicated that being Polite, Professional and Efficient is the most important element of customer service to them and being 'Contactable variety of ways' as the least important element of customer service. They also indicated that they rank 'Multi skilled operatives' as the preferred improvement to their experience on the phone. This is followed closely behind by 'Call you back instead of being on hold'. Having 'automated routing of calls on spoken commands' the least important improvement to the experience on the telephones.
- A majority of 67% of those asked would or probably would book a repair to their home online via the website, if they could.
- When the respondents were asked about where they normally get help or information about Council services a majority opted for St Aldate's Chambers followed by the Council Website. Community Centres, Libraries and Advice Centre scored the lowest.
- When the survey asked if they would use a computer in a public building if it was available the majority was 'Probably Not' (29.26%). However, the options 'Yes Definitely' and 'Yes Probably' score at 23.79% and 24.76%. Therefore, if a self-service terminal was placed in a Community Centre, Library or Advice Centre, it seems reasonable to assume it would increase the figures to make it a place where people normally get help or information and perhaps alleviate the difficulties with travel that some customers reported stopped them contacting us (5.6% of the 44% who reported something had stopped them contacting us).
- A majority of 53.37% stated that they would definitely or probably would not use video conferencing if it was possible.
- Home Broadband is the preferred method of access to the internet; however access by mobile phone is high. 59.74% have accessed the Council website in the 6 months and a majority of 63% stated that their experience is good or very good.

- The report details about what the residents have stated when asked if they knew certain services are available online. There is a pattern that those asked know that Council Tax Services are available online. However, they are unlikely to know that they can apply for a garage or report abandon vehicle online. This may have something to do with the uptake of these services and the likelihood on when someone would require these services in comparison to Council Tax services.
- It is clear that a majority of 25.32% already use online services and therefore do not need encouragement to access services online. But, 17.74% would be encouraged with simple online forms and 14.79% would be encouraged to access services online if they had a quicker response time.
- 95% of those asked do not follow the Council on Facebook or Twitter.

In conclusion, this is the start of determining who our customers are and what they want from Customer Services. The report outlines a customer base that will use online services but do not want to lose the telephony contact and Face to Face contact. The Council needs to ensure it does not isolate the elderly population by focusing solely on online services as they prefer letter correspondence. However, this should not discourage the possibility of email communication for personal and general correspondence. As mobile phones are used to access online services the Council needs to make sure online forms and services have applications compatible with these devices.

This report gives a valuable insight into our customers and an excellent foundation to build for future surveys and a customer lead customer service.

Background Papers

1. Further data analysis by customer services of demographic information
2. Further breakdown of statistics from consultation
3. Breakdown of comments left by those surveyed when they selected "other".