

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

2006 RESIDENTS SURVEY

OVERVIEW REPORT

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY FINDINGS

Overall Satisfaction

The Council's overall "net satisfaction" rating has changed little since 2004, showing a modest decrease from +27% to +25%.

There are signs of improved public perceptions in some specific regards (e.g. the Council's effectiveness in getting resources into Aberdeenshire) although a majority of citizens continue to question whether the Council makes effective use of money.

Aberdeenshire citizens are more likely to think the Council is better, rather than worse, than other Councils although the extent of this has again declined slightly over the past two years.

Customer Service and Contact Management

Telephone is typically the preferred method of contacting the Council for most service users.

There has been a notable improvement in the perceived ease of contacting the Council over the past two years. Indeed, satisfaction levels across a range of customer service attributes show an encouraging upwards trend.

Satisfaction with complaint handling remains a concern, however, including the extent to which people are kept in touch with regarding their complaint.

Home internet penetration is high (62%) and an increasing proportion of internet users have visited the Council's web site (48%). There is a strong willingness amongst internet users to use the Council's web site to transact a range of business.

The Communities of Aberdeenshire

Some improvements are evident with regard to people's perception of the Council's role in keeping towns and villages clean and tidy.

There is a concern, however, about the extent to which the Council is perceived to be taking account of the impact of its planning decisions on local facilities and services.

Affordable housing is seen as an important issue and residents are willing to countenance house building in a variety of places although there is some resistance to large-scale house building outwith existing settlements.

Some improvements in perception of community spirit and vibrancy are evident.

The Communities of Aberdeenshire (continued)

However, people continue to rate the availability of community facilities poorly.

There has been a decline in people's perception of their personal safety when they are outside after dark. However, most people's actual experience of anti-social behaviour is of the low-level, albeit persistent, kind.

Public Transport and Safety

Improved perceptions of public transport are evident over the past two years, albeit from a low base.

There is a strong desire for road improvements within Aberdeenshire.

Some desire is evident for safety measures such as more restricted speed areas, pedestrian zones, driver safety education and traffic calming measures.

There is also some desire for speed cameras within towns and villages (but less demand for such speed cameras on main roads).

Satisfaction with Key Services

Across the board, there has been an increase in satisfaction with those Council services that citizens elect to use. Ratings for schools and libraries are particularly positive and perceptions of parks/open spaces and leisure facilities continue to improve.

With regard to a range of "universal services" there continues to be a positive upwards trend in terms of satisfaction with services such as winter gritting and snow clearing, albeit from a low historical base.

Satisfaction with refuse collection services has declined significantly (from 86% to 62%); this decline is wholly due to a reduction in satisfaction in those areas where the Council has implemented changes to its recycling and waste collection regime.

The evidence is that this policy has been successful in encouraging people to recycle more. A significant minority of residents have, however, found it difficult to adapt to these changes.

There are some indications that the extent to which people believe services are continuing to improve has diminished somewhat since 2004.

Roads maintenance continues to be an area that citizens would prioritise for expenditure; a significant number of people also believe that more should be spent on refuse collection, implying that recent changes to this service are perceived to be a cost-cutting measure.

Social Responsibility

There continues to be a positive trend in the extent to which the Council is seen as environmentally friendly, as encouraging equal opportunities and as contributing to the economy of the area.

However, there remains scepticism as to the extent of its community involvement and willingness to genuinely involve communities in its decision making.

There is also a view that the Council could do better at informing its citizens as to how it is performing.

There are indications that previous positive trends in terms of a sense of environmental awareness and community responsibility amongst Aberdeenshire citizens have stalled somewhat.

Council Decision Making, Consultation and Communications

A large majority of survey respondents claim to have voted in the most recent parliamentary and Council elections.

When people have not voted it has normally been due to a general disenchantment with politics.

However, a high proportion of Aberdeenshire residents are able to name their elected representatives, including their Councillors.

Scepticism is evident with regard to individuals' ability to influence the Council's decision making and to have their views taken into account.

Despite this, there are strong indications of a desire on the part of many people to take part in civic life.

Between 2004 and 2006 there has been a decline in people's satisfaction with the information that they receive on Council services suggesting that this is an area where the Council needs to place continued efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The Council's approach to the handling of complaints should be reviewed, having regard to the recording and reporting of such complaints and in particular, ensuring effective communication with complainants throughout the process.
- 2) Steps should be taken to meet the demand for Council services to be delivered through the internet. This will require improved communication as to its current functionality and ongoing enhancement of this.

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

- 3) The Council should review its procedures to ensure that it is taking as much account as it can of the impact of its planning decisions and that it is effectively communicating what powers are available to it in this respect.
- 4) Priority should be given to working with others to seek to improve the availability of affordable housing within Aberdeenshire's community, with the priority being developments on existing sites and small-scale developments adjacent to existing settlements.
- 5) A full review of community facilities should be instituted, perhaps in conjunction with Community Planning partners, to explore how improvements can be made in this area.
- 6) The Council should liaise with Aberdeenshire Community Safety Partnership to review the reasons for an increase in people's concerns about being out alone after dark and to ensure that everything possible is being done to address this.
- 7) Along with the Community Safety Partnership, efforts should be continued to enhance road safety, focusing on towns and villages, prioritising measures to reduce speeds and driver awareness and education activities.
- 8) Where possible, a prioritisation of resources towards the improvement of roads and road maintenance in Aberdeenshire should be continued.
- 9) The Council should consider what can be done to improve the implementation of its recycling schemes, including enhanced communication of the rationale behind the scheme and improved support to individuals to help them implement the changes. This should apply both to those areas where the scheme has already been implemented and to those where this has yet to be done.
- 10) Whilst recognising the continued improvements in satisfaction across a range of Services, it is also important to note that there is continued room for improvement and that the "perceived rate of improvement" is diminishing, largely because of increasing customer expectations. To retain and enhance these ratings in the future will require continuous improvements in service quality from the current baseline and it is, therefore, recommended that all Services set out such plans for continuous improvement in their customer service delivery, as part of the Service Planning process.
- 11) Efforts should be made to enhance the Council's reporting of its performance as part of its overall communications strategy. Consideration should be given to direct communications with residents as part of this process.

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

- 12) Communications efforts should also be given greater priority with respect to the provision of information on Council services, again considering direct communication with citizens and using existing communications channels such as the Council's web site and its public buildings.
- 13) Along with its Community Planning partners, the Council should review its community engagement strategy so as to maximise citizens' opportunities to take part in its decision making processes.

1.0 BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This 2006 Residents survey is the fourth full-scale survey of residents' views which Aberdeenshire Council has undertaken since 2000 (such surveys have now been undertaken in 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2006). Specific in-depth items of research have also been conducted in the intervening years (2001, 2003, 2005). The survey repeats a number of questions from the previous surveys, to allow for a tracking of changes in perceptions over time. In some cases, it has been possible to track changes back to the 2000 survey. However, as the survey questionnaire was considerably revised and updated in 2002, this has not always been possible.

OBJECTIVES

- 1.2 The original broad aims and objectives of the 2006 Residents' Survey were to:
- To identify issues of importance to Aberdeenshire residents.
 - To determine the key priorities which residents have of the Council and whether these are changing.
 - To determine perceptions of the Council's performance against these priorities.
 - To track changes over time (primarily from the 2002 and 2004 surveys).
 - To link the findings of the residents' survey to elements of the employee survey, thus identifying opportunities for improvement and associated barriers (the 2006 employee survey is now due to take place in December 2006).
 - To provide an overall "headline" measure of public satisfaction.
 - To assist the process of setting goals, and planning actions, for future improvement.

- 1.3 In previous years, the survey process has incorporated a series of exploratory focus groups with members of the public to help identify issues of concern for the main survey. For the 2006 survey, these focus groups were replaced with a series of consultations with the Council's Area Managers and, where possible, Chairs of Area Committees, in order to identify areas of current or topical interest in each area. The key themes highlighted in these discussions are summarised below:

Banff and Buchan	Buchan	Formartine
<p>The integration of new workers into the area</p> <p>Banff and Buchan as a tourist destination</p>	<p>Availability of parking</p> <p>The integration of new workers into the area</p>	<p>Changes to the refuse collections and recycling service</p> <p>Volunteering issues</p> <p>Awareness of local organisations</p> <p>Formartine as a tourist destination</p>
Garioch	Kincardine and Mearns	Marr
<p>The integration of new workers into the area</p> <p>Changes to the refuse collection and recycling service</p> <p>Volunteering issues</p> <p>Garioch as a tourist destination</p>	<p>Availability of parking</p> <p>Changes to the refuse collection and recycling service</p> <p>Kincardine and Mearns as a tourist destination</p>	<p>Changes to the refuse collection and recycling service</p> <p>The environment of local towns and villages</p> <p>Volunteering issues</p> <p>Marr as a tourist destination</p>

Some issues were also identified in *all* of the areas, including:

- Local shopping patterns
- Barriers to accessing services
- Usage of Council offices
- Population movements within and across areas
- Aspects of life that people would like to see improved.

These discussions helped to inform some of the “new” questions which are discussed herein. In addition, following these discussions, it was decided to incorporate “local inserts” to the survey for each of the Council’s six administrative areas. As these questions generally apply only to one or two areas, they are not usually addressed in this report; the exception is the issue of changes to waste management and recycling services which was addressed in four of the six local inserts and is of general interest across the Council.

More generally, it should be noted that separate area reports are to be produced and disseminated for each of the administrative areas. A separate “equalities report” is also to be produced, addressing any differences in response across key equalities groups.

- 1.4 The purpose of the survey is to inform a variety of planning and decision making processes within the Council; the results are therefore of more than academic interest. Throughout the research process, the involvement of the Residents and Employee Survey Team (REST) has been crucial in ensuring the relevance of the survey to these decision making processes. Clearly, it is also important that the results be widely and effectively disseminated throughout the organisation.

The focus is one of continuous improvement. The survey is designed to identify areas of priority for residents and to gauge their views on the Council’s current performance in these areas and how such performance could be improved.

It is important to recognise that the results are based on perceptions rather than empirical evidence of actual service performance. It is recognised that these perceptions are formed both from actual experience of the service and also from wider communications including word of mouth. Satisfaction with particular aspects of Council service is also influenced by changing expectations of service delivery (both in the public and private sectors) in addition to the effectiveness and efficiency of actual service delivery.

As a minimum, the results should be considered by the full Council and also by the Senior Management Team as a group. Individual Services must consider the implications for their own Service, as should established groups that are working on “cross-cutting” issues such as the Customer Service Project Team. More generally, mechanisms for widespread dissemination of the survey results should be chosen, involving for example, articles in Accent, a Core Brief item and appropriate local press coverage.

METHODOLOGY

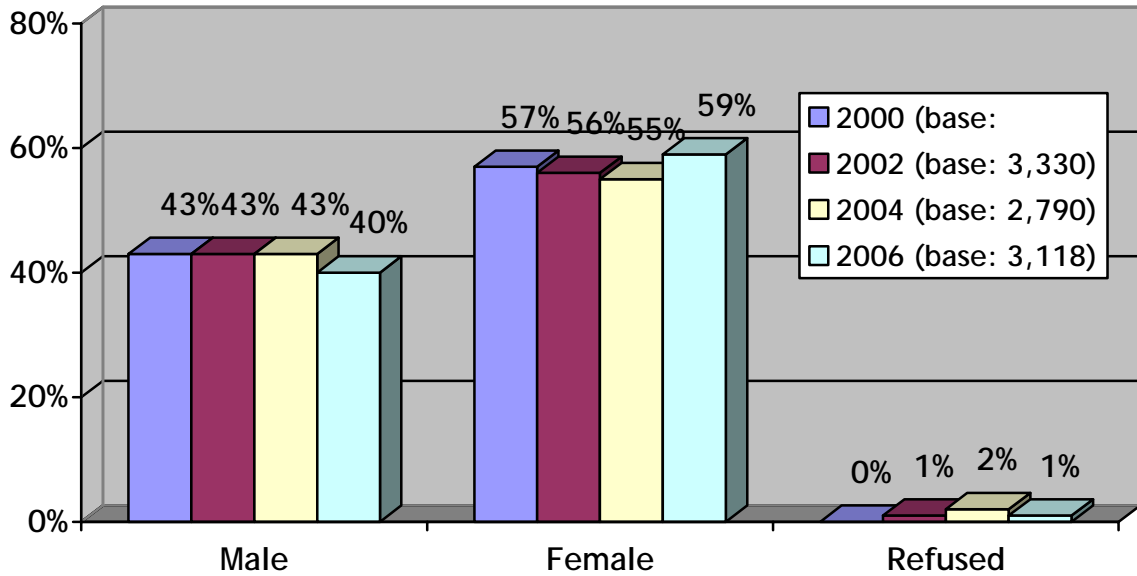
- 1.5 The survey questionnaire was devised in partnership with REST. It builds on questions asked in previous surveys whilst also taking account of the issues raised in the local discussions described above.
- 1.6 The survey was conducted on a postal basis, with a total of 12,000 invitations being issued, at random, to households in Aberdeenshire, selected to be representative of the population in the Council's six administrative areas. This approach was broadly similar to that undertaken in 2004, when 12,500 postal invitations were issued. Respondents had the opportunity to respond by post or online.

RESPONSE

- 1.7 A total of 3,118 responses were received (including 22 responses which were completed online). This represents a response rate of 26.0%. This is within the anticipated range of response rates for surveys of this nature and compares favourably with the 18.9% response rate for the postal component of the 2002 survey and the 22.3% response rate for the 2004 survey. This continued upward trend is encouraging
- 1.8 It is important to consider the profile of the achieved sample in considering the comparability of the 2006 data to the previous surveys.

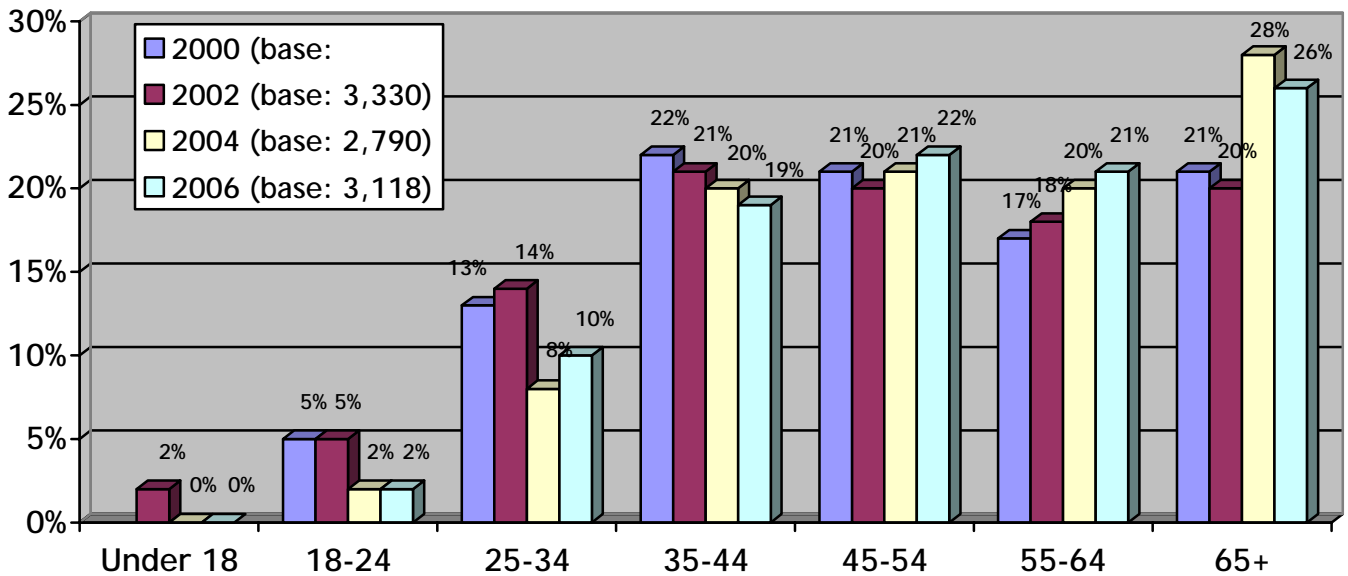
Figure 1.1 over the page illustrates that the gender mix is similar to that of the 2004 survey (which was, in turn, similar to the 2002 and 2000 survey) although there is a slightly more pronounced bias towards female respondents than previously. It should be noted that, throughout the report, numbers may not add to 100% due to the effects of rounding. Also, in a number of cases, the base number of respondents to the 2000 survey is not known and so these figures have been left blank.

Figure 1.1: Profile of Respondents (Gender)



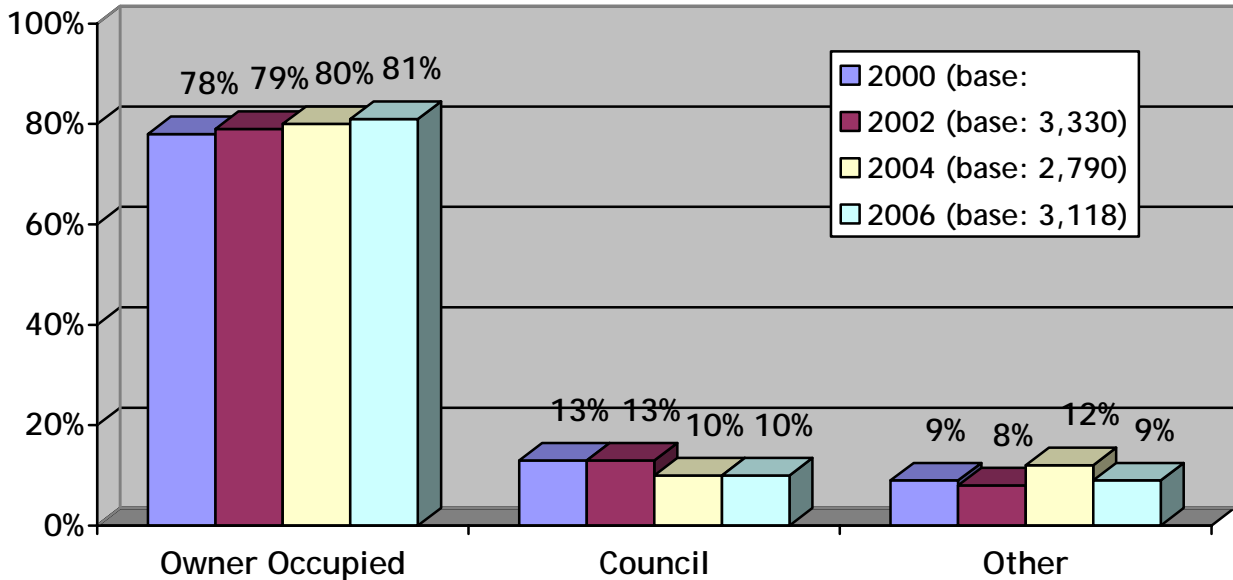
1.9 Figure 1.2 shows that the age profile for 2006 is very similar to 2004.

Figure 1.2: Profile of Respondents (Age)



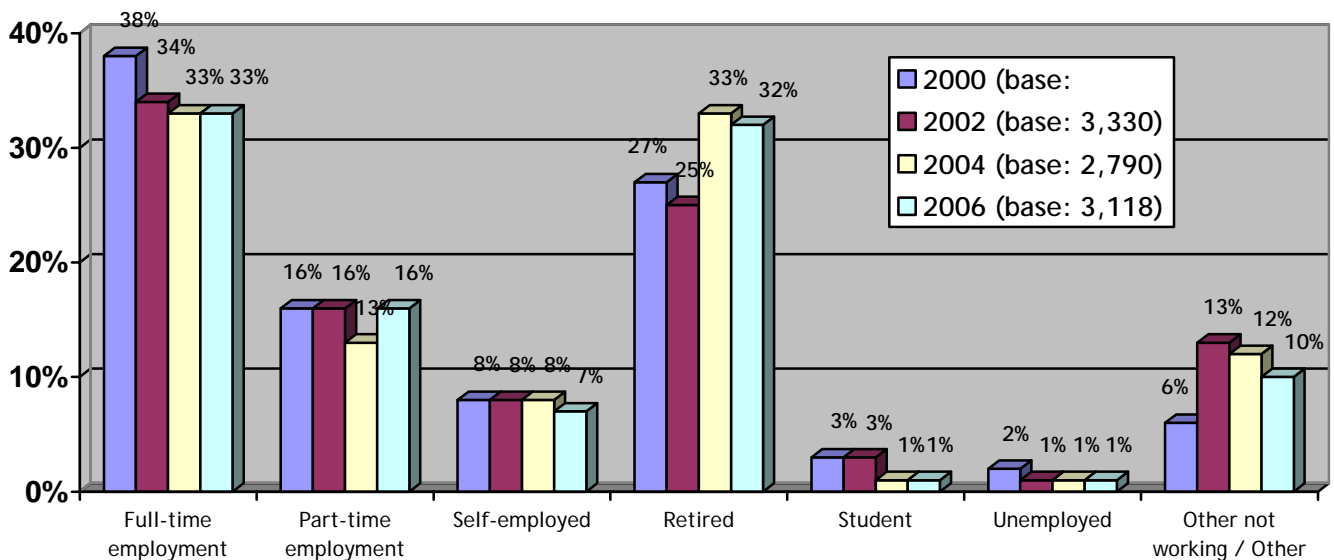
1.10 The profile of respondents in terms of housing tenure has also changed little in comparison to previous surveys.

Figure 1.3: Profile of Respondents (Housing Tenure)



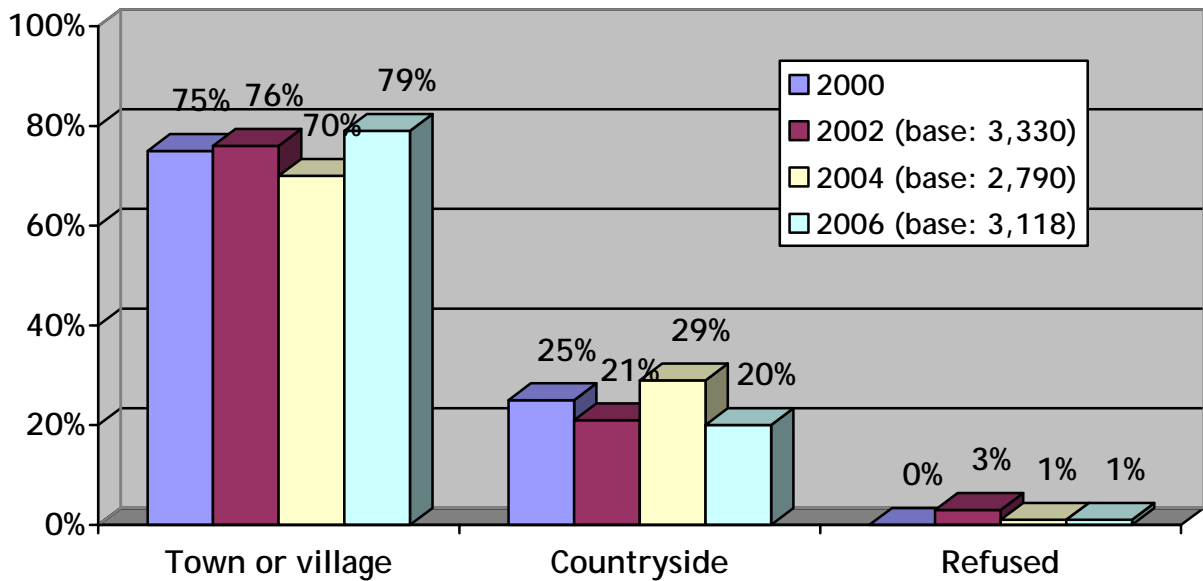
1.11 The respondent profile by employment status shows a high proportion of retired respondents, although again this is little changed since 2004.

Figure 1.4: Profile of Respondents (Employment Status)



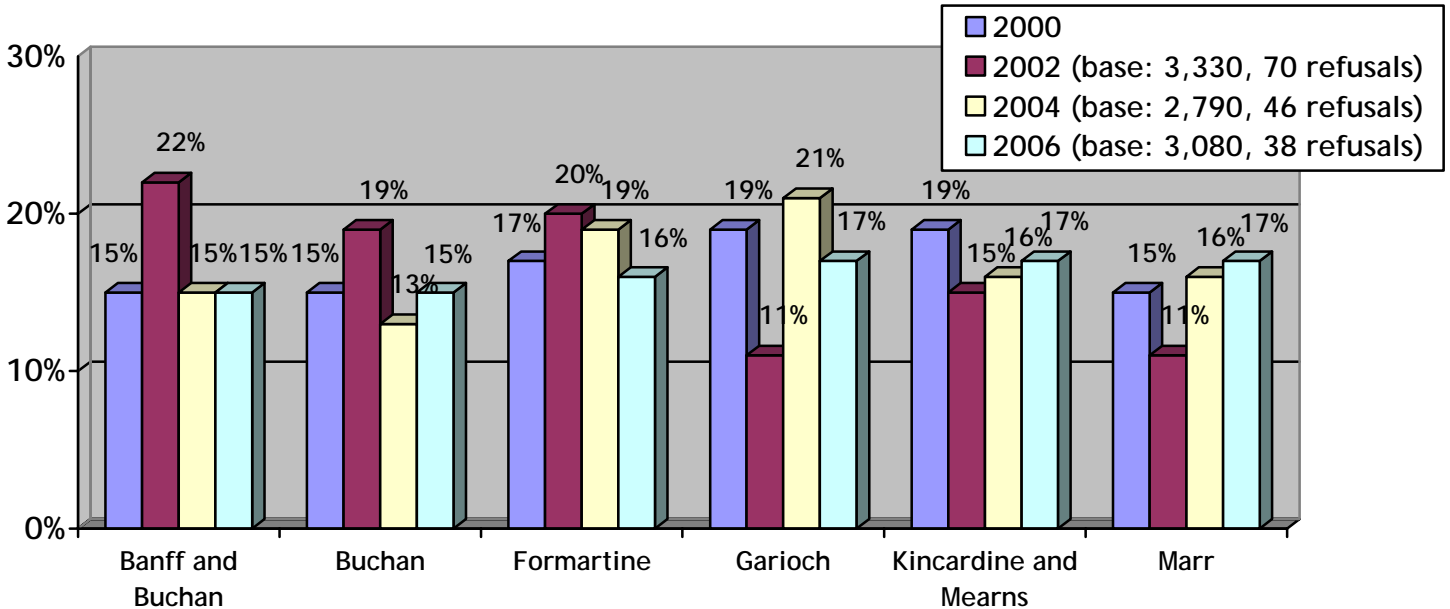
1.12 2006 respondents are slightly more likely to come from towns or villages than 2004 respondents; the 2006 sample is more similar to the sample achieved in previous year's surveys.

Figure 1.5: Profile of Respondents (Rurality)



1.13 Figure 1.6 illustrates the profile of respondents by area. In the 2006 survey, responses are fairly evenly spread across each of the Council's six administrative areas.

Figure 1.6: Profile of Respondents (Area)



The sample sizes are sufficiently robust to allow for an analysis of the views of people living in each area and such an analysis will follow in each of the local area reports.

1.14 As in the 2002 and 2004 surveys, the data has been weighted to ensure representativeness by area. However, as responses were fairly evenly spread across the Council area, any distinctions between the weighted and unweighted data are not material.

2.0 OVERALL SATISFACTION

- 2.1 This section sets out patterns of overall satisfaction with Aberdeenshire Council, as identified by the quantitative survey.
- 2.2 A “headline” picture of overall satisfaction comes from levels of agreement with the statement “*I am satisfied with Aberdeenshire Council as a provider of local services*”.

The pattern in responses to this question remains fairly positive as illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

Within many of the graphs in this report, “net agreement” figures will be given. That is to say, the figure quoted is the % agreeing with a statement (or expressing satisfaction) less those disagreeing (or expressing dissatisfaction). This allows for agreement and disagreement levels to be taken into account in a single figure, thus allowing for large amounts of data to be summarised easily.

Figure 2.1: Overall Satisfaction

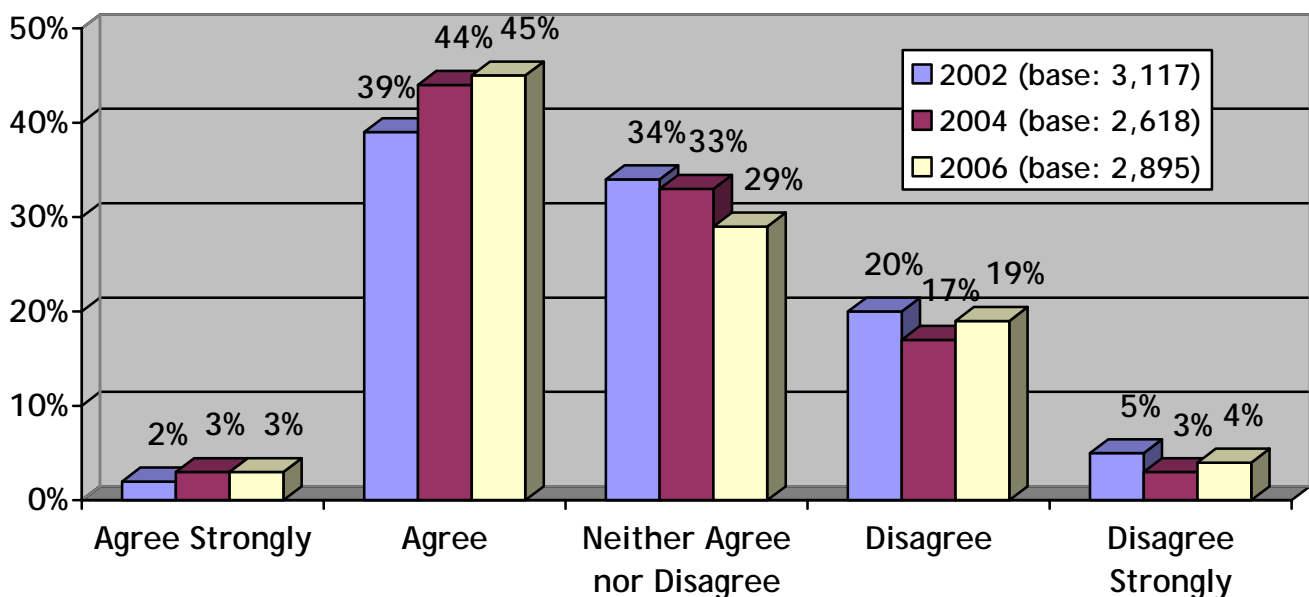
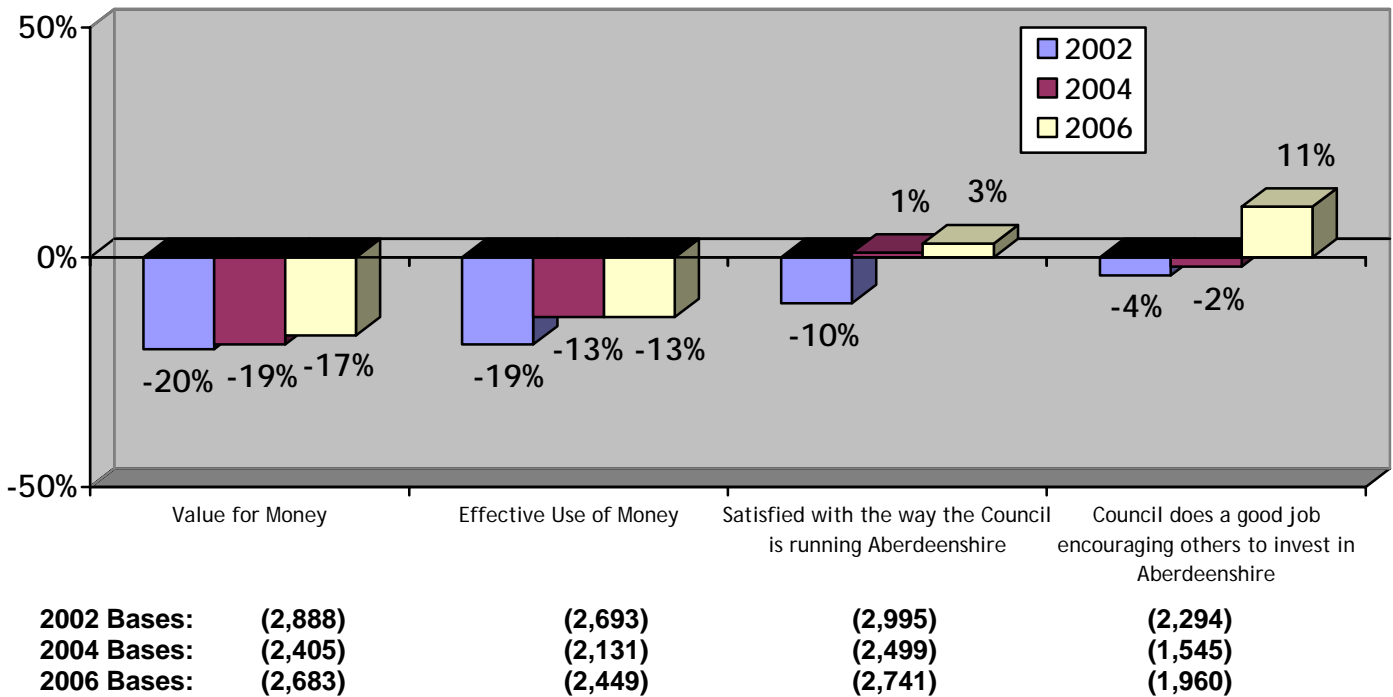


Figure 2.1 demonstrates a net agreement of 25% in 2006 compared to 27% in 2004 and 16% for 2002. Until 2004, the findings for this question in the Residents Survey mirrored a long term decline in satisfaction with services provided by Scottish Local Authorities. This pattern was reversed in 2004. The 2006 figures show a very modest decline in net satisfaction since 2004, which clearly requires further consideration. However, the decline is limited and the current net satisfaction figure is still better than that achieved up to and including 2002.

Prior to 2003, the Scottish Household Survey asked a question on overall satisfaction with the services provided by local Councils. The most recently reported figures for this showed a median net satisfaction rating of +16%. Aberdeenshire's rating remains well ahead of this.

2.3 The overall views of the Aberdeenshire population were explored, between 2002 and 2006, with reference to a number of attitudinal statements. As can be seen below, whilst an overall upwards trend is evident, respondents' retained a number of negative views with respect to some of these statements.

Figure 2.2: Overall Views on Key Issues



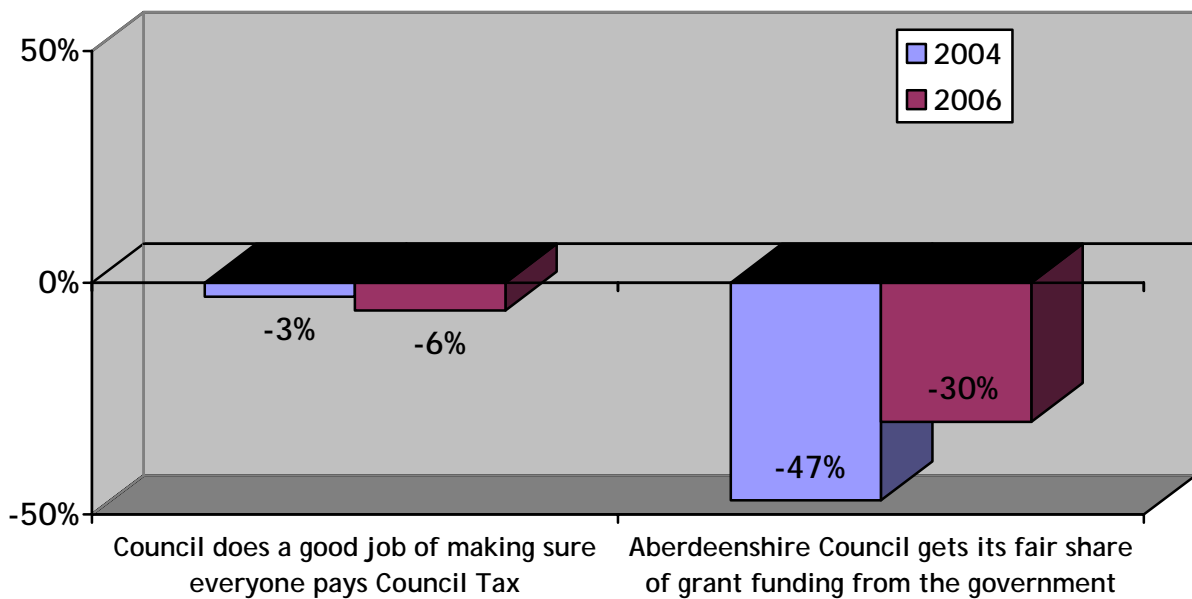
The key points to note are:

- It is still the case that a majority do not believe that Aberdeenshire Council gives its residents Value for Money and there is little sign of improvement in this area.

- A majority of residents still disagree with the view that “the Council does the best it can to make effective use of the money available to it”.
- More positively a very slight majority now agree with the statement that “I am satisfied with the way the Council is running Aberdeenshire” and perceptions continue to improve with respect to this.
- There is a very encouraging upwards trend in relation to the statement that “Aberdeenshire Council does a good job encouraging others to invest in Aberdeenshire”.

2.4 Two new questions of an overall nature were added in to the 2004 survey, and repeated in 2006. Results for these are detailed in Figure 3.3 below:

Figure 2.3: Additional Attitudinal Statements



2004 Bases:	(1,780)	(1,417)
2006 Bases:	(2,105)	(1,639)

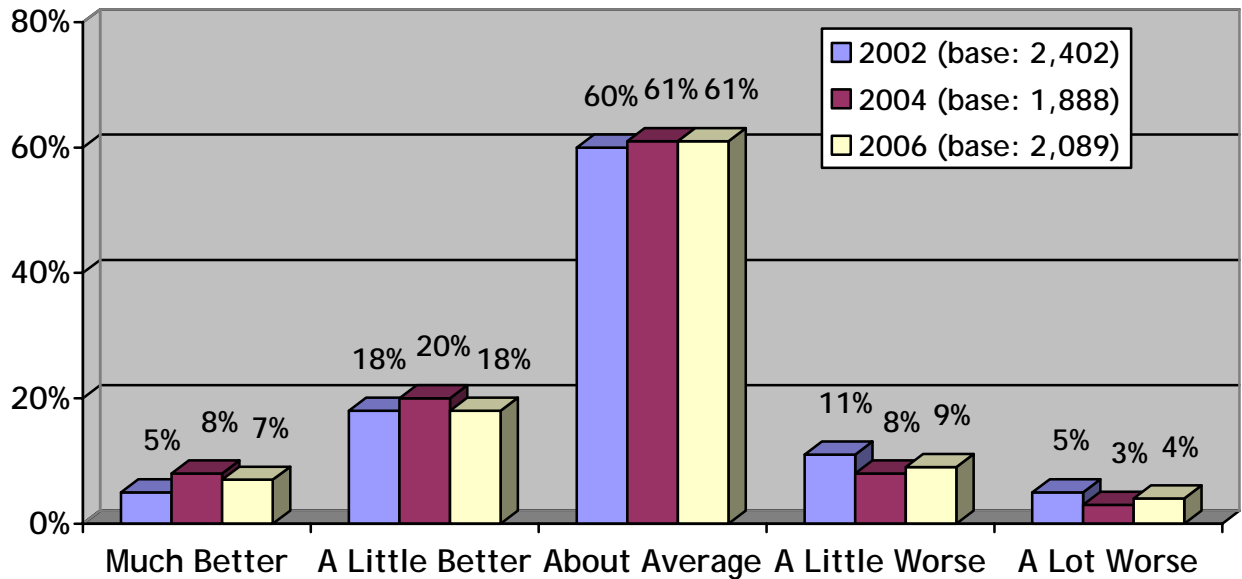
There continue to be mixed views as to whether the Council does a good job of making sure everyone pays their Council Tax.

Aberdeenshire residents are now somewhat more likely to believe that the Council does get its fair share of grant funding from the government, although a majority still disagree that this is the case. 9% of people now believe that the Council gets its fair share, in comparison to 7% in 2004. 47% of respondents fall into the “don’t know” category.

2.5 The slight decline in overall satisfaction with the Council is reflected in responses to the question as to how Aberdeenshire residents perceive their Council in relation to other Councils.

The 2002 results for this showed a net approval of 7% and this improved to 17% in 2004. For 2006, the comparable “net positive” figure has declined to 12%.

Figure 2.4: Overall Views (Comparison to Other Councils)



Summary of Key Points

The Council’s overall “net satisfaction” rating has changed little since 2004, showing a modest decrease from +27% to +25%.

There are signs of improved public perceptions in some specific regards (e.g. the Council’s effectiveness in getting resources into Aberdeenshire) although a majority of citizens continue to question whether the Council makes effective use of money.

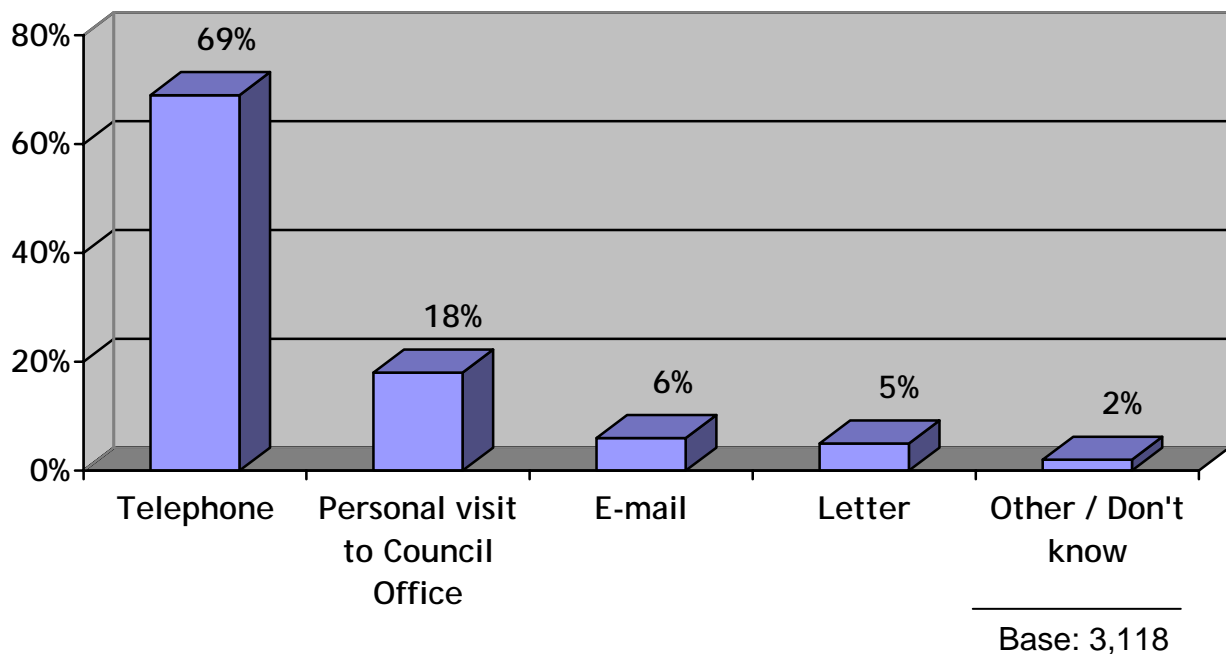
Aberdeenshire citizens are more likely to think the Council is better, rather than worse, than other Councils although the extent of this has again declined slightly over the past two years.

3.0 CUSTOMER SERVICE AND CONTACT MANAGEMENT

CONTACTING THE COUNCIL

3.1 As noted in Figure 3.1, 2006 survey respondents generally preferred the telephone as a means of contacting the Council (this specific question was not posed in previous years).

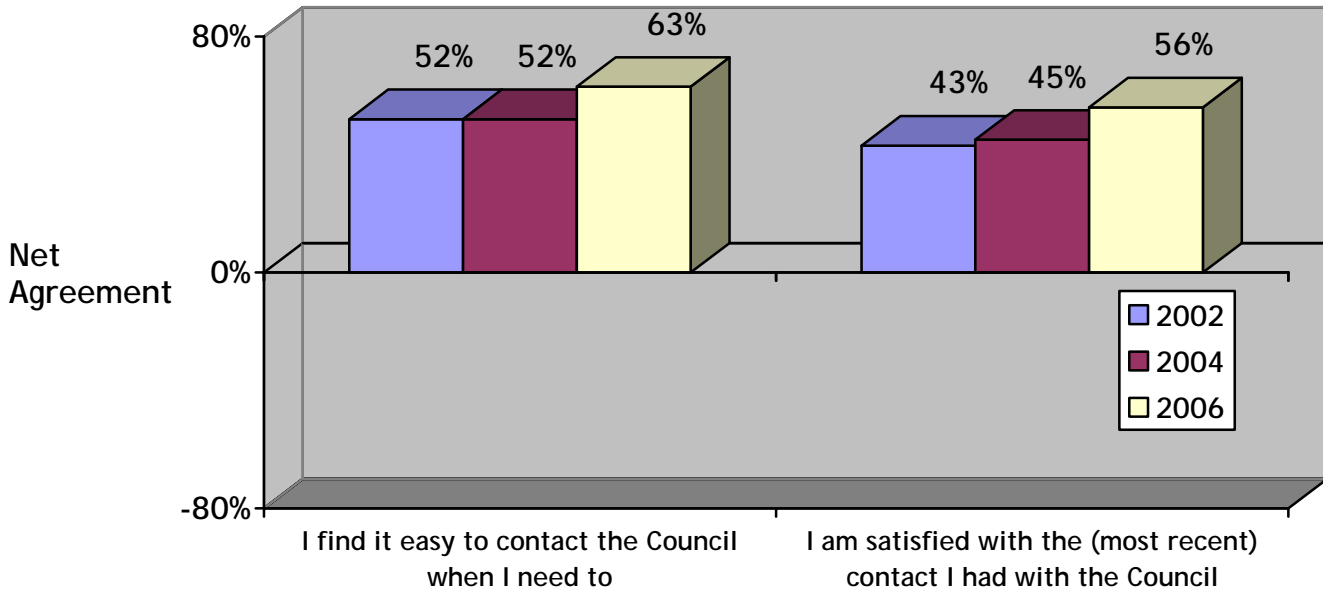
Figure 3.1: Preferred Method of Contacting the Council



Although older people are slightly more likely to prefer a personal visit (e.g. 26% of people aged 65-74) the telephone remains their preferred method (for 64% of this age group).

3.2 The Council has maintained and enhanced its generally positive ratings in terms of ease of contact as illustrated in Figure 3.2 below.

Figure 3.2: Contacting the Council

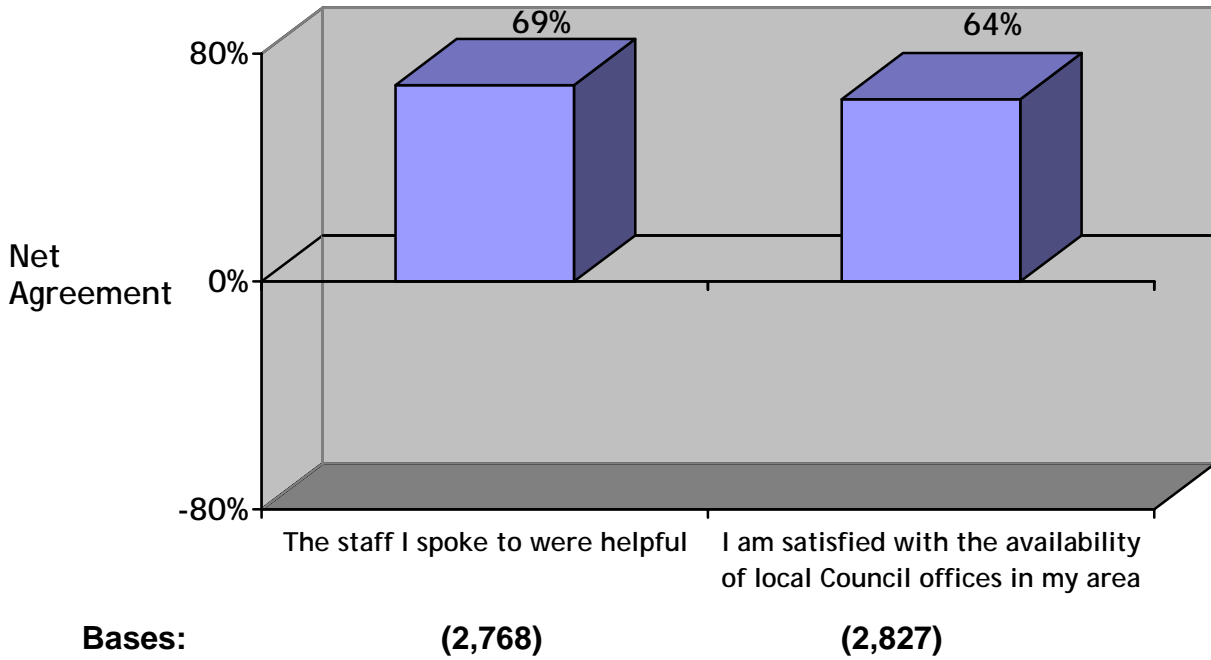


2002 Bases:	(2,644)	(2,493)
2004 Bases:	(2,334)	(2,175)
2006 Bases:	(2,820)	(2,718)

These are generally positive ratings and there is no evidence of any particular groups of people or particular localities finding it particularly difficult to contact the Council.

3.3 Two additional aspects of contact management were investigated on the 2006 survey:

Figure 3.3: Contacting the Council



Clearly, a significant majority of residents express satisfaction with both the helpfulness of staff and the availability of Council offices in their local area.

3.4 Figures 3.4(a) and (b) below map out net satisfaction ratings for a range of customer service attributes. These issues are arranged in the order of importance that was ascribed to them in the 2004 survey (this “importance” question was not asked in 2006 for reasons of space).

Figure 3.4(a): Rating of Service Attributes

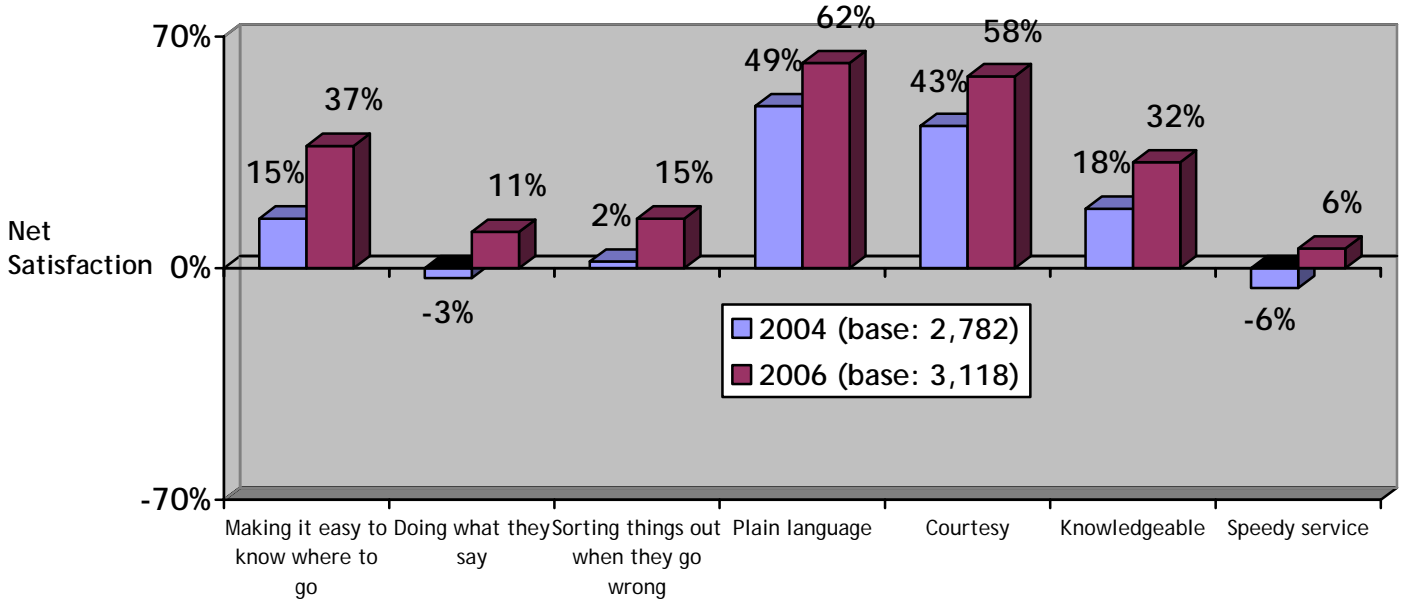
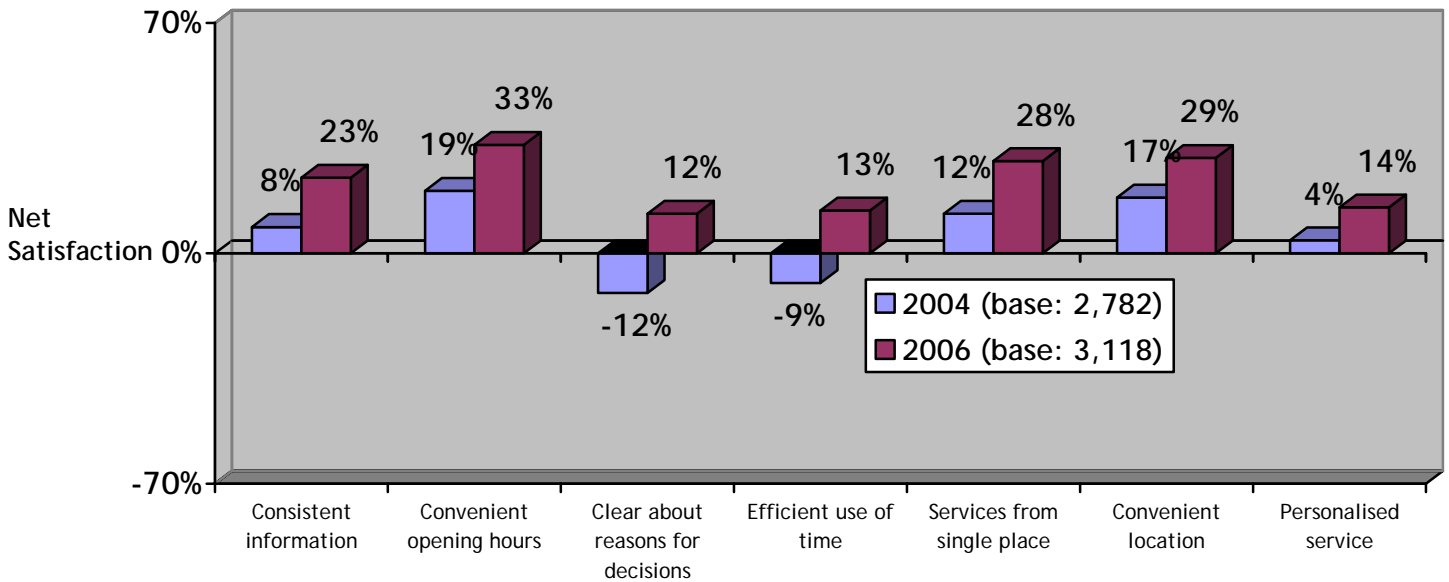


Figure 3.4(b): Rating of Service Attributes



Across the board, there is an encouraging upwards trend in relation to these issues. In particular, there has been a significant improvement with regard to “Making it easy to know where to go for help and advice”, which was rated as the most important service attribute in 2004. The Council also maintains its positive ratings for two of the other important service attributes (plain language and courtesy).

In those areas where the Council previously achieved negative ratings, the encouraging upwards trend now means that these issues now score a small “net positive”:

- “Doing what they say they will do”
- “Providing a speedy service”
- “Being clear about why they have made a certain decision”
- “Making efficient use of their time”.

None of these attributes now attract a “net negative” rating.

3.5 Figures 3.5(a) and (b) track the mean ratings achieved for each of these attributes, between 2002 and 2006, where a five point scale from very good to very poor was utilised. For example, a very good rating receives a score of plus 2, a good rating a score of plus 1, an average rating a zero score, poor rating a score of minus 1 and a very poor rating a score of minus 2.

Figure 3.5(a): Customer Service Ratings

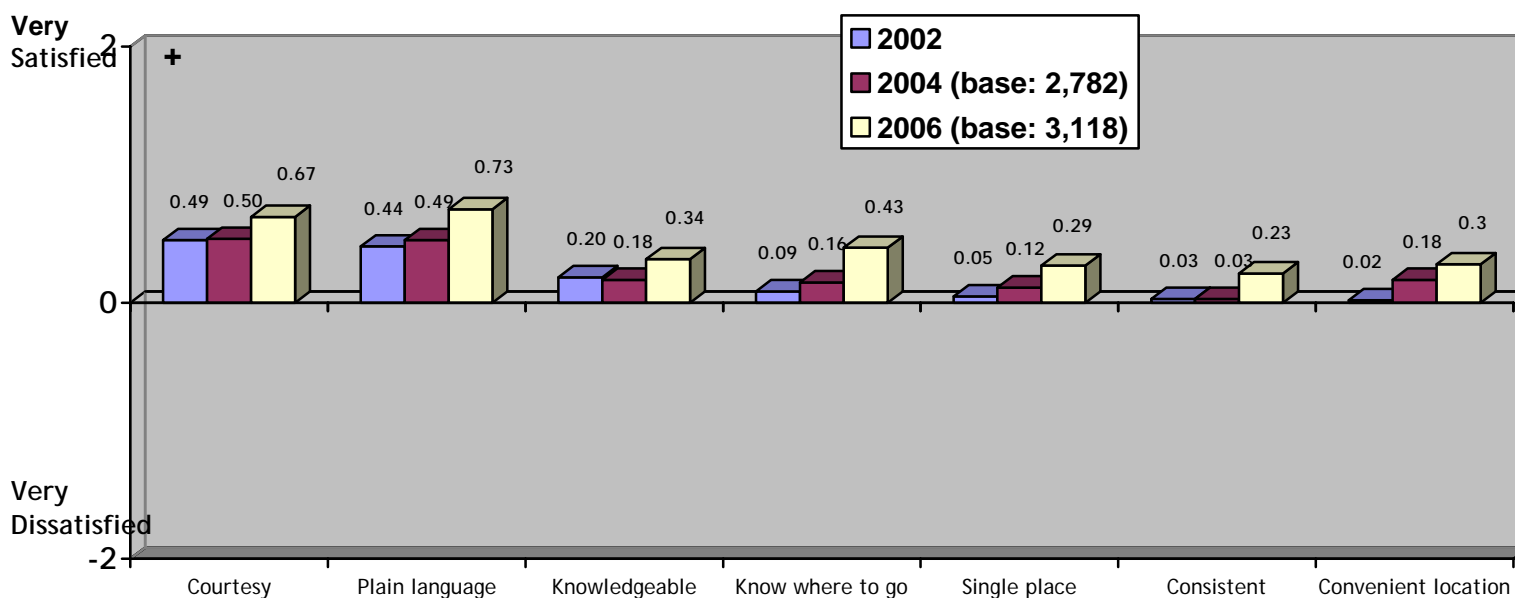
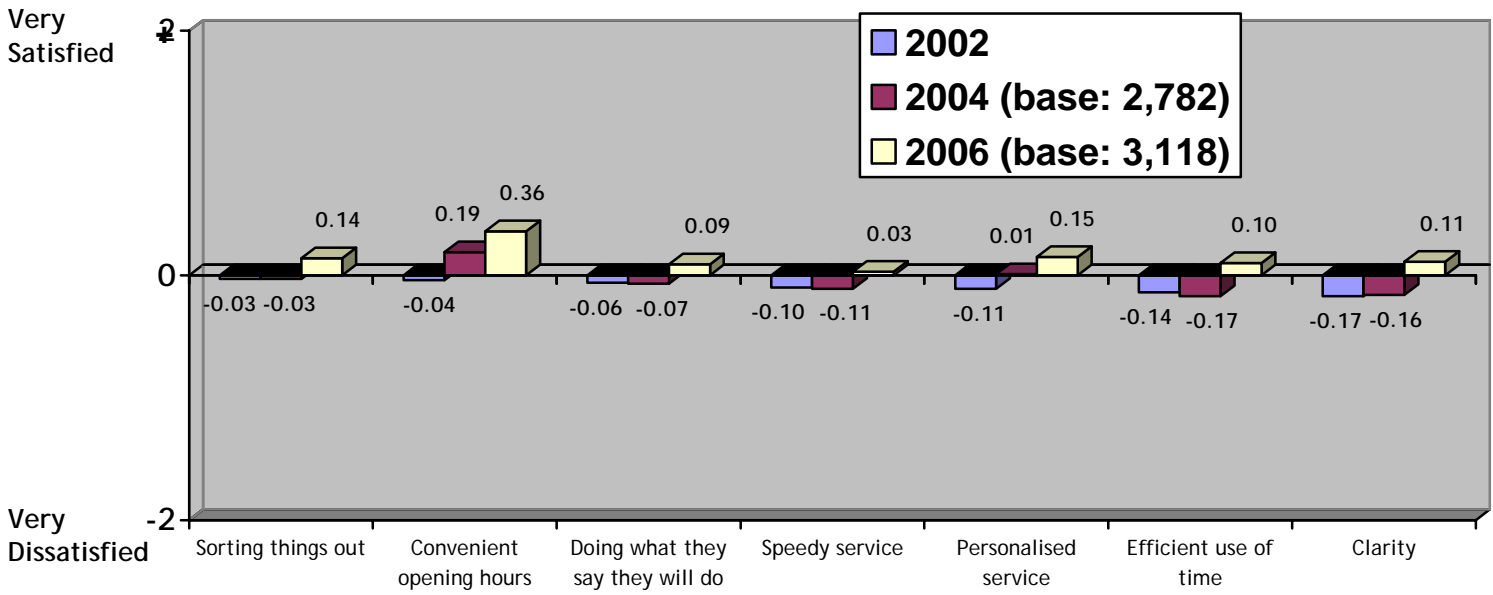


Figure 3.5(b): Customer Service Ratings



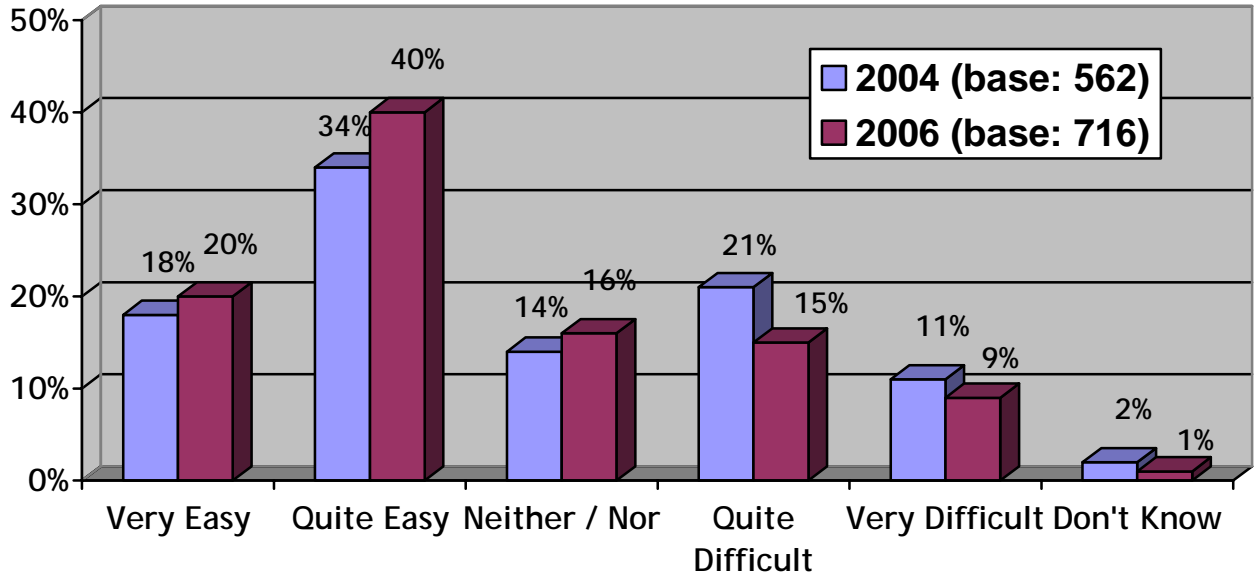
Again, the positive upward trend is evident, particularly between 2004 and 2006.

COMPLAINT HANDLING

3.6 23% of the sample claimed to have made a complaint to the Council “in the past 12 months”. The figure in 2002 was 19% and in 2004 was 20%.

3.7 As illustrated in Figure 3.6 below, the majority of people find it easy to make their complaint, although a minority did not:

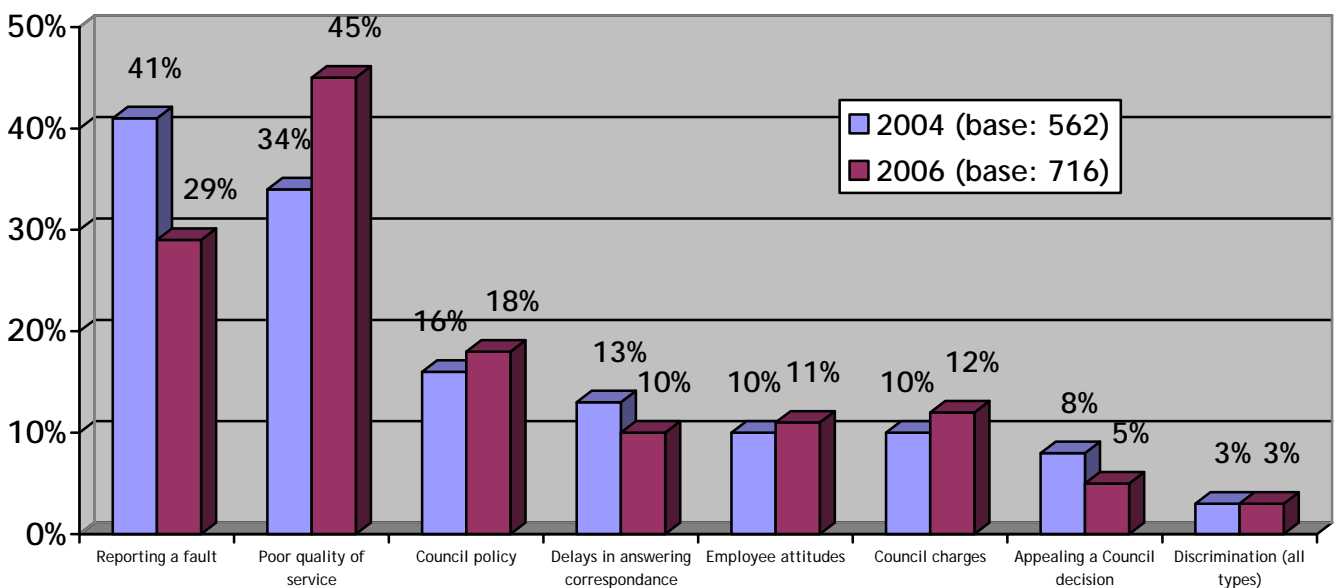
Figure 3.6: Ease of Making a Complaint



People are now more likely to feel that it is easy to make a complaint than was the case in 2004.

3.8 Slightly more of these complaints related to poor quality of service than was the case in 2004.

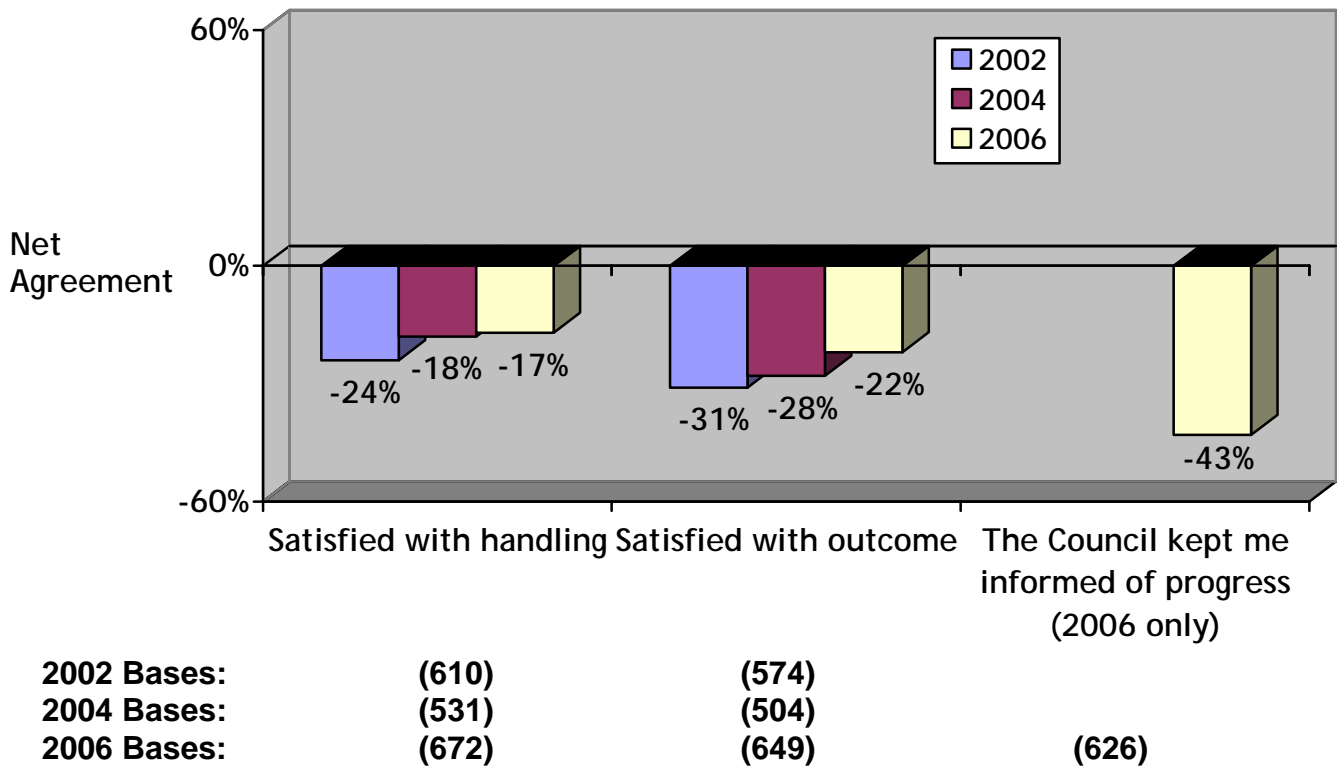
Figure 3.7: Reason for Complaint (2004 and 2006 only)



Other than these, the most common complaints continue to relate to matters of policy, rather than service delivery.

3.9 The high levels of dissatisfaction with complaint handling continue to persist, with only very modest improvements being evident. The evidence from the 2006 survey is that people are particularly dissatisfied with how they are kept informed of progress and this is likely to be a contributory factor to the more general dissatisfaction with complaint handling.

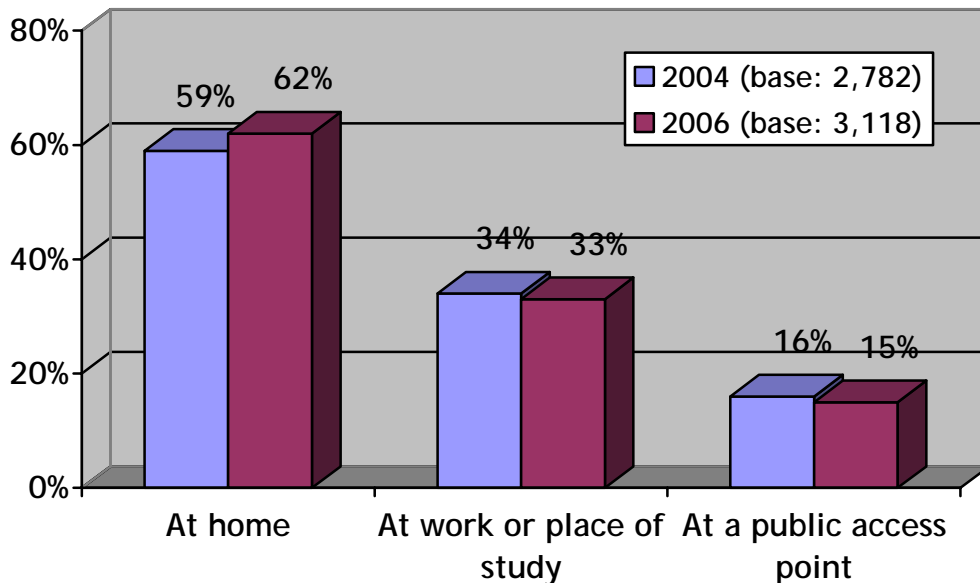
Figure 3.8: Satisfaction with Complaints



THE INTERNET

- 3.10 Figure 3.9 profiles current internet access within Aberdeenshire and shows a slightly upwards trend in terms of home internet penetration, although this is now beginning to “top out”.

Figure 3.9: Internet Access



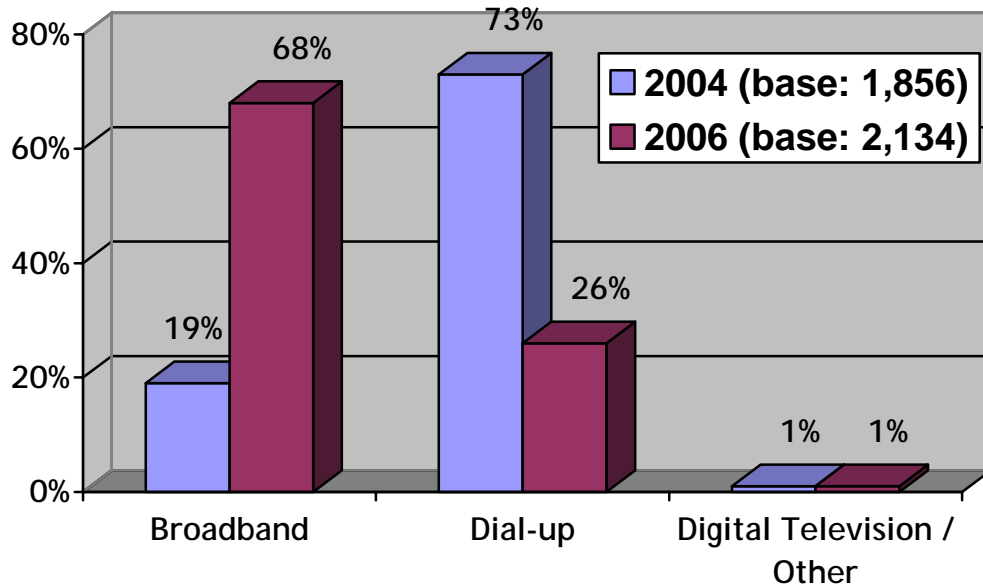
This level of home internet access is higher than the UK average (the Office of National Statistics reports this as 57% for the period January to April 2006).

There is little difference in internet penetration by gender although it is closely correlated with age. 80% of 25-34 year olds and 86% of 35-44 year olds have home internet access compared to 37% of 65-74 year olds and 13% of those aged 75+.

There are also differences in home internet penetration across the Council's administrative areas, ranging from 51% in Banff and Buchan to 70% in Formartine.

3.11 As can be seen from Figure 3.10, broadband has now become much more evident within Aberdeenshire households.

Figure 3.10: Type of Connection (most commonly used for personal business)

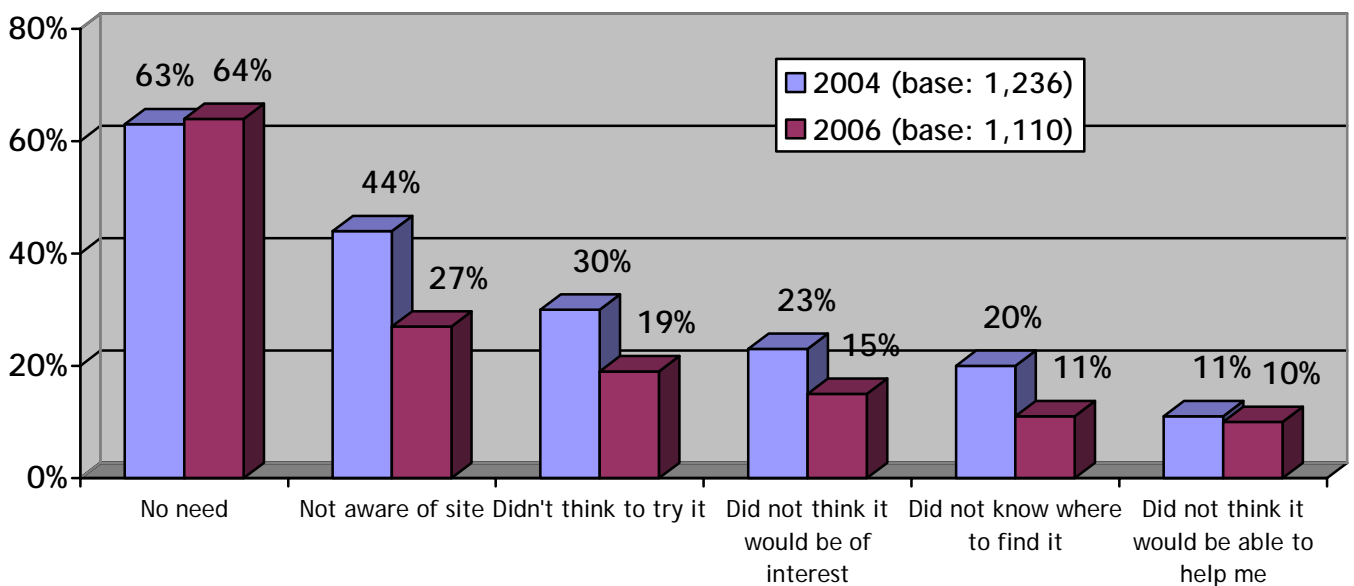


N.B. balance was "don't know" responses

3.12 In 2006, 48% of people had previously visited the Council's web site compared to only 33% in 2004.

Individuals' reasons for not visiting the site are set out in Figure 3.11

Figure 3.11: Reasons for not visiting Council Web-Site



Clearly, very many people do not consider there to be any particular need to visit the site. However, the other main factors, which relate to a lack of awareness, have improved somewhat since 2004.

3.13 As illustrated in Figure 3.12(a) and (b) below, there is a significant minority of internet users who express a willingness to use the Council's website for a wide range of services.

Figure 3.12(a): Services Willing to Transact Through Council Website

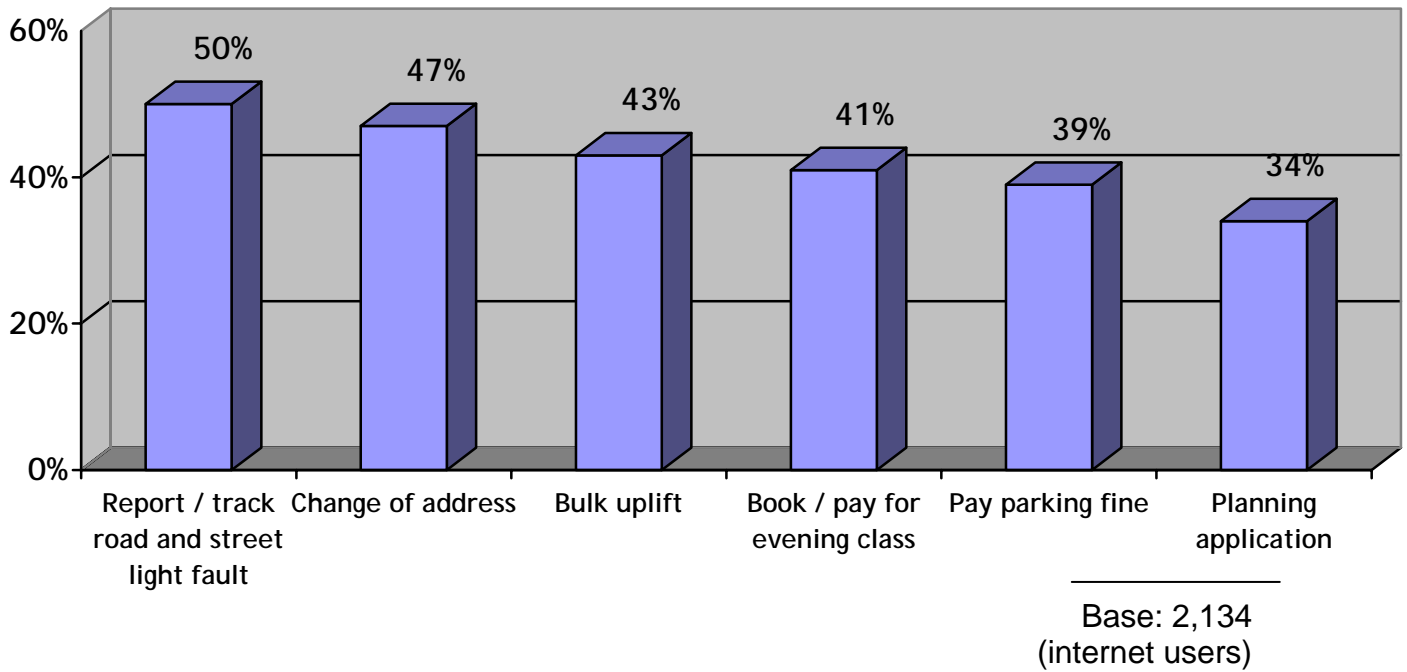
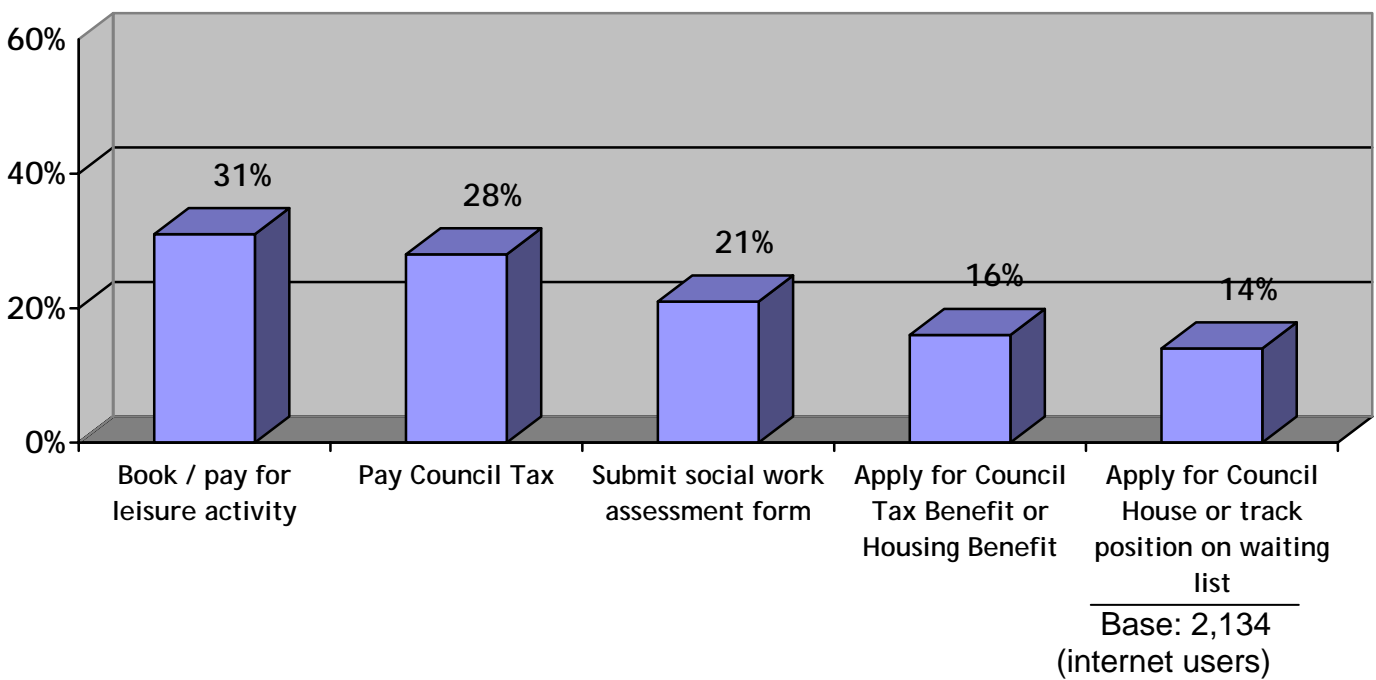


Figure 3.12(b): Services Willing to Transact Through Council Website



The implication is that there is continued scope to further enhance the functionality of the site and to continue to promote this.

Summary of Key Points

Telephone is typically the preferred method of contacting the Council for most service users.

There has been a notable improvement in the perceived ease of contacting the Council over the past two years. Indeed, satisfaction levels across a range of customer service attributes show an encouraging upwards trend.

Satisfaction with complaint handling remains a concern, however, including the extent to which people are kept in touch with regarding their complaint.

Home internet penetration is high (62%) and an increasing proportion of internet users have visited the Council's web site (48%). There is a strong willingness amongst internet users to use the Council's web site to transact a range of business.

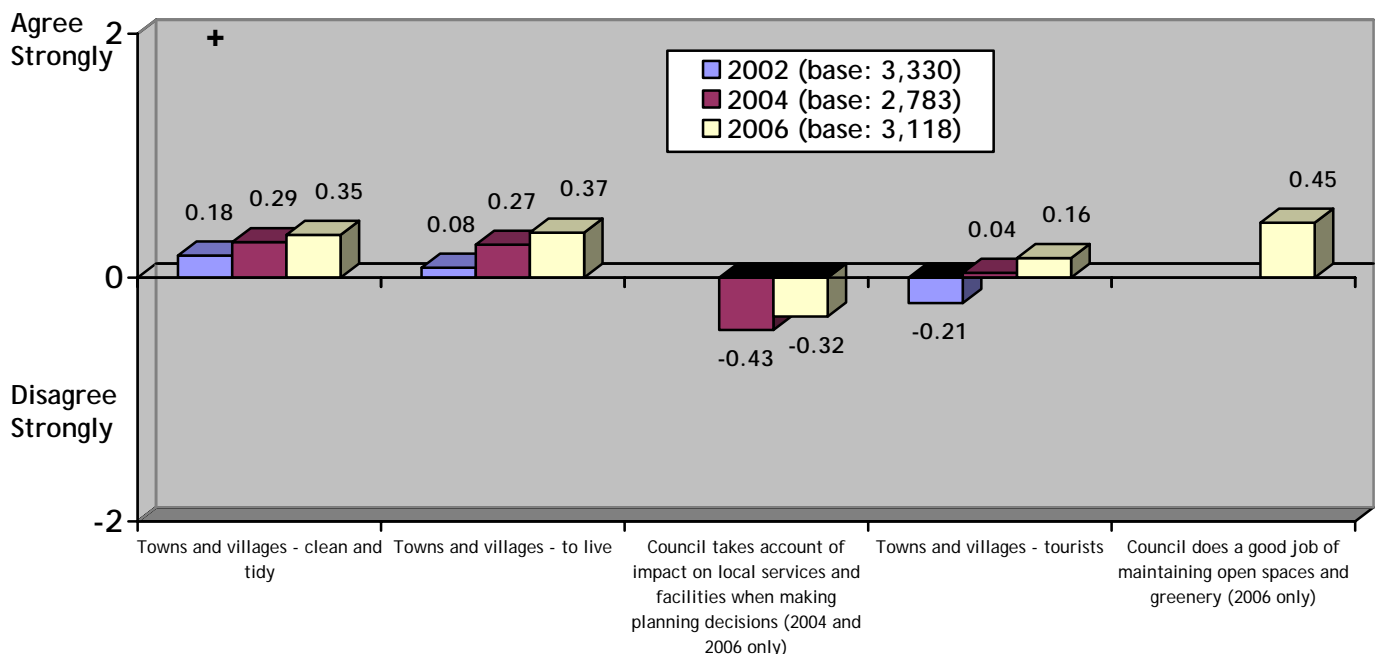
4.0 THE COMMUNITIES OF ABERDEENSHIRE

4.1 As with the 2002 and 2004 surveys, a series of agree/disagree questions were asked in relation to the impact which the Council has had on Aberdeenshire’s communities. These statements, the results to which are summarised in Figure 4.1 below, included:

- “The Council does a good job in keeping towns and villages clean and tidy”.
- The Council does a good job in making towns and villages in Aberdeenshire attractive places to live”.
- “The Council wastes money on projects to improve the look of towns and villages”.
- “The Council does a good job in making towns and villages in Aberdeenshire attractive places for tourists”.

Again, this chart is presented in the form of “mean ratings” to ensure comparability with 2002 and 2004 data. Thus, an “agree strongly” response is accorded a score of +2, and “agree” a score of +1 and so on, with the aggregate result being expressed as a mean rating.

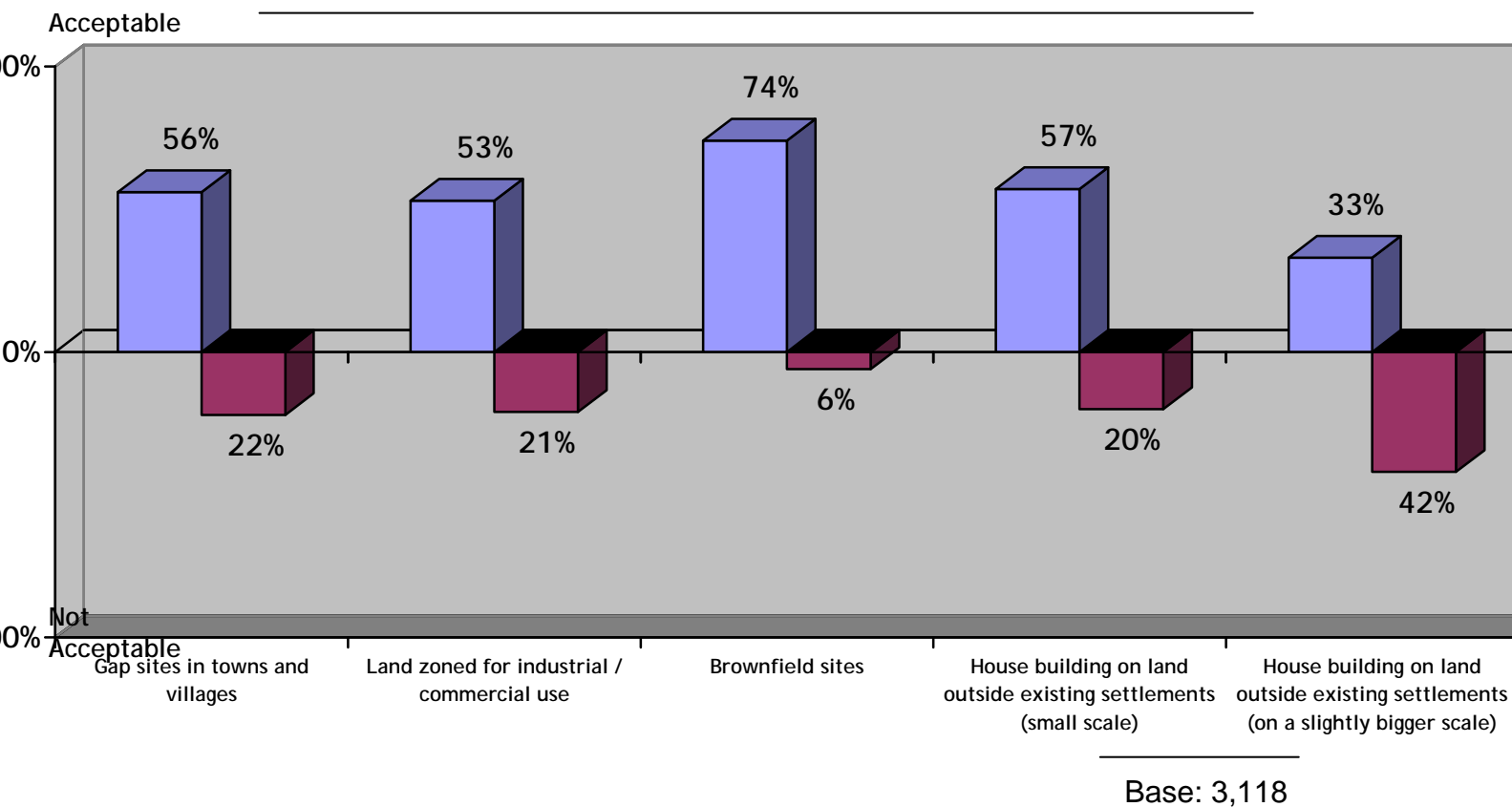
Figure 4.1: The Communities of Aberdeenshire – Towns and Villages



Clearly, a continued upwards trend is evident across all of these issues.

- 4.2 However, there remains a concern as to whether the Council takes account of the impact of its planning decisions on local services and facilities. Despite an improving trend, the majority of residents still do not believe that it does so effectively. People in Kincardine and Mearns are particularly unlikely to believe that the Council does so (17% compared to 23% of the sample as a whole).
- 4.3 The 2006 survey asked respondents to comment on the acceptability of housing developments under a range of circumstances. As Figure 4.2 illustrates, there is considerable support for housing developments to be allowed on gap sites and on land which is either zoned for industrial or commercial use or “brownfield sites”. There is also a strong consensus in support of allowing “small scale” housing developments on land outside existing developments. A slight majority opposes the idea of larger scale house building on land outwith settlements although, even here, a significant minority are in support of this.

Figure 4.2: Attitudes to Planning Decisions



N.B. balance is “don’t know” responses

4.4 The full area breakdown for the above questions for the 2004 and 2006 surveys is as follows:

	Net Agreement											
	Banff and Buchan		Buchan		Formartine		Garioch		Kincardine and Mearns		Marr	
	2004	2006	2004	2006	2004	2006	2004	2006	2004	2006	2004	2006
The Council does a good job in making towns and villages in Aberdeenshire attractive places to live	4%	20%	14%	36%	37%	47%	43%	43%	26%	21%	40%	43%
The Council does a good job in making towns and villages in Aberdeenshire attractive places for tourists	-15%	4%	-17%	13%	10%	22%	12%	23%	-6%	7%	24%	35%
The Council does a good job in keeping towns and villages clean and tidy	22%	36%	17%	35%	35%	44%	44%	40%	17%	6%	42%	51%
The Council does a good job of maintaining open spaces and greenery within towns and villages	-	39%	-	43%	-	46%	-	43%	-	25%	-	54%
The Council takes account of the impact on local services and facilities when it makes planning decisions	-22%	-11%	-18%	-6%	-24%	-9%	-22%	-23%	-31%	-28%	-17%	-8%

The main points to note from this analysis are:

- Continued improvements in most of the areas but especially in Buchan and, to a lesser extent, Banff and Buchan.
- A slight decline in satisfaction with some of these aspects (e.g. keeping towns and villages clean and tidy, making towns and villages attractive places to live) in Kincardine and Mearns.

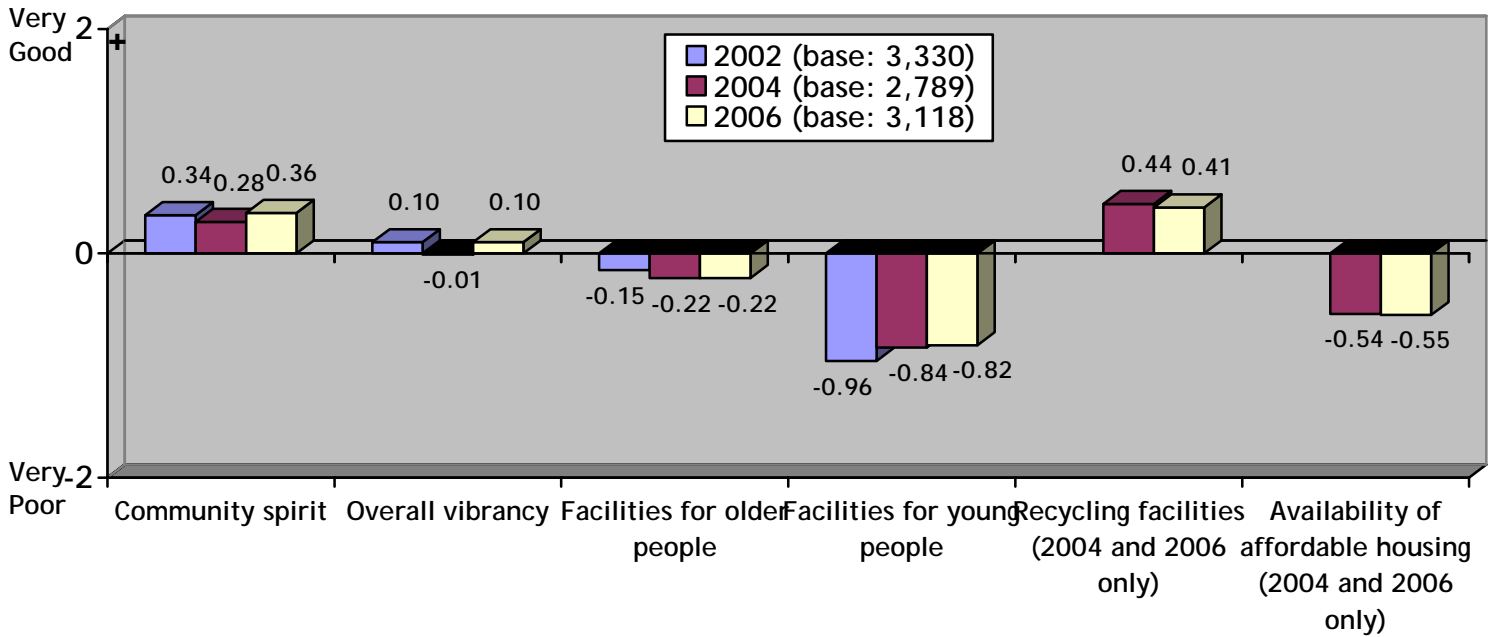
4.5 Wider questions were also repeated from the 2002 and 2004 surveys in relation to a number of community issues including:

- Sense of community spirit
- The overall vibrancy of the community

- Facilities for older people
- Facilities for young people.

The results of this are set out in Figure 4.3 below.

Figure 4.3: The Communities of Aberdeenshire – Community Issues



Unlike many of the other strands of the 2006 survey, few significant improvements in perception are apparent, other than a modest improvement in ratings for “community spirit” and “overall vibrancy”.

4.6 The full area breakdown for these questions for the 2004 and 2006 surveys is as follows:

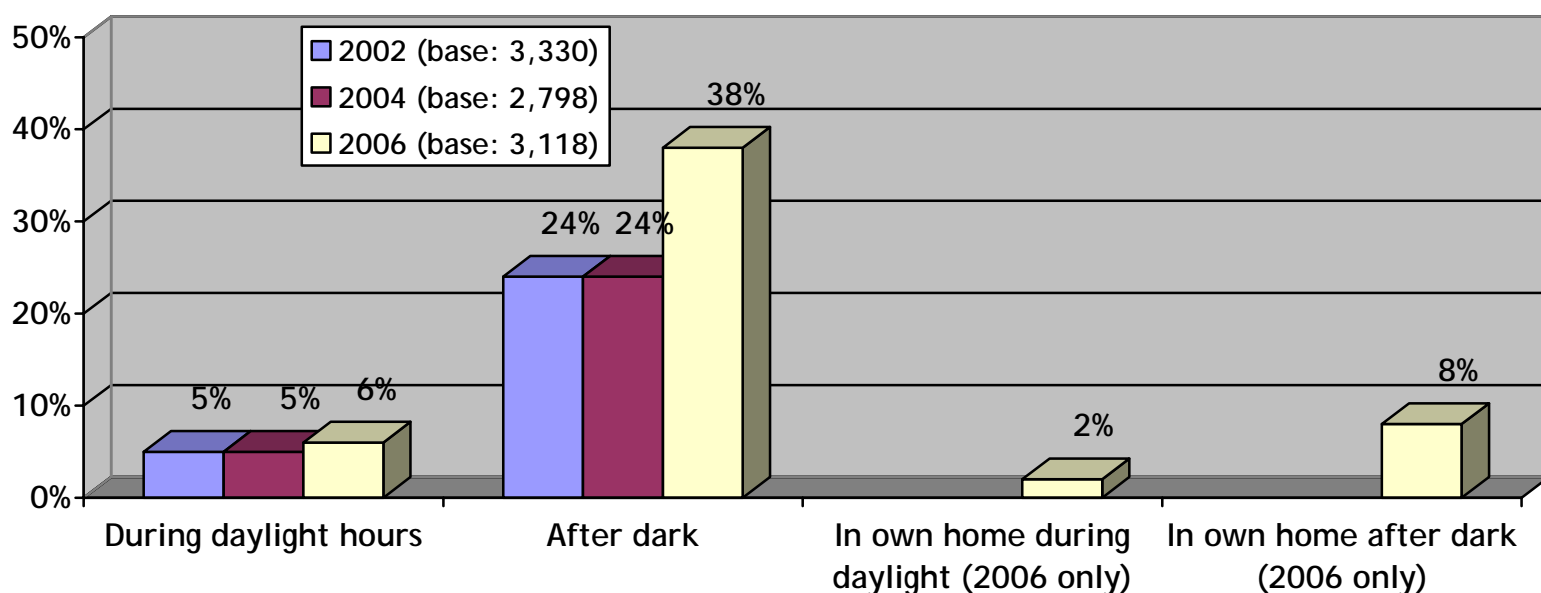
	Net Positive											
	Banff and Buchan		Buchan		Formartine		Garioch		Kincardine and Mearns		Marr	
	2004	2006	2004	2006	2004	2006	2004	2006	2004	2006	2004	2006
Sense of community spirit	3%	12%	5%	19%	27%	33%	34%	30%	29%	26%	34%	44%
Facilities for young people (up to 17 years)	-59%	-52%	-66%	-57%	-49%	-41%	-35%	-49%	-56%	-54%	-43%	-38%
Facilities for older people	-21%	-18%	-32%	-21%	-9%	-9%	-3%	-6%	-11%	-16%	-13%	5%
The overall vibrancy of the community	-24%	-15%	-17%	-1%	4%	18%	21%	19%	7%	6%	17%	30%
Recycling facilities	34%	36%	36%	29%	47%	51%	44%	52%	15%	0%	46%	42%
Availability of affordable housing	-12%	-15%	-13%	-18%	-31%	-27%	-31%	-30%	-32%	-40%	-50%	-40%

Again, some positive trends can be identified within the Banff and Buchan and Buchan areas, albeit from a relatively low base.

- 4.7 A further issue investigated under the “communities” theme was personal safety. As can be seen from Figure 4.3, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of people who feel unsafe outside after dark between 2004 and 2006.

Figure 4.4: Personal Safety

% feeling either a bit or very unsafe

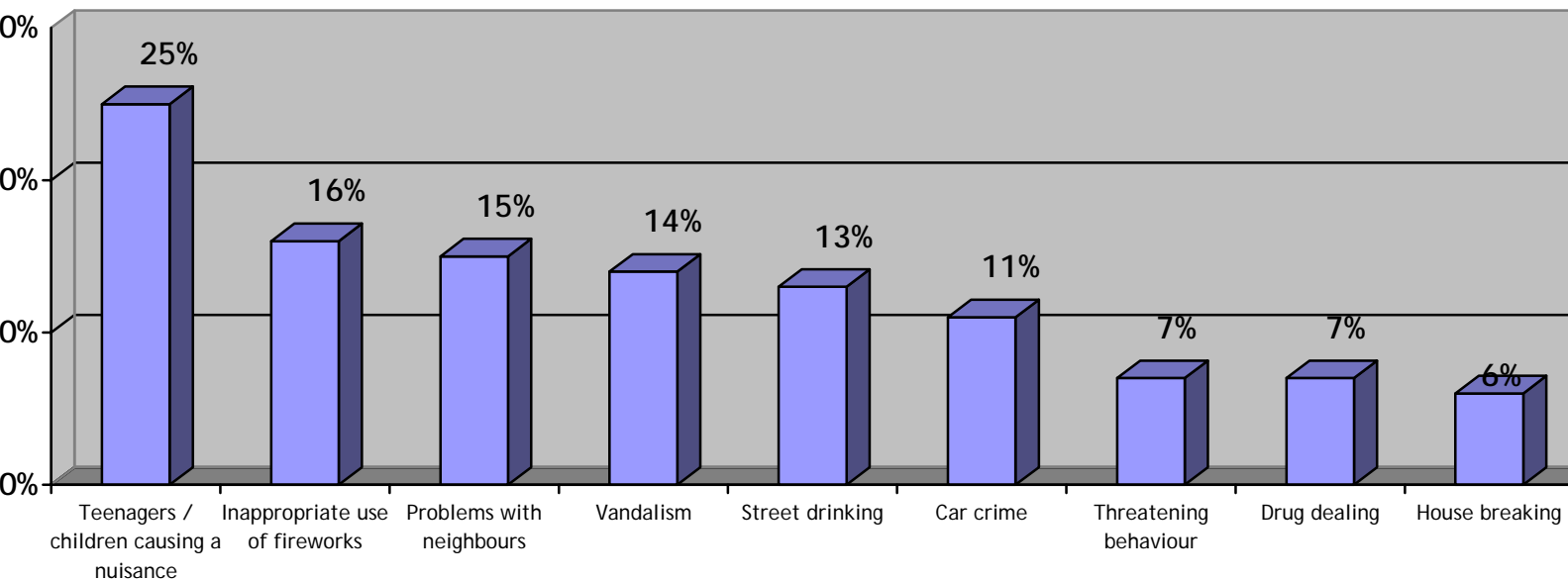


Amongst the groups of people who were most likely to feel unsafe after dark were the following:

- Females (the relevant figure is 41%, up from 29% in 2004)
- People living in Banff and Buchan (50%, up from 45% in 2004 and 38% in 2002)
- People living in Buchan (51%, up from 44% in 2004 and 41% in 2002).
- Older people (for example, 45% of people aged 75+).

4.8 Figure 4.5 below summarises the extent to which respondents had actually been a victim of various aspects of anti-social behaviour:

Figure 4.5: Experience of Anti-Social Behaviour (2006 only)



Base: 3,118

Other items (assault, harassment, domestic abuse) were reported by a small minority of people.

Clearly, much of people's actual experience of anti-social behaviour is of the low-level, albeit persistent, kind.

Summary of Key Points

Some improvements are evident with regard to people's perception of the Council's role in keeping towns and villages clean and tidy.

Summary of Key Points (continued)

There is a concern, however, about the extent to which the Council is perceived to be taking account of the impact of its planning decisions on local facilities and services.

Affordable housing is seen as an important issue and residents are willing to countenance house building in a variety of places although there is some resistance to large-scale house building outwith existing settlements.

Some improvements in perception of community spirit and vibrancy are evident.

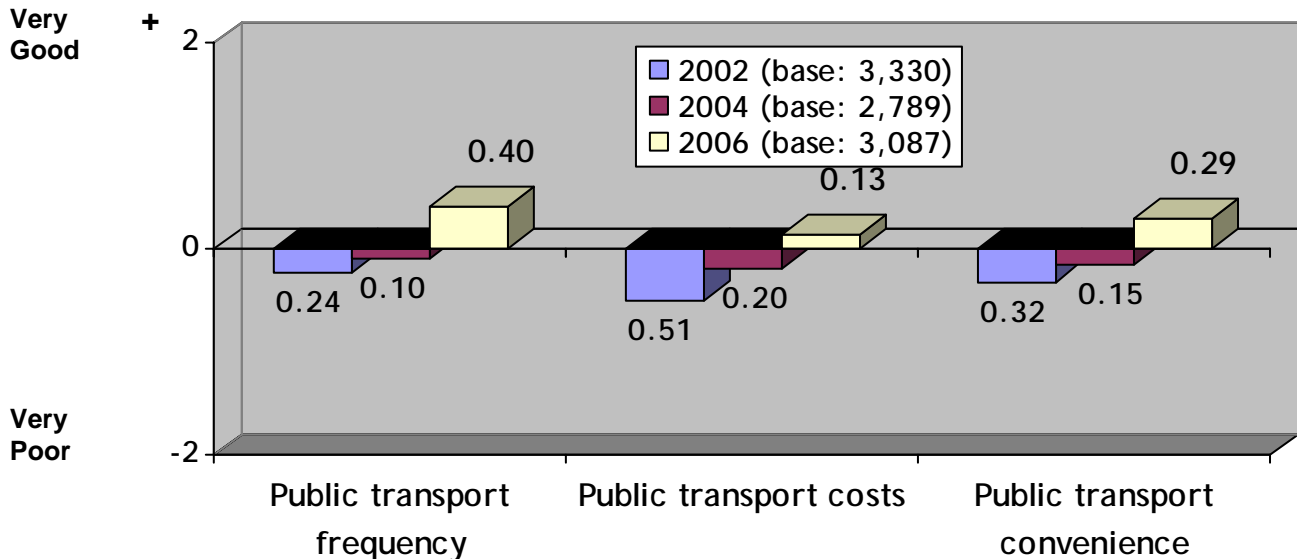
However, people continue to rate the availability of community facilities poorly.

There has been a decline in people's perception of their personal safety when they are outside after dark. However, most people's actual experience of anti-social behaviour is of the low-level, albeit persistent, kind.

5.0 TRANSPORT AND ROAD SAFETY

5.1 As illustrated in Figure 5.1 below, respondents' perceptions of the frequency, cost and convenience of public transport all show a positive upwards trend, particularly over the past two years.

Figure 5.1: Public Transport

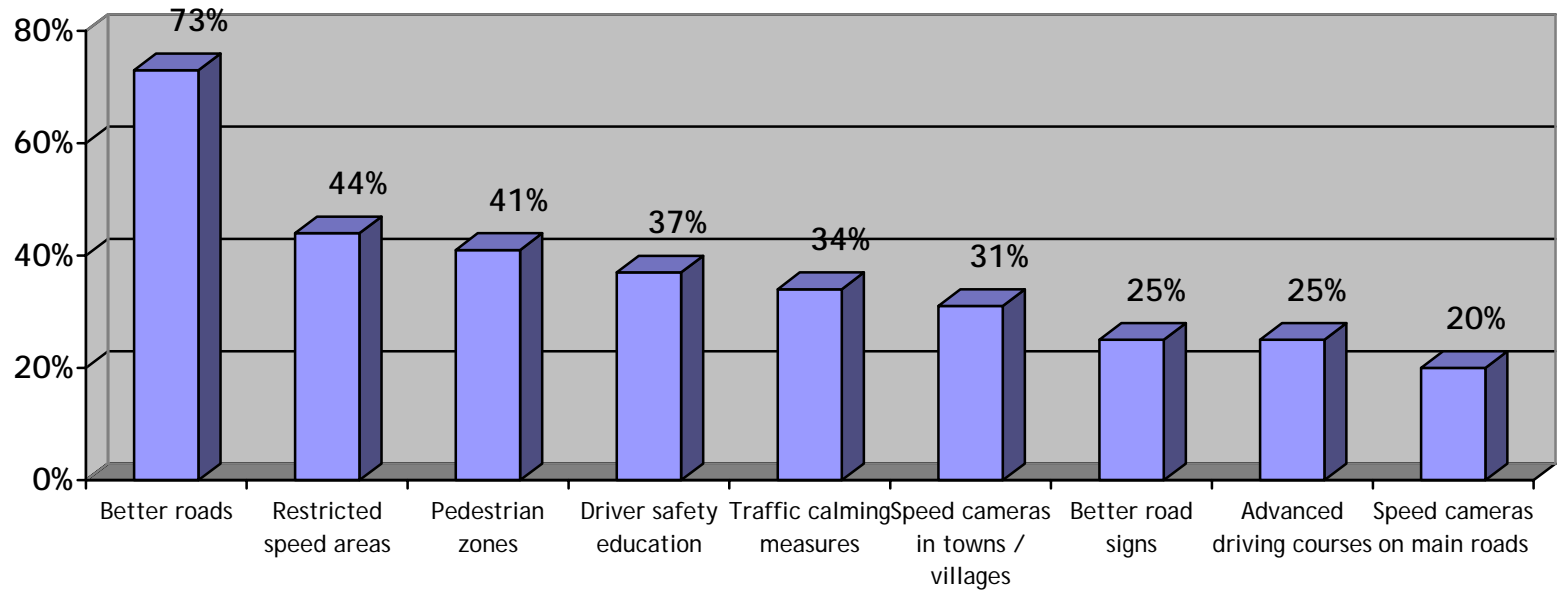


For example:

- Only 23% of people rate the frequency of public transport to and from the area which they live as being poor or very poor compared to 41% in 2004 and 52% in 2002.
- 24% rate the cost of public transport links as being poor and a similar proportion rate the convenience of public transport links as being poor, compared to 43% and 42% respectively in 2004.

5.2 The 2006 survey explored a range of issues around the theme of the safety measures that citizens would like to see within Aberdeenshire. The results of this are set out in Figure 5.2 below:

Figure 5.2: Preferred Road Safety Measures



Base: 3,087

Clearly, there is a strong desire for “better roads” and it is reasonable to infer that this is partially for safety purposes but also for more general reasons of convenience.

5.3 Less than half of respondents nominated any of the other elements (although it is worth noting that they were not asked to agree or disagree with the options, simply to state those that they would like to see).

Given this, quite a number of people would like to see measures such as:

- Restricted speed areas
- Pedestrian zones
- Driver safety education
- Traffic calming measures
- Speed cameras *within towns and villages*.

There is, however, less apparent demand for improved road signage, more advanced driving courses and speed cameras *on main roads*.

Summary of Key Points

Improved perceptions of public transport are evident over the past two years, albeit from a low base.

There is a strong desire for road improvements within Aberdeenshire.

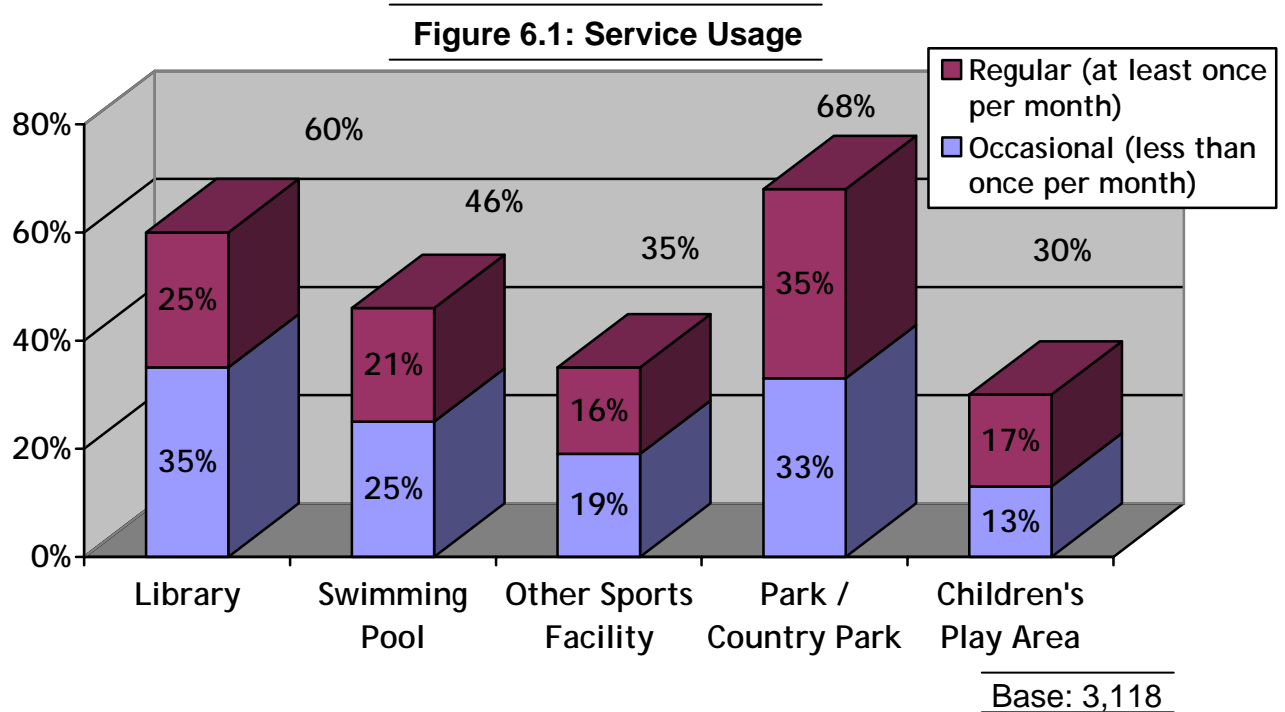
Some desire is evident for safety measures such as more restricted speed areas, pedestrian zones, driver safety education and traffic calming measures.

There is also some desire for speed cameras within towns and villages (but less demand for such speed cameras on main roads).

6.0 SATISFACTION WITH KEY SERVICES

SATISFACTION RATINGS

6.1 Figure 6.1 profiles usage of a range of Council facilities.

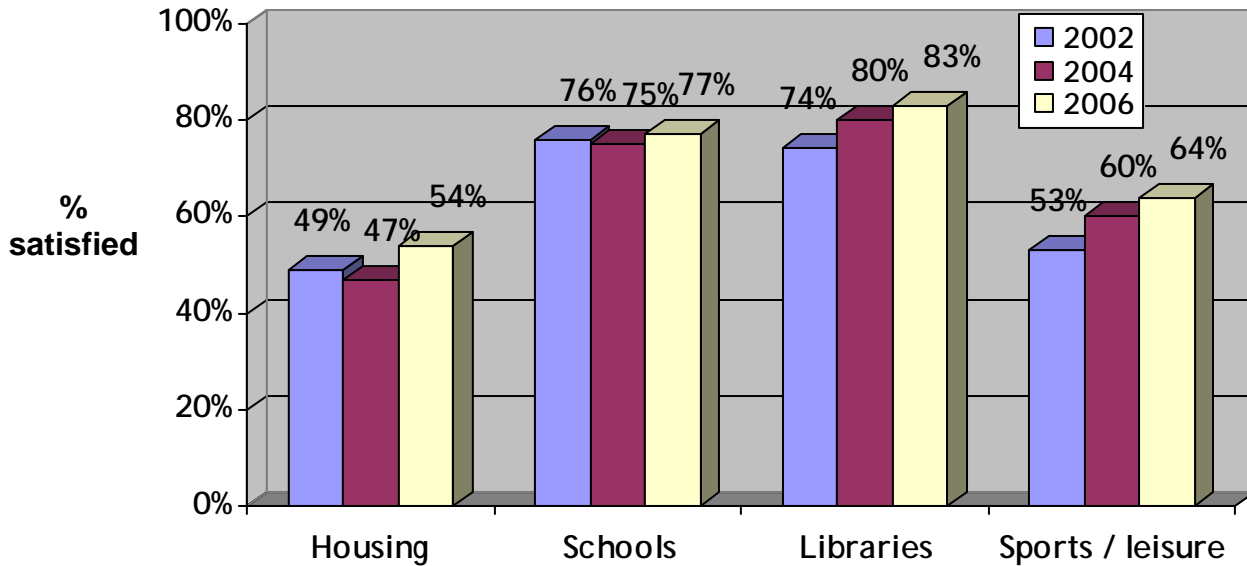


There has been no material change in overall levels of usage of these facilities since 2004 and, clearly, such facilities continue to play an important part of individuals' lives within their communities.

SERVICE SATISFACTION

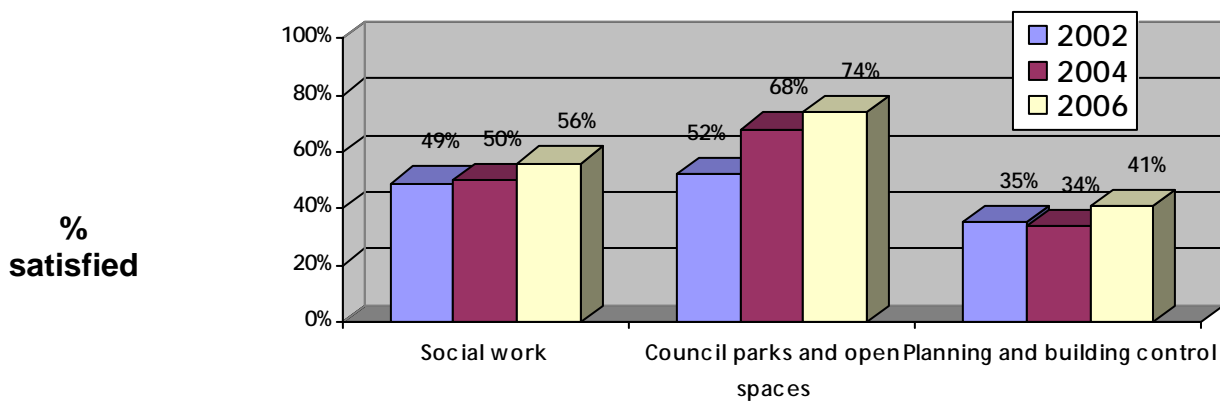
6.2 Figures 6.2(a) and (b) profile the trend in relation to levels of satisfaction with a range of specific Council services.

Figure 6.2(a): Services You Use – Specific Services



2002 Bases:	(666)	(1,149)	(2,024)	(1,809)
2004 Bases:	(648)	(957)	(1,842)	(1,521)
2006 Bases:	(643)	(965)	(2,013)	(1,706)

Figure 6.2(b): Services You Use – Specific Services



2002 Bases:	(774)	(2,278)	(1,412)
2004 Bases:	(709)	(1,994)	(1,431)
2006 Bases:	(685)	(2,267)	(1,302)

These results continue to be generally positive. For example,

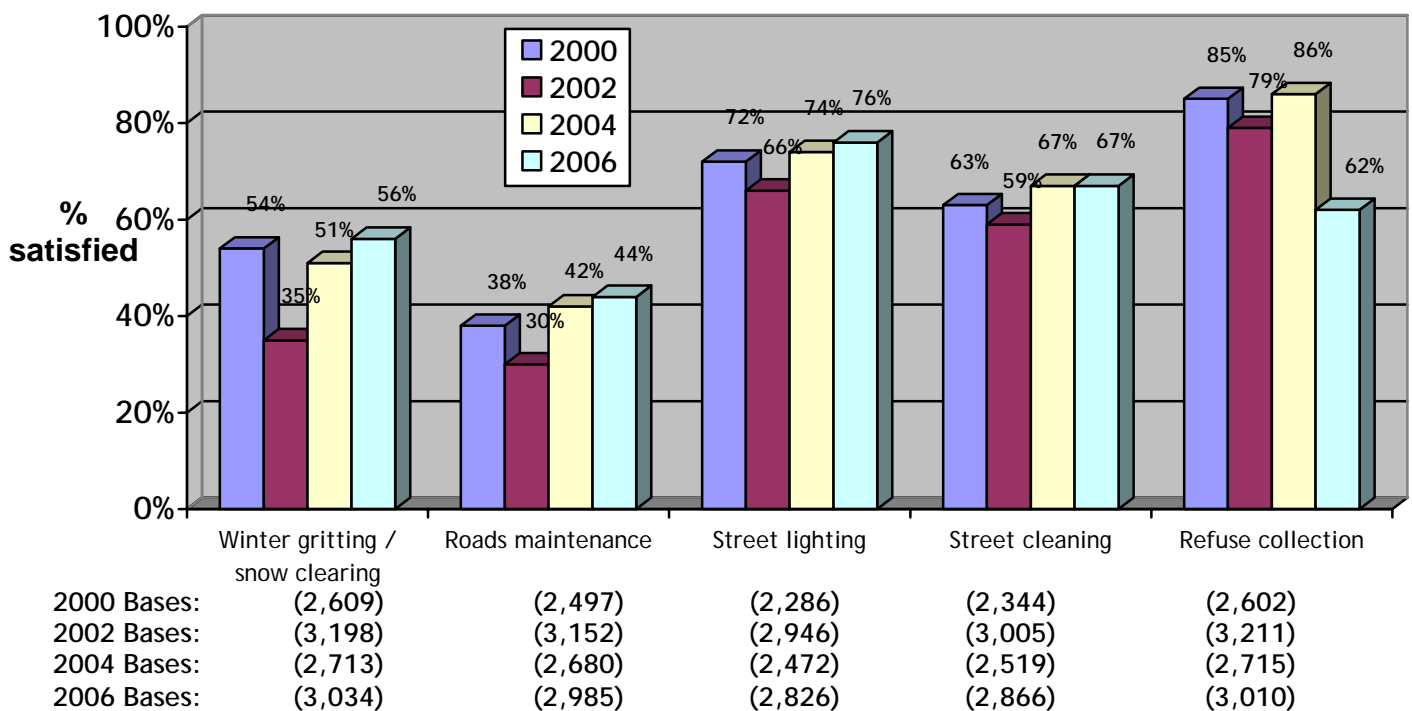
- “Schools” retain their very high satisfaction rating
- Satisfaction levels with libraries has risen further from an already high base
- There have been significant continued improvements in satisfaction ratings with Council parks and open spaces and with sport and leisure facilities.

6.3 There continues to be a positive net satisfaction with both housing and social work services, albeit at a lower level than the services described above. The likelihood is that this is reflective of the challenging nature of certain aspects of housing and social work services.

6.4 Ratings for planning and building control continues to be rated lowest amongst this batch of services, although again, an improving trend is evident. Previous reports have suggested that this is a function of policy, rather than service delivery. The public concerns noted in this report over the extent to which planning decisions are thought to take account of the impact on local facilities and services would tend to endorse this view.

6.5 Levels of satisfaction for a range of universal services can now be tracked over a six-year period, as illustrated in Figure 6.3 below.

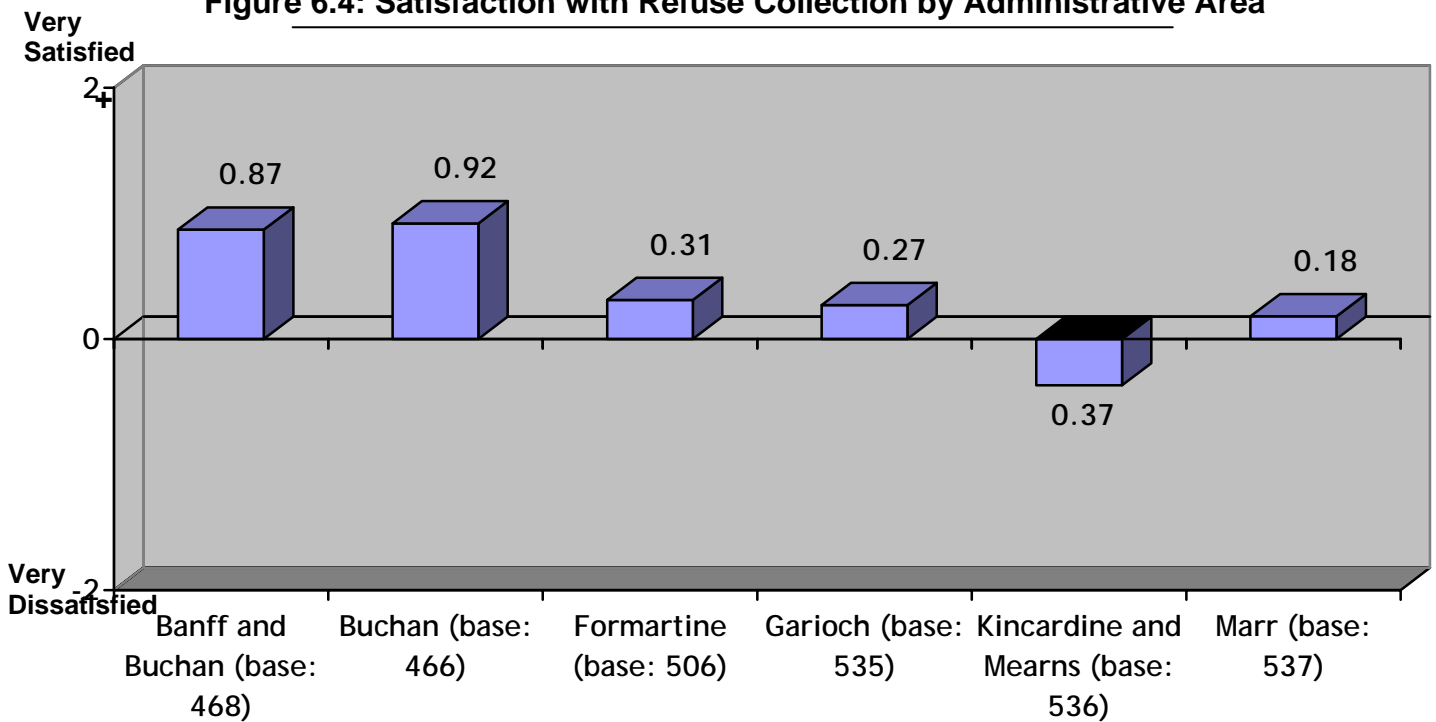
Figure 6.3: Services Everybody Uses – Universal Services



The improved perception of the majority of these services is noteworthy, although there continues to be scope for further improvement, particularly with regard to roads maintenance and winter gritting, albeit real improved perceptions are apparent.

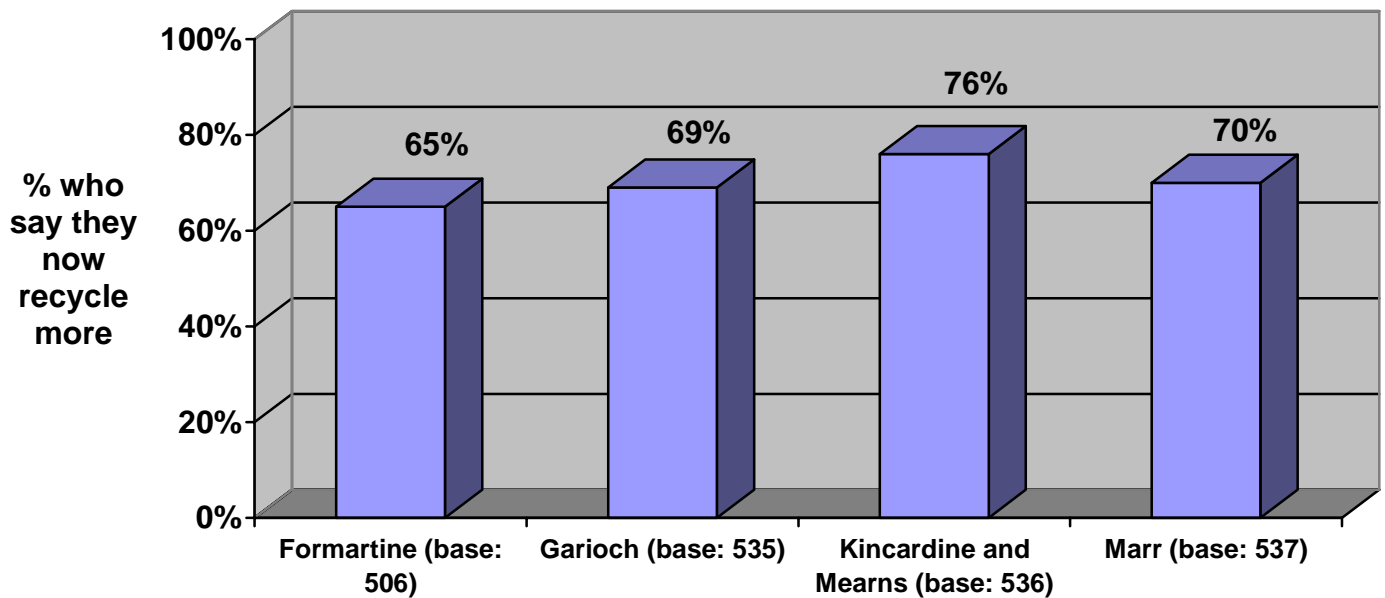
6.6 The particular drop in satisfaction with refuse collection services is very apparent and needs to be seen against a backdrop of significant changes that have been implemented with regard to the Council’s recycling and waste collection services over the past year within the specific areas of Formartine, Garioch, Kincardine and Mearns and Marr. Levels of satisfaction within each of these areas are set out in Figure 6.4 below (Figure 6.4 illustrates the “mean satisfaction” rating on a 5-point scale).

Figure 6.4: Satisfaction with Refuse Collection by Administrative Area



6.7 However, the evidence from the “local inserts” in these areas is that the policy has had some success in that the majority of people do now say that they recycle more as a result of these changes.

Figure 6.5: Impact of Changes on Propensity to Recycle



In each of the four areas, a majority of people stated that they found it “easy” to adapt to the changes. However, this was not the case for a significant minority of people, including:

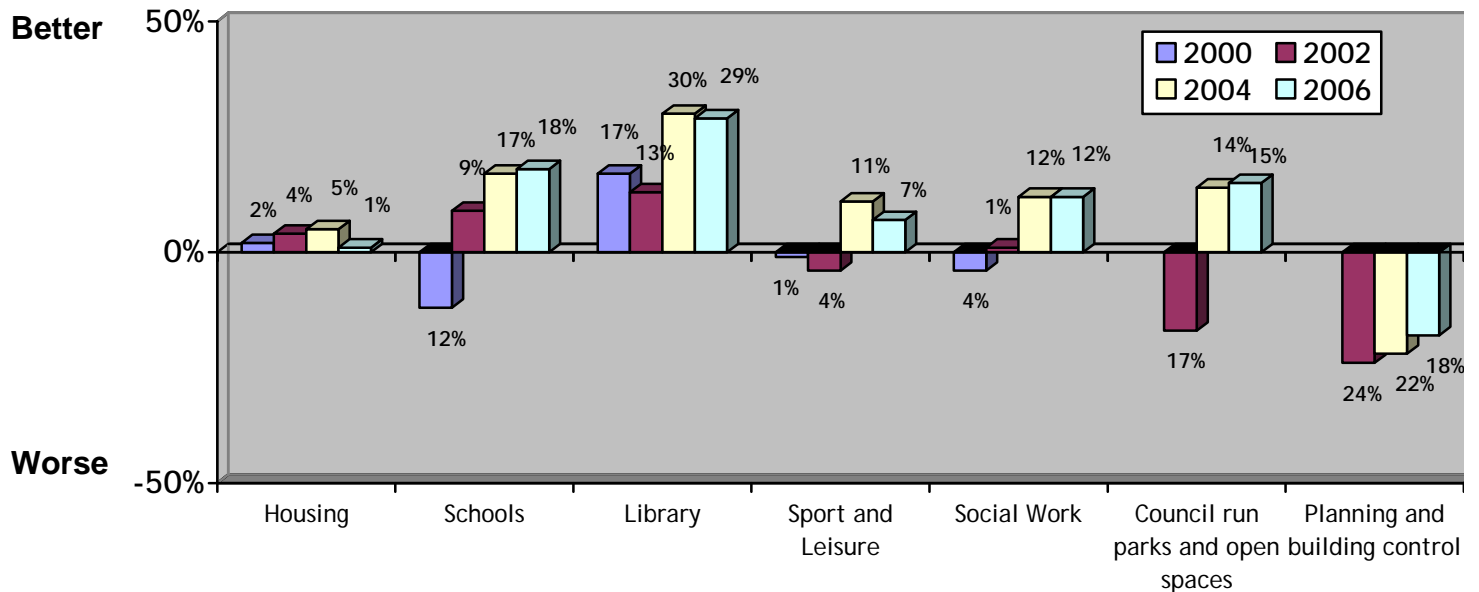
- 23% of people in Garioch who found it difficult to adapt to the changes
- 24% of people in Formartine
- 31% of people in Kincardine and Mearns
- 32% of people in Marr.

PERCEIVED CHANGES

6.8 The survey also asked people to comment on whether they perceived services to have got better or worse over the past three or four years. This is a robust method of measuring changes in perceptions of services, as it does not rely on the sampling methodology for previous years being identical. These questions have been asked in each of 2000, 2002 and 2004 and the results are detailed below (in the case of two questions, year 2000 data is not available). The calculations are based on the proportion of respondents who believe services have improved, *less* the proportion of respondents who believe they have got worse.

6.9 Results for a number of specific services are summarised below.

Figure 6.6: Pattern Data in Relation to Specific Services



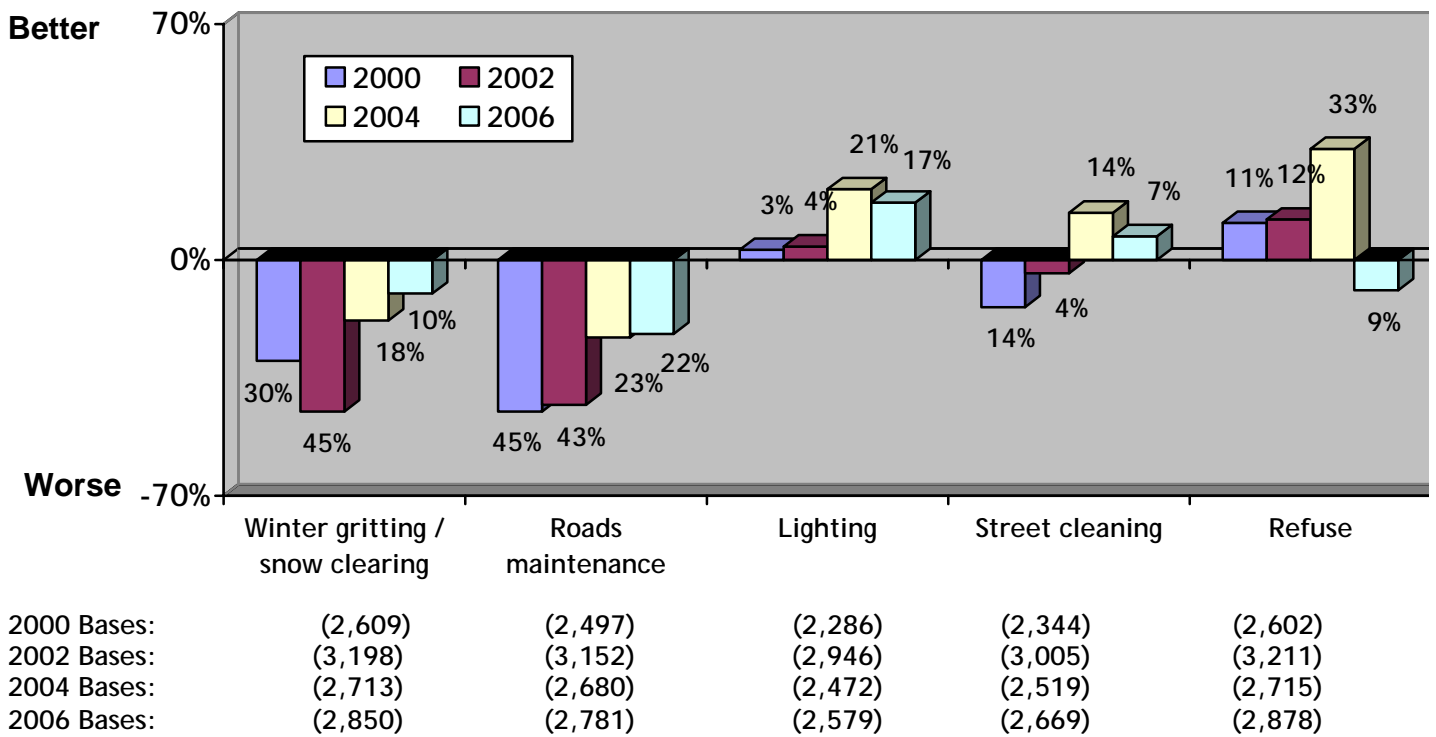
2002 Bases:	(666)	(1,149)	(2,024)	(1,809)	(774)	(2,278)	(1,412)
2004 Bases:	(648)	(957)	(1,842)	(1,521)	(709)	(1,994)	(1,431)
2006 Bases:	(629)	(929)	(1,747)	(1,572)	(634)	(2,011)	(1,005)

Clearly, across most of these services, people are still more likely to say that they are improving rather than worsening. However, the upwards trend in relation to these figures has stalled somewhat. It is perhaps the case that the improvements that people were starting to see in 2004 have now fed through to improved satisfaction ratings and, clearly, it is important for this positive momentum to be maintained.

The only service that more people believe is worsening, rather than improving, is “planning and building control” again, most probably for “policy” reasons).

6.10 A similar analysis for a number of “universal services” is set out below.

Figure 6.7: Pattern Data on Perceived Changes to Universal Services



As in Figure 6.6, the upwards trend in terms of the proportion of people who believe services to be improving has stalled somewhat.

In general, however, the majority of respondents believe services such as street lighting and street cleaning to be improving although, again, the extent of this view is less apparent than it was in 2004.

It is encouraging, also, to note the diminishing extent to which people perceive winter gritting/snow clearing and roads maintenance to be worsening and, as noted above, satisfaction with these services continues to improve.

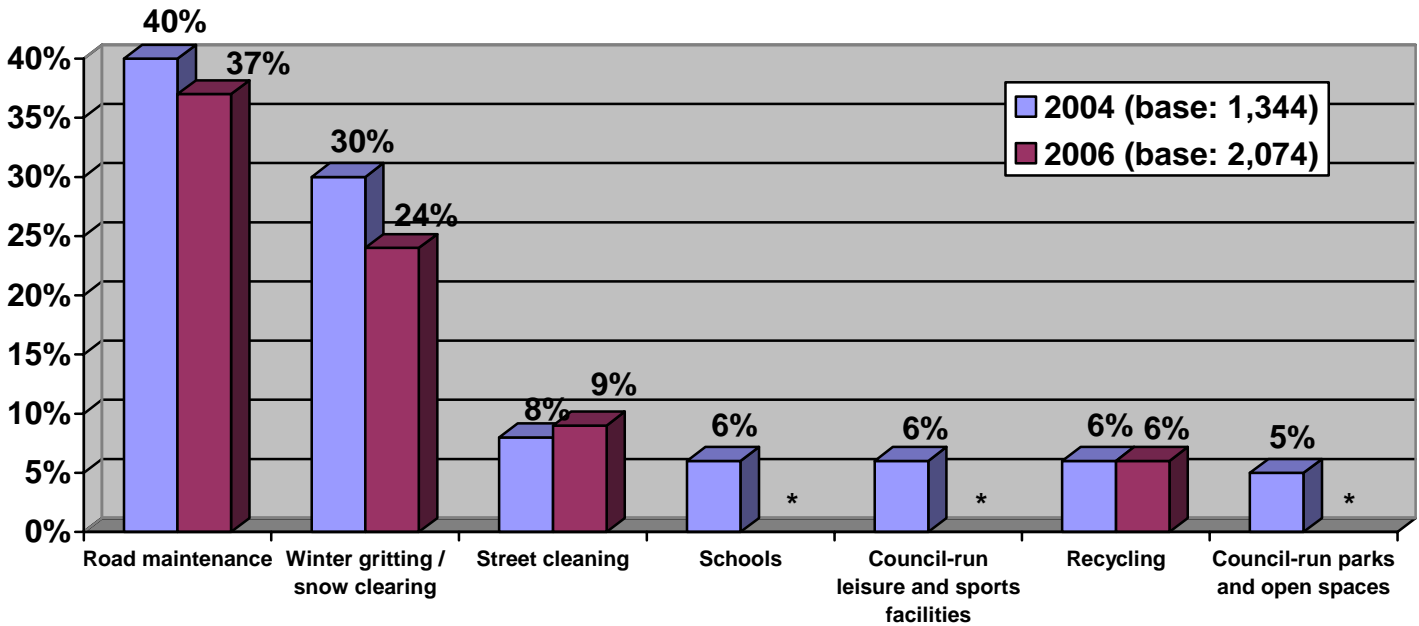
Clearly, the reversal of the positive trend with respect to refuse collection is influenced by the difficulties over the change in service approach, which has been described above.

6.11 The table below summarises overall perceptions of the range of services that have been covered in this section.

Housing	Consistent perception of performance staying the same or improving slightly.
Schools	A continued and impressive positive turnaround in terms of perception of performance.
Libraries	Perceived to be continuing to improve.
Sport and Leisure	A slight downward pattern has been reversed and perceptions are improving.
Social Work	Recent perceived improvement in service delivery.
Council-run parks and open spaces	Continuing to be perceived as improving, representing a significant turnaround from the pre-2004 position.
Planning and building control	Still perceived to be worsening.
Winter gritting/snow clearing	Still perceived to be worsening by some, but to a much lesser extent than previously.
Roads maintenance	A similar pattern to winter gritting/snow clearing.
Street lighting	Now seen to be improving by a significant proportion.
Street cleaning	A continued positive turnaround and now perceived to be improving.
Refuse collection	A significant proportion of people now perceive this service to be worsening.

6.12 2004 and 2006 respondents were also asked to suggest on which services they felt the Council should have spent more money in the previous year. The results of this are detailed in Figure 6.8 below (suggestions accounting for more than 5% of the total are included and where the figure for that year is less than 5%, an * is inserted).

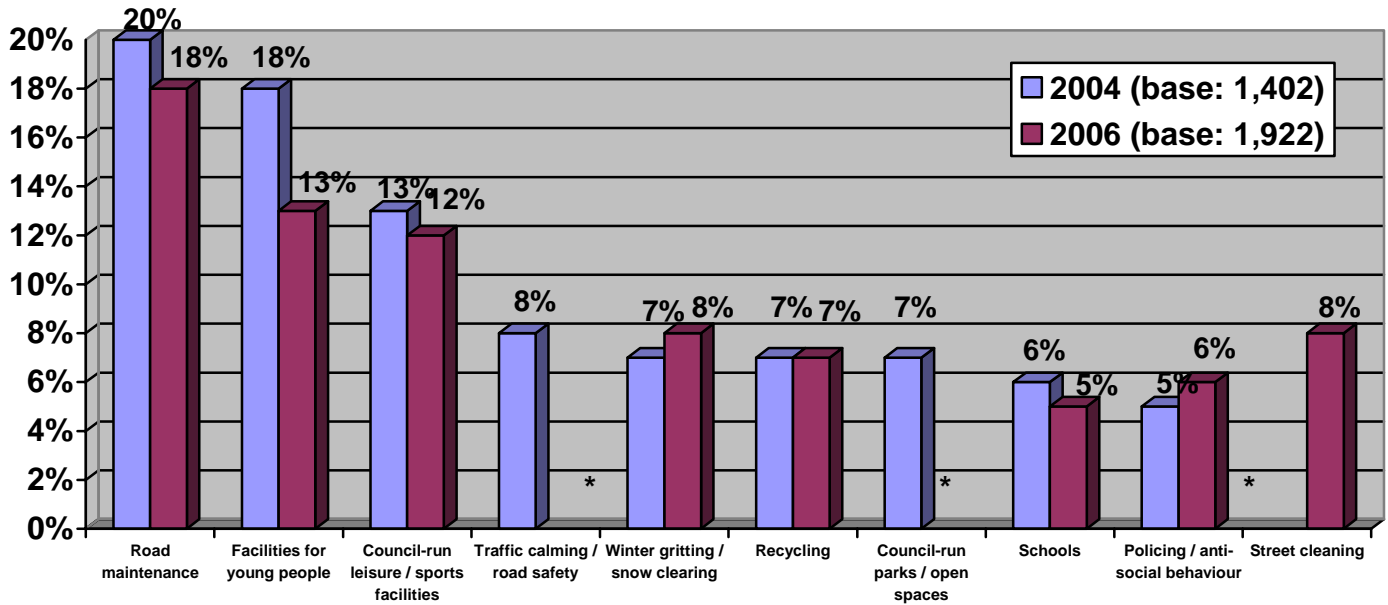
Figure 6.8: On which services should the Council have spent more money last year?



Clearly, the continued concerns over roads maintenance and winter gritting/snow clearing are reflected in these responses. However, the most notable shift is the proportion of respondents suggesting that more money be spent on refuse collection (a trend which is not repeated for recycling). Clearly, this reflects a perception that changes to the refuse collection regime are influenced by costs rather than a desire to drive up recycling rates.

6.13 The same is true to some degree of suggestions for which services the Council should give priority (again, suggestions accounting for more than 5% of the total are included, with an * being inserted where the figure is below this).

Figure 6.9: What facilities or services should be given priority?



Clearly, road maintenance continues to stand out as an area where residents feel priority should be given, with new prominence to “refuse collection” also being apparent.

The issue of facilities, particularly for young people, is also prominent amongst these suggestions.

Summary of Key Points

Across the board, there has been an increase in satisfaction with those Council services that citizens elect to use. Ratings for schools and libraries are particularly positive and perceptions of parks/open spaces and leisure facilities continue to improve.

With regard to a range of “universal services” there continues to be a positive upwards trend in terms of satisfaction with services such as winter gritting and snow clearing, albeit from a low historical base.

Satisfaction with refuse collection services has declined significantly (from 86% to 62%); this decline is wholly due to a reduction in satisfaction in those areas where the Council has implemented changes to its recycling and waste collection regime.

The evidence is that this policy has been successful in encouraging people to recycle more. A significant minority of residents have, however, found it difficult to adapt to these changes.

Summary of Key Points (continued)

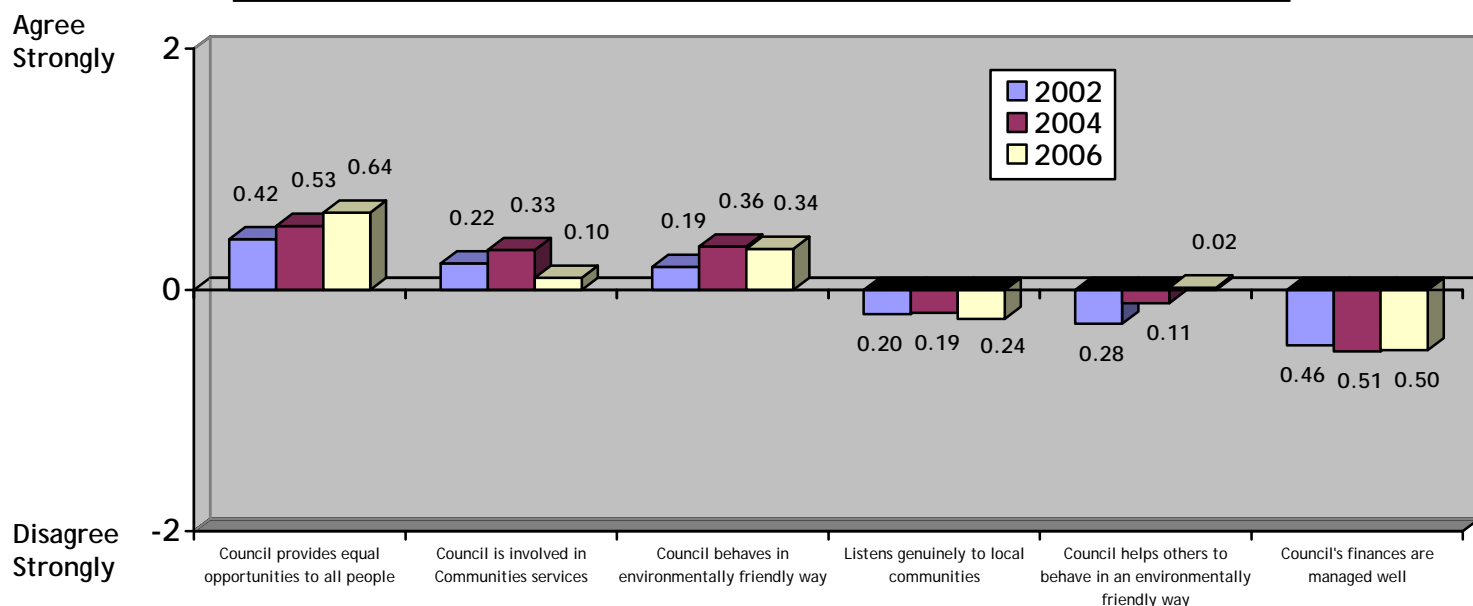
There are some indications that the extent to which people believe services are continuing to improve has diminished somewhat since 2004.

Roads maintenance continues to be an area that citizens would prioritise for expenditure; a significant number of people also believe that more should be spent on refuse collection, implying that recent changes to this service are perceived to be a cost-cutting measure.

7.0 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

7.1 Between 2002 and 2006, respondents were asked a number of questions around the theme of Corporate Social Responsibility. The results of this are illustrated in Figure 7.1 below:

Figure 7.1: Measures of Council as Socially Responsible Organisation



2002 Bases:	(2,209)	(2,560)	(2,515)	(2,563)	(2,599)	(2,191)
2004 Bases:	(1,751)	(2,235)	(2,140)	(2,218)	(2,255)	(1,805)
2006 Bases:	(1,902)	(2,346)	(2,396)	(2,295)	(2,432)	(2,017)

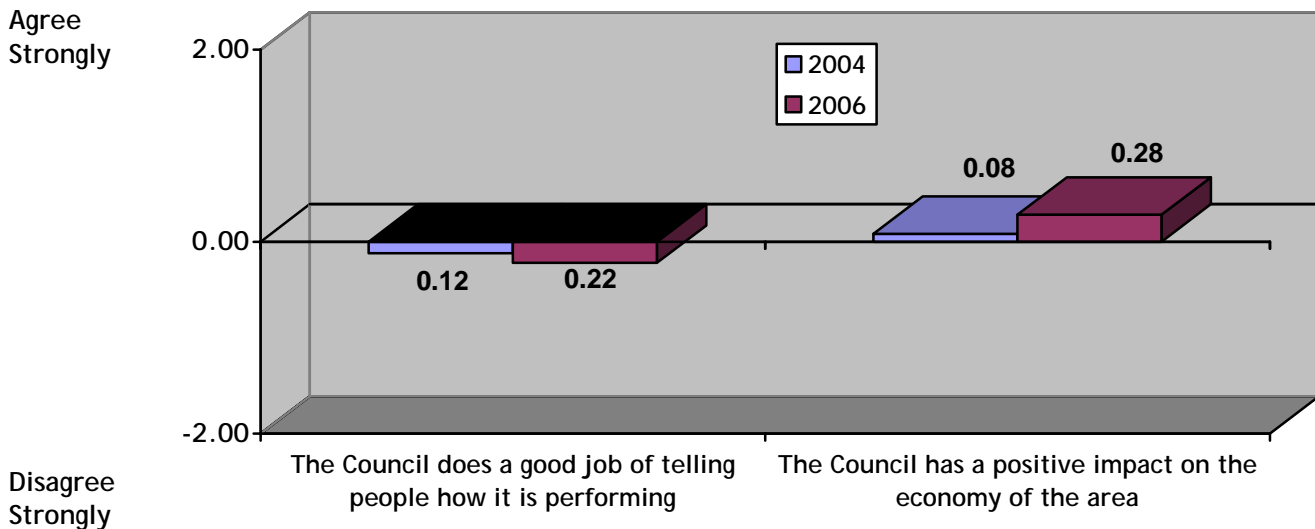
7.2 The following key points may be made:

- Few people now disagree that the Council provides “equal opportunities” to all people (5% disagree compared to 10% in 2004 and 13% in 2002).
- There has been a decline in the proportion of people who see the Council as “involved in the communities it serves” (only 28% of people agree with this, although there is a high “don’t know” (25%) and neither/nor (27%) response to this question).
- The Council continues to be perceived to behave in an environmentally friendly way (51% now agree that it does so, a similar figure to 2004).

- There continues to be real scepticism regarding whether the Council “listens genuinely” to local communities. A majority of those who express an opinion disagree with this statement (only 18% agree, compared to 25% in 2004).
- Overall, a slightly higher proportion now believe that the Council does enough to help others to behave in an environmentally friendly way (37% of those who express an opinion believe it does, compared to 33% in 2004 and 23% in 2002).
- There is a very high “don’t know” response of 35% regarding the question of whether the Council’s finances are well managed. There is, however, a continued view amongst those who do express an opinion that its finances are not well managed. This almost certainly reflects negative perceptions of the efficiency of some aspects of Council work, rather than being a comment on the prudence of its financial management.

7.3 A selection of additional questions on matters of social responsibility were posed in 2004 and 2006, as detailed below:

Figure 7.2: Additional Social Responsibility Questions



2004 Bases:	(2,223)	(2,065)
2006 Bases:	(2,268)	(2,243)

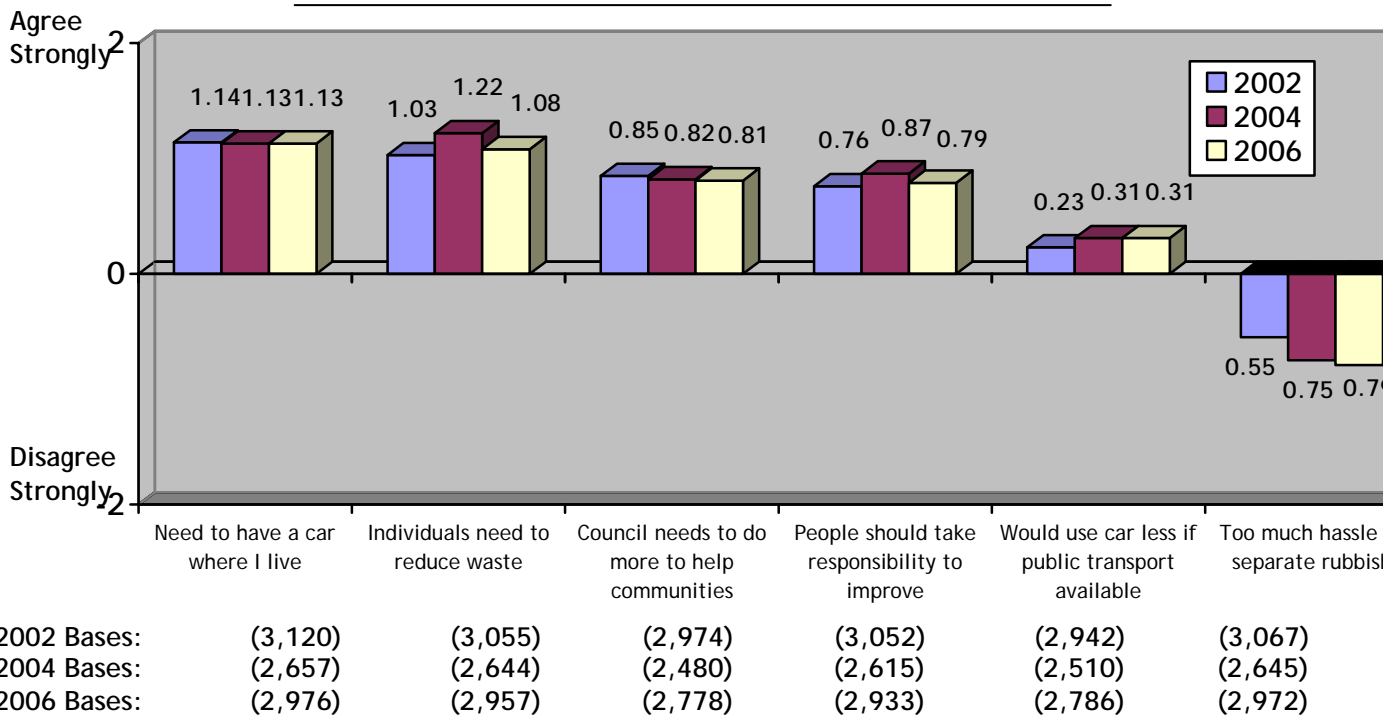
The key points to note here are:

- The view that the Council does not do a good job of telling people how it is performing (only 23% believe it does a good job compared to 25% in 2004).

- More positively, an increasing proportion of people believe that the Council has a positive impact on the economy of the area (44% believe it has, compared to 35% in 2004).

7.4 A further element of the social responsibility section related to the public's own attitudes to these issues. Responses to a series of attitudinal statements are laid out in Figure 7.3.

Figure 7.3: Social Responsibility – Public Attitudes



7.5 Changes in relation to such attitudes are marginal:

- Most people continue to feel that they need to have a car where they live (79% compared to 81% in 2004).
- There is actually a slightly lower level of acceptance that individuals need to do more to reduce the waste they produce (81% now agree, compared to 93% in 2004, although this figure was 71% in 2002).
- There is still a strong view that the Council should do more to help local communities (70% agreement, compared to 71% in 2004).
- There is also a slightly reduced level of agreement that “people should take more responsibility themselves for improving their local communities” (73%, compared to 78% in 2004).

- There continue to be divided views as to whether people would make less use of their car if public transport were available (48% of people who expressed an opinion in 2006 said that they would do).
- A similar proportion of people now believe that “it is too much hassle to separate out rubbish for recycling (16%).

7.6 Overall, there are signs that improvements in a sense of positive environmental awareness and community responsibility within the communities of Aberdeenshire have not been continued over the past two years.

Summary of Key Points

There continues to be a positive trend in the extent to which the Council is seen as environmentally friendly, as encouraging equal opportunities and as contributing to the economy of the area.

However, there remains scepticism as to the extent of its community involvement and willingness to genuinely involve communities in its decision making.

There is also a view that the Council could do better at informing its citizens as to how it is performing.

There are indications that previous positive trends in terms of a sense of environmental awareness and community responsibility amongst Aberdeenshire citizens have stalled somewhat.

8.0 COUNCIL DECISION MAKING, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

8.1 A further strand of the research related to people's attitudes to Council decision making, consultation and communications. Some of the questions asked in relation to this were drawn from previous Residents Surveys. However, others, relating particularly to consultation and communications, were substantially derived from work previously undertaken as part of the Council's Scrutiny and Audit Committee investigation into public consultation, communication and engagement, including the small-scale survey that IBP undertook as part of this process. It should be noted that the base of responses to that survey was small (101 respondents) and so some caution should be taken in drawing comparisons between the two.

8.2 Figure 8.1(a) provides data as to whether people voted in the last round of a number of elections

Figure 8.1 (a): Voted in Last Elections

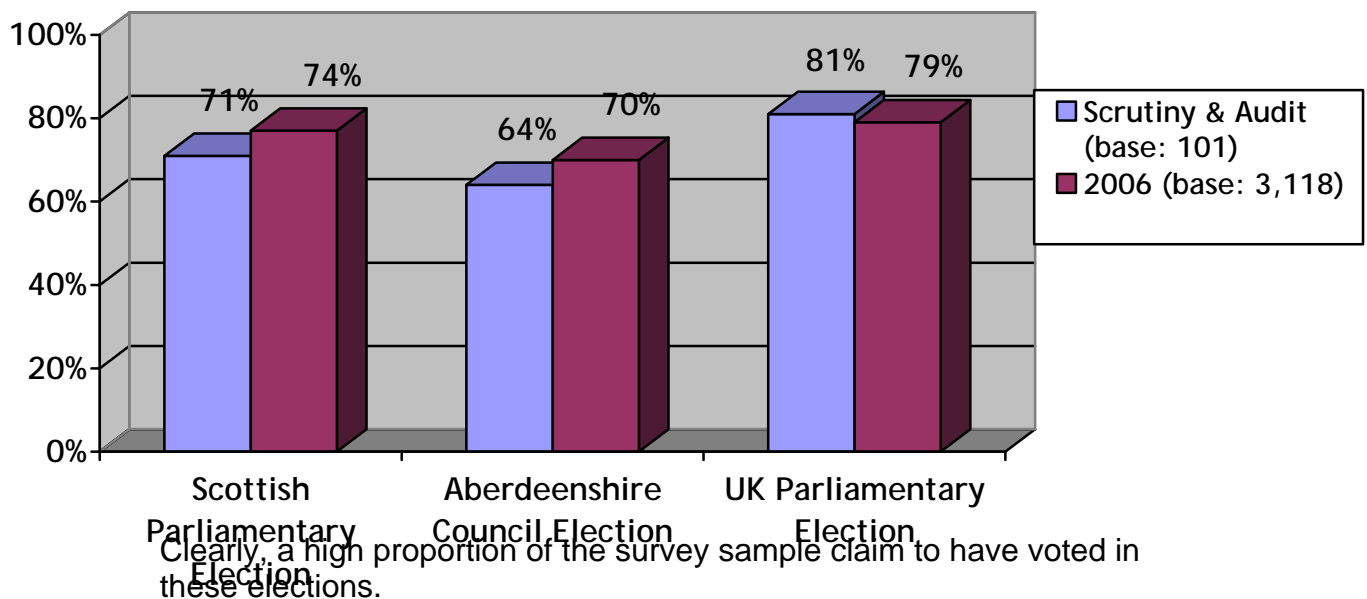
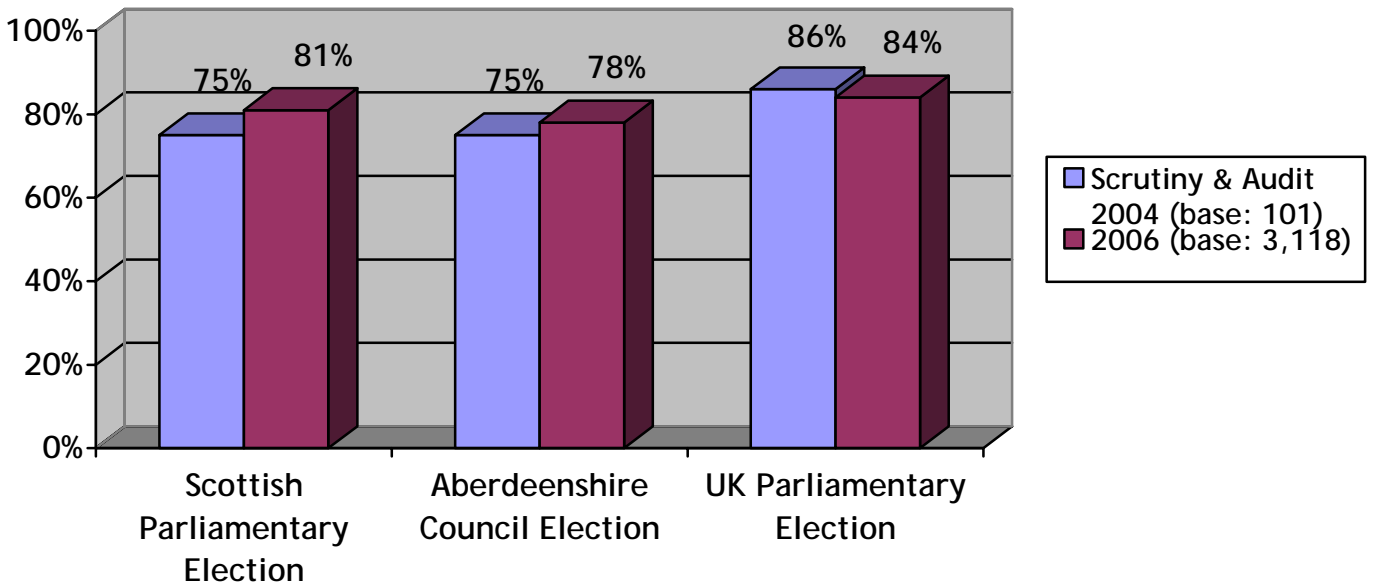


Figure 8.1 (b) below provides information as to whether they intend to vote in these elections in the future.

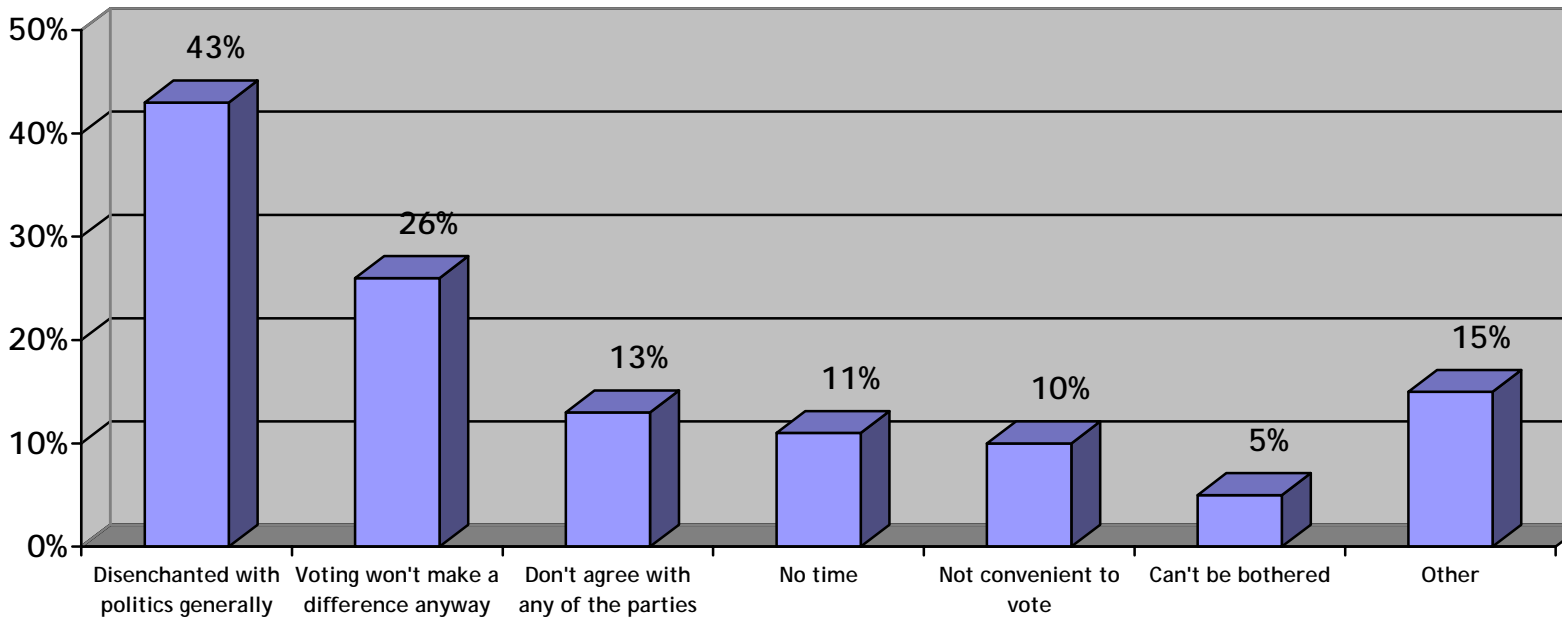
Figure 8.1 (b): Intend to Vote in Next Elections



These figures correlate closely to those who voted on previous occasions.

8.3 The main reasons why people say that they would not vote are detailed below:

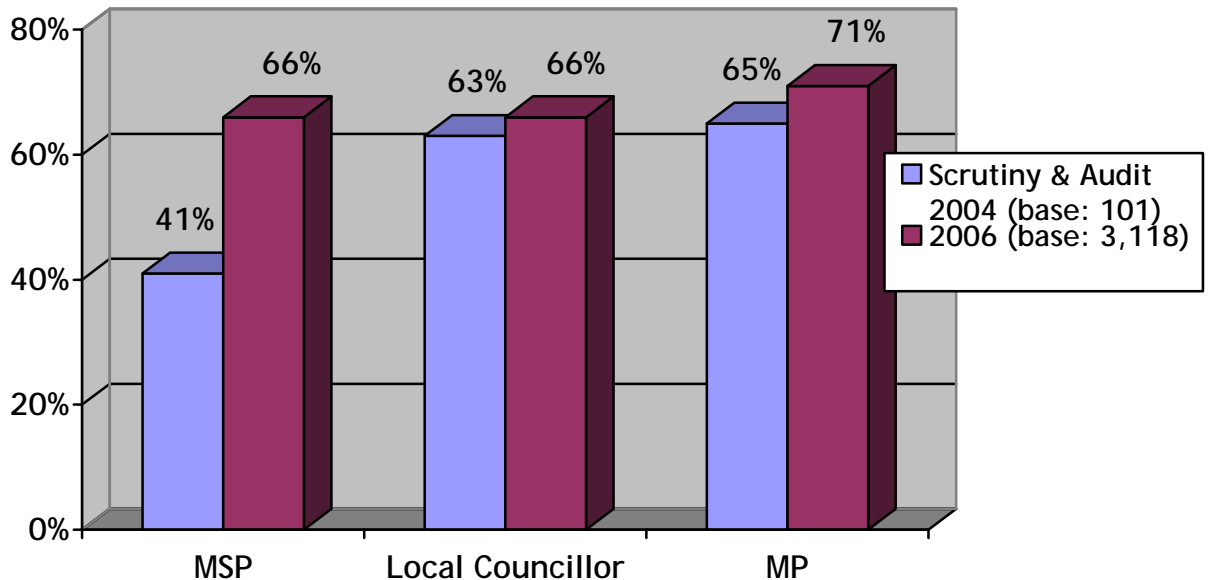
Figure 8.2: Reasons for Not Voting



Base: 825

8.4 Figure 8.3 summarises individuals' ability to name their local elected representatives:

Figure 8.3: Ability to name Local Elected Representatives



8.5 Overall, the increasing proportion of people who say they know their local councillor is impressive and is well ahead of the 43% most recently quoted by the Scottish Household Survey. These figures are still closely correlated with age (only 42% of 19-24 years olds and 47% of 25-34 year olds say that they know the name of their local councillors, although these figures have improved since 2004). Awareness is highest in Marr (74%) and Banff and Buchan (72%).

8.6 Attitudes in relation to a number of dimensions of Council decision making and its consultation processes are set out below:

Figure 8.4 (a): Council Decision Making and Consultation

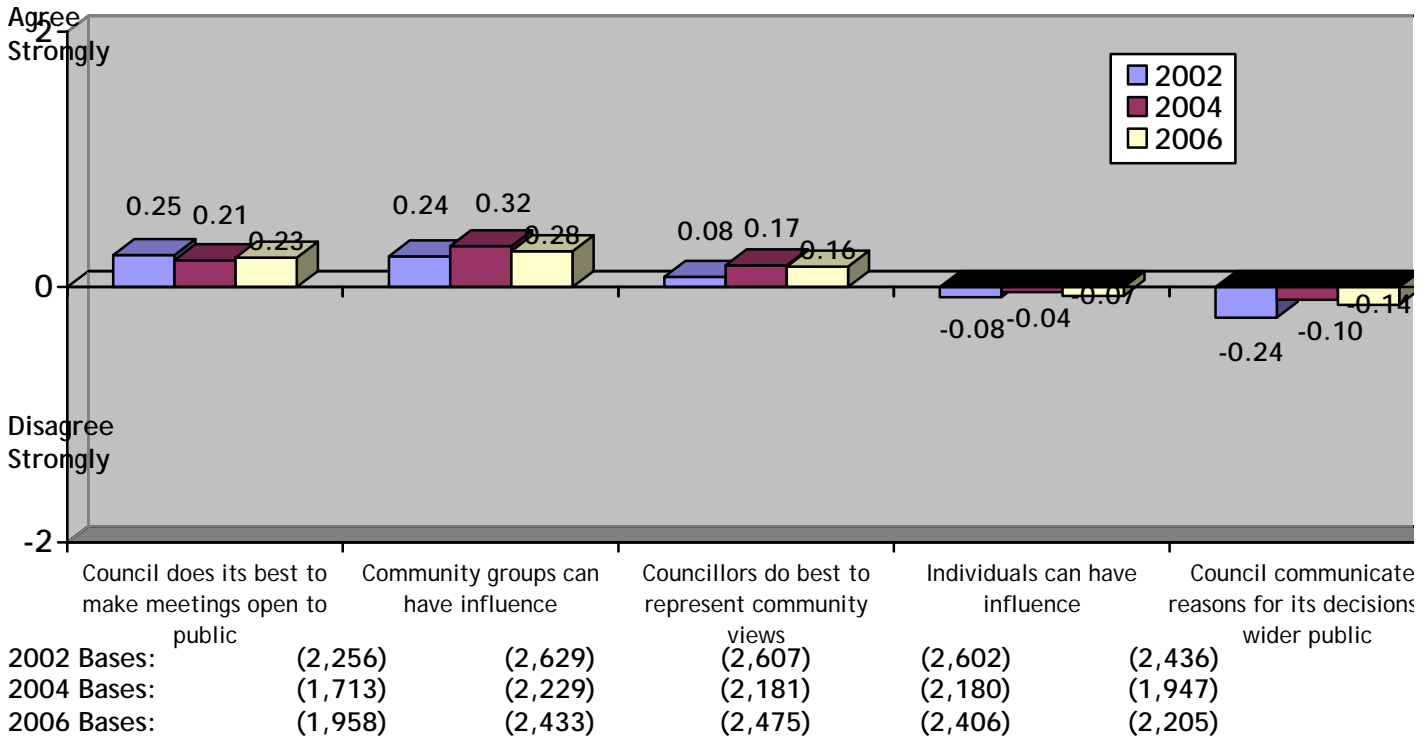
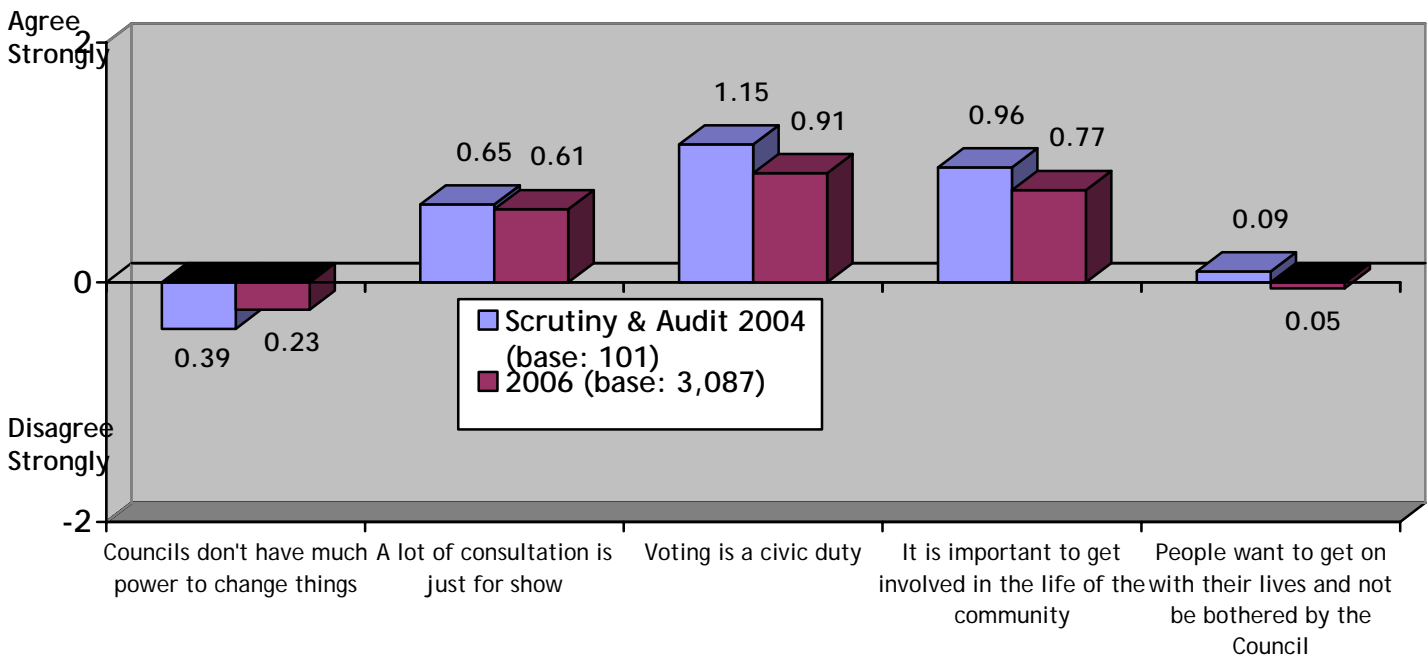
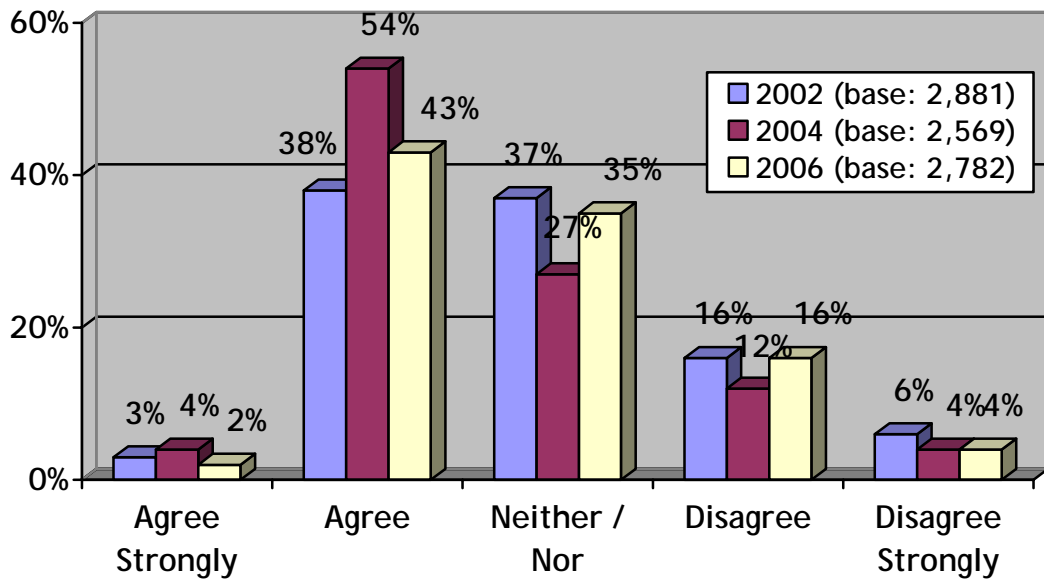


Figure 8.4(b): Council Decision Making and Consultation



- 8.7 The following key points may be made in relation to these issues:
- There continues to be a general, if lukewarm, acceptance that the Council does indeed do its best to make its meetings open to the public (though there is a 36% “don’t know” response).
 - There is a general view that local community groups can have an influence on Council decisions (53% agree compared to 55% in 2004 and 50% in 2002).
 - Mixed views continue to be evident as to whether Councillors do their best to represent the views of the local community (46% continue to agree with this statement, a similar figure to 2004).
 - Opinions continue to be divided regarding whether local individuals can have an influence on Council decisions (37% agree that they can compared to 38% in 2004).
 - Only 29% of those who express an opinion believe that the Council communicates the reasons for its decisions to the wider public.
 - 62% of people who express a view believe that “consultation is just for show”
- 8.8 There are, however, some more positive messages contained within Figure 8.4 (b). For example, a slight majority of people *disagree* with the view that “councils don’t have much power to change things” (28% agree and 44% disagree). Most people (75%) believe voting is a civic duty and 71% believe it is important to get involved in the life of the community. A slight majority also disagree with the view that “people want to get on with their lives and not be bothered with the Council” (29% agree compared to 34% who disagree). All of these indicators point towards a reasonable proportion of people being willing to take part in Aberdeenshire’s civic life.
- 8.9 Clearly, effective communications is a crucial issue for the Council. Figure 8.5 sets out the trend data in relation to individuals’ satisfaction with the information that they receive on Council services:

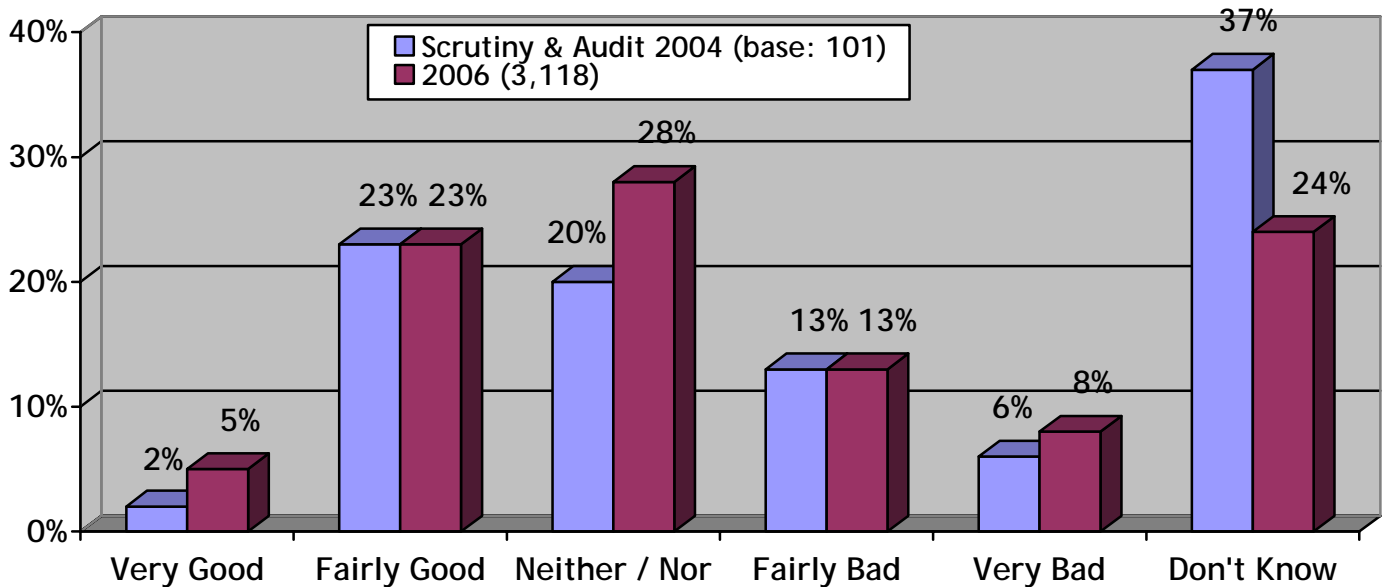
Figure 8.5: “Overall, I am satisfied with the information I get on Council services”



The slight decline in satisfaction with this is worthy of note.

8.10 There is also some scepticism as to the extent to which the Council will genuinely take account of people’s views, as illustrated in Figure 8.6 below.

Figure 8.6: How Good Do You Think the Council is at Taking Account of Your Views over Matters Which Concern You?



The “don’t know” response should be taken into account but, even allowing for this, a significant minority of residents are sceptical as to whether the Council will take account of their views, reflecting some of the scepticism described under the “Social Responsibility” heading.

Summary of Key Points

A large majority of survey respondents claim to have voted in the most recent parliamentary and Council elections.

When people have not voted it has normally been due to a general disenchantment with politics.

However, a high proportion of Aberdeenshire residents are able to name their elected representatives, including their Councillors.

Scepticism is evident with regard to individuals’ ability to influence the Council’s decision making and to have their views taken into account.

Despite this, there are strong indications of a desire on the part of many people to take part in civic life.

Between 2004 and 2006 there has been a decline in people’s satisfaction with the information that they receive on Council services suggesting that this is an area where the Council needs to place continued efforts.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 As noted previously, it is important that the survey findings are considered fully at all levels of the Council and that improvement actions can then be adopted. To assist this process, IBP have set out a number of recommendations for further consideration.

9.2 These recommendations are as follows:

- 1) The Council's approach to the handling of complaints should be reviewed, having regard to the recording and reporting of such complaints and in particular, ensuring effective communication with complainants throughout the process.
- 2) Steps should be taken to meet the demand for Council services to be delivered through the internet. This will require improved communication as to its current functionality and ongoing enhancement of this.
- 3) The Council should review its procedures to ensure that it is taking as much account as it can of the impact of its planning decisions and that it is effectively communicating what powers are available to it in this respect.
- 4) Priority should be given to working with others to seek to improve the availability of affordable housing within Aberdeenshire's community, with the priority being developments on existing sites and small-scale developments adjacent to existing settlements.
- 5) A full review of community facilities should be instituted, perhaps in conjunction with Community Planning partners, to explore how improvements can be made in this area.
- 6) The Council should liaise with Aberdeenshire Community Safety Partnership to review the reasons for an increase in people's concerns about being out alone after dark and to ensure that everything possible is being done to address this.
- 7) Along with the Community Safety Partnership, efforts should be continued to enhance road safety, focusing on towns and villages, prioritising measures to reduce speeds and driver awareness and education activities.
- 8) Where possible, a prioritisation of resources towards the improvement of roads and road maintenance in Aberdeenshire should be continued.

- 9) The Council should consider what can be done to improve the implementation of its recycling schemes, including enhanced communication of the rationale behind the scheme and improved support to individuals to help them implement the changes. This should apply both to those areas where the scheme has already been implemented and to those where this has yet to be done.
 - 10) Whilst recognising the continued improvements in satisfaction across a range of Services, it is also important to note that there is continued room for improvement and that the “perceived rate of improvement” is diminishing, largely because of increasing customer expectations. To retain and enhance these ratings in the future will require continuous improvements in service quality from the current baseline and it is, therefore, recommended that all Services set out such plans for continuous improvement in their customer service delivery, as part of the Service Planning process.
 - 11) Efforts should be made to enhance the Council’s reporting of its performance as part of its overall communications strategy. Consideration should be given to direct communications with residents as part of this process.
 - 12) Communications efforts should also be given greater priority with respect to the provision of information on Council services, again considering direct communication with citizens and using existing communications channels such as the Council’s web site and its public buildings.
 - 13) Along with its Community Planning partners, the Council should review its community engagement strategy so as to maximise citizens’ opportunities to take part in its decision making processes.
- 9.3 IBP looks forward to further discussion of these recommendations with the Residents and Employee Survey Team and other relevant parties within the Council.