

# Research Report



## Residents' Tracker Survey 2017

Prepared for: North Hertfordshire  
District Council

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**Prepared for: North Hertfordshire District Council**

**Prepared by: Jack Harper, Associate Director and Jordan Harrold Research Executive**

**Date: December 2017**

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## 1 Introduction

BMG Research was commissioned by North Hertfordshire District Council to undertake a 2017 Residents' Tracker Survey using a telephone methodology.

This survey captures residents' general views and perceptions of certain services and facilities provided by North Hertfordshire District Council, also examined in similar surveys conducted in 2015 and 2008 (by BMG Research using face to face methodology) and 2013 and 2011 (by ORS).

The results in this report are based on a survey of 1,001 telephone interviews conducted from a sample of North Hertfordshire residents.

Quotas were set on area and age in order to achieve a cross-section of responses.

The survey contained questions on the following topics:

- Overall Satisfaction
- Council Services
- Information and Communication
- Contact with the Council

### 1.1 Weighting the data

The extent to which results can be generalised from a sample depends on how well the sample represents the population from which it is drawn. As for all surveys of this type, although a random sample of telephone numbers was selected, the achieved sample was unbalanced owing to non-response of certain profile groups.

Under these circumstances, inferences about the views of the population can be improved by calculating weights for any under or over-sampling of particular groups. Weights are assigned by comparing the sample proportions for particular groups with known population characteristics from other sources for the same groups. Each observation is then multiplied by its weight to ensure that the weighted sample will conform to the known population characteristics.

To ensure that the data set is representative the data has been weighted by area, age, gender, working status and ethnicity at a district level.

### 1.2 Interpreting the data

On an observed statistic of 50%, a sample size of 1,001 is subject to a maximum standard error of +/-3.08% at the 95% level of confidence. This means that if all North Hertfordshire residents had responded to the survey, we are 95% confident that a figure of 50% in this report would actually have been between 53.1% and 46.9%.

Results have been presented rounded to 0 decimal places – this may mean that some totals exceed 100%. This also has implications regarding how summary percentages appear. For example, if 25.4% of residents state they are very satisfied and 30.3% of residents are fairly satisfied, these figures are rounded down to 25% and 30% respectively. However, the sum of these two responses is 55.7%, which is rounded up

to 56%, whereas the individual rounded responses suggest this total should be 55%. This explains any instances of where summary text does not match a graph or table it is referring to.

Comparisons with results from previous surveys of North Hertfordshire residents are made at appropriate points. The same methodology was used in this year's Residents survey as the 2015 survey, in that residents were contacted via telephone. The survey was slightly different to the 2015 version. However, it is worth noting that whilst the 2013 and 2011 North Hertfordshire Residents Surveys, as well as the current Hertfordshire County Council Omnibus Survey were carried out via telephone interviews, the 2008 North Hertfordshire Residents Survey was conducted via face to face interviews. They also used questionnaires that differed in the order of questions and overall topics. These differences between methodologies imply that results between surveys are not necessarily directly comparable; however previous experience has demonstrated that while results of paper based surveys (such as BVPI & Place 2008) are not comparable, results obtained via personal face to face or telephone interview are typically similar and are broadly comparable.

For analysis purposes wards have been grouped into five areas as follows.

**Table 1: Area definitions**

Area	Ward
Baldock and District	Arbury
	Baldock East
	Baldock Town
	Weston and Sandon
Hitchin	Hitchin Bearton
	Hitchin Highbury
	Hitchin Oughton
	Hitchin Priory
	Hitchin Walsworth
Southern Rural	Cadwell
	Chesfield
	Codicote
	Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo
	Kimpton
	Knebworth
Letchworth	Letchworth East
	Letchworth Grange
	Letchworth South East
	Letchworth South West
	Letchworth Wilbury
Royston	Ermine
	Royston Heath
	Royston Meridian
	Royston Palace



## 2 Key findings

### 2.1 Council perceptions and service satisfaction

Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live has remained extremely high amongst residents with 95% sharing positive perceptions. This mirrors the 2015 result and measures very well against the latest Local Government Association benchmarks. Satisfaction with the way North Hertfordshire Council runs things has fallen significantly since the previous year from 82% to 75%, but still remains well above the LGA benchmarking. Alongside this, just under half of residents (48%) agree that their Council provides value for money.

**Table 2: Summary of key Council indicators**

	2017	Change since 2015	LGA benchmark October 2017
% satisfied with the local area as a place to live	95%	0	82%
% satisfied with the way the Council runs things	75%	-7	65%
% agree that the Council provides value for money	48%	-6	50%

When considering universal Council services, resident opinions have seen a decrease since 2015. Satisfaction with general waste and recycling collection at 79% is significantly lower than the 86% satisfaction from 2015. Overall satisfaction with street cleaning is also lower than the previous survey, dropping from 78% to 72%, whilst also having a 6-percentage point reduction in the proportion giving the most positive response of very satisfied (22% down from 26%). The views given in relation to how Council Tax is administered are also down from 2015; however this measure has not seen a statistically significant drop.

Among users of more specific Council services, satisfaction levels are generally very high. This is particularly the case for the Council's Careline Community Alarms Service (92%), parks and open spaces (92%) and Council run leisure facilities (91%). The lowest user satisfaction is seen among users of Council car parks (77%) and housing services (79%).

The majority of North Hertfordshire residents feel that general waste and recycling collection (57%) is the most important service the District Council provides (this was also the most important service in the 2015, 2013 and 2011 Residents' Survey). The next most commonly selected service area is housing services, with 15% indicating that this is the most important service, followed by parks and open spaces which is chosen by 10% of residents.



## 2.2 Information and communication

The highest proportion of residents obtain information from the District Council website (59%), followed by local newspapers (22%) and the 'Outlook' magazine (16%). These three sources have consistently made up the top three in 2011, 2013 and 2015, however this is the first time local newspapers have been a more popular choice to source information regarding the council than the 'Outlook' magazine.

The extent to which residents feel informed about areas of Council activity have seen significant declines from the 2015 results. Around four in ten residents feel very or fairly well informed about how to get involved in local decision making (39%), what NHDC is spending its money on (also 39%) and how well NHDC is performing (41%).

When asked whether they have seen or have had a copy of Outlook delivered to their door, 72% of residents answered yes, with a quarter (28%) saying no. The proportion answering positively to this question is 2-percentage points below the 74% seen in 2015, which isn't significant. However, there has been a 6-percentage point drop since 2013. There is a possibility that the individuals that were interviewed may not see this magazine before it is discarded by another member of the household. However, checks may be necessary to establish if there are any distribution issues.

Among those who have seen or received a copy of Outlook, only 7% didn't look at it at all compared to 6% in 2015. At the other end of the scale, the proportion of recipients who read all or nearly all of it has risen from 32% in 2015 to 37% in 2017.

Agreement that Outlook is interesting (among those who read it to some extent) is at 76%, this is marginally higher than the 73% observed in 2015. Agreement that residents like the way Outlook is written is virtually the same (79% in 2017, 80% in 2015) whilst the agreement that they like the way Outlook looks and is presented has fallen three-percentage points to 82%.

## 2.3 Council contact

In the last 12 months, 56% of residents have contacted North Hertfordshire District Council. This is a three-percentage point increase from 2015 which shows that high quality contact handling is imperative, given that half of residents are having some form of contact. The majority of residents continue to contact the Council by telephone (66%).

When considering their satisfaction with the service they received the last time they contacted the Council three quarters (74%) were satisfied. Encouragingly the single most common response on the 5-point scale was 'very satisfied' which was chosen by 40% of residents. The satisfaction level recorded in 2017 regarding Council contact is in line with that seen in 2015 (75% satisfied), although there was a 6-point drop in the proportion of those very satisfied.

Six in ten (61%) of all respondents have visited North Hertfordshire District Council's website in the last 12 months. This proportion is highest amongst those aged 35-44, where nearly three quarters have been on the website (73%).

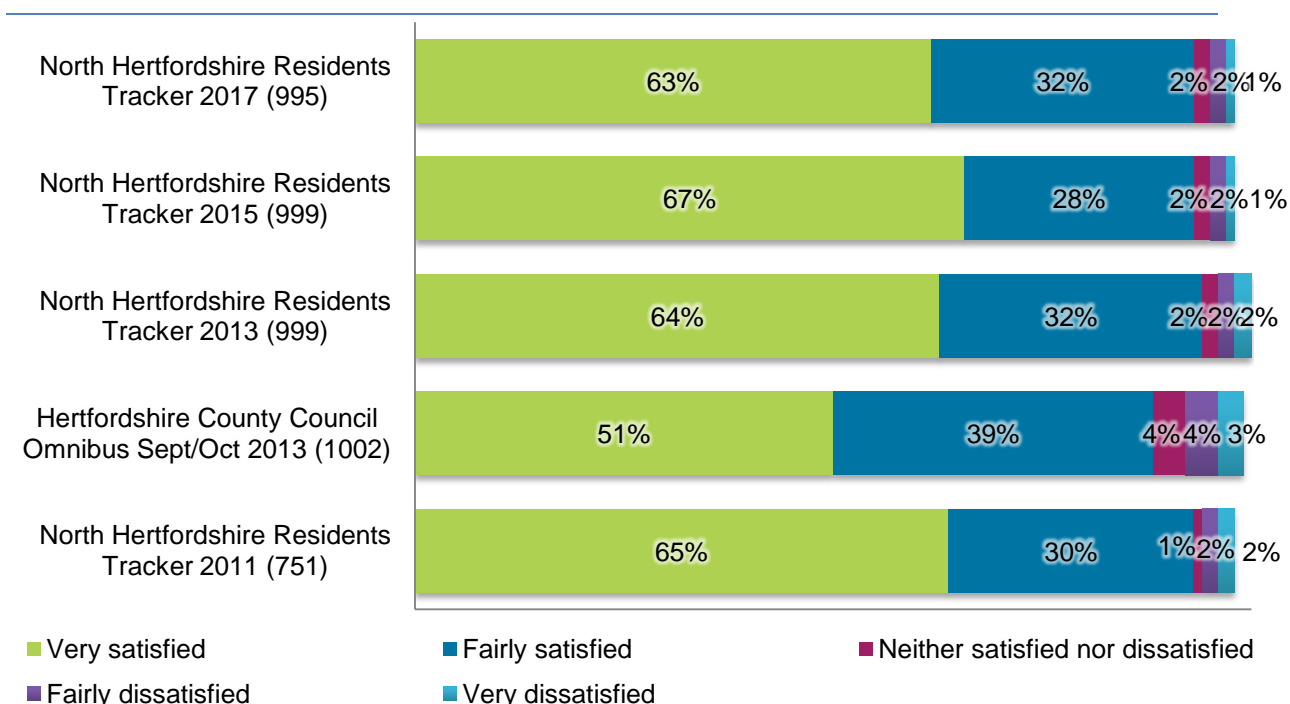
### 3 Overall satisfaction

#### 3.1 The local area as a place to live

The vast majority of North Hertfordshire residents (95%) are satisfied with their area as a place to live, including 63% who are very satisfied. Satisfaction with the local area is at the same level seen in 2015 and within this, the proportion who are very satisfied has declined by 4-percentage points from 67% to 63%, but this is not a significant change.

This question on local area satisfaction is included in regular telephone polling conducted by the Local Government Association (LGA). In its latest October 2017 poll completed among 1,003 British adults (aged 18 or over), the proportion expressing satisfaction with their local area was 82%. On this basis, the views expressed by North Hertfordshire residents in 2017 are 13-percentage points above the latest national benchmark.

**Figure 1: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this area as a place to live? (All valid responses)**



Unweighted sample bases shown in parentheses

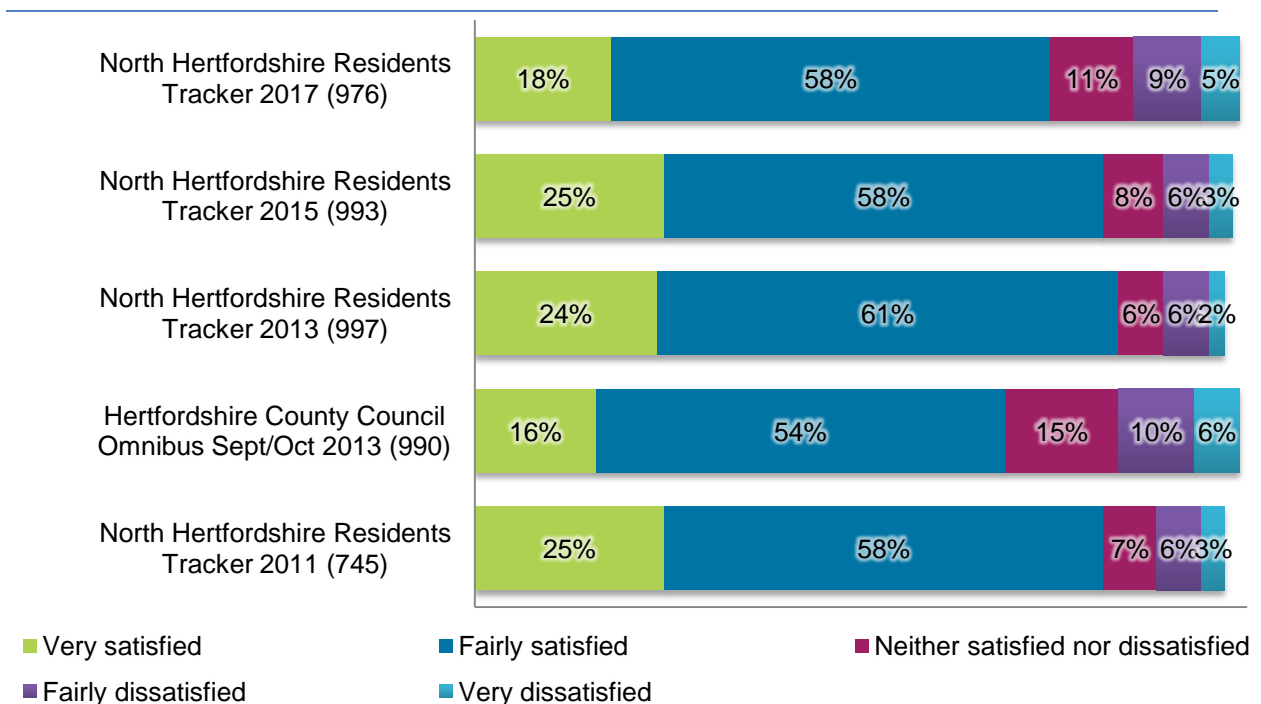
It is important to review any question that refers to the local area on a geographical basis. Unlike in 2015, there is limited variation in satisfaction with the area as a place to live by area, although Royston residents are markedly more likely than Southern Rural residents to state they are dissatisfied with the area as a place to live (5% cf. 1%).

### 3.2 The way North Hertfordshire Council runs things

All survey respondents were reminded that North Hertfordshire District Council is responsible for local planning applications, housing, building regulations, environmental health, waste collection, revenue collection, leisure and recreation.

When considering the performance of North Hertfordshire District Council in this context, three in four (75%) residents express satisfaction with the way they run things. Perceptions with the way the Council runs things have worsened with a significant decline in satisfaction compared against the 2015 finding (82%). However, satisfaction with the Council remains well above the latest LGA benchmark for this measure which is 65%.

**Figure 2: Taking everything in to account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way North Hertfordshire District Council runs things? (All valid responses)**



Unweighted sample bases shown in parentheses

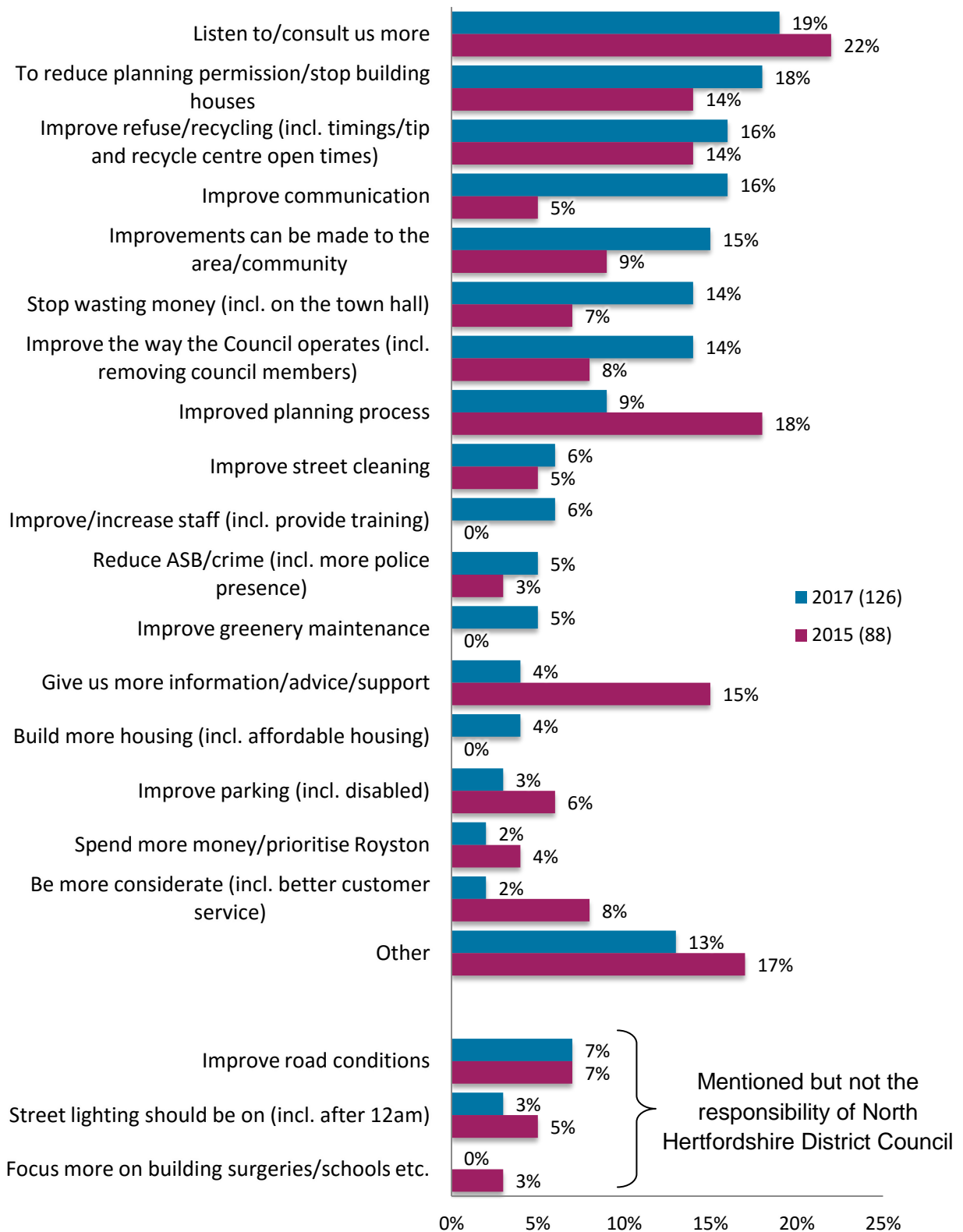
Further analysis finds those within the Southern Rural area are most likely to state they are dissatisfied with the way the Council runs things, indeed, significantly more so than those in Hitchin and Letchworth (20% cf. 12% & 11% respectively). By age group, those aged 16 to 24 are most likely to state they are satisfied (89%).

As found in 2015, those who receive or have seen the Council's Outlook magazine are significantly more likely than those who have not, to be satisfied with the Council overall (77% cf. 69%). Furthermore, those who have read all of it are markedly more satisfied than those who claim to receive it but haven't read any of it (78% cf. 70%).

Any residents who expressed dissatisfaction with the way North Hertfordshire District Council run things were asked a follow up question, where they were invited to say how they feel the Council could improve their running of North Hertfordshire. These verbatim have then been coded in themes, the findings for which are shown overleaf. Although due to the lower base sizes, the finding should be treated as indicative. The results show that residents feel the Council should:

- Listen/consult more (19%);
- Reduce planning permissions/stop building houses (18%);
- Improve refuse/recycling (incl.timings/tip and recycle centre open times) (16%)
- Improve communication (16%)

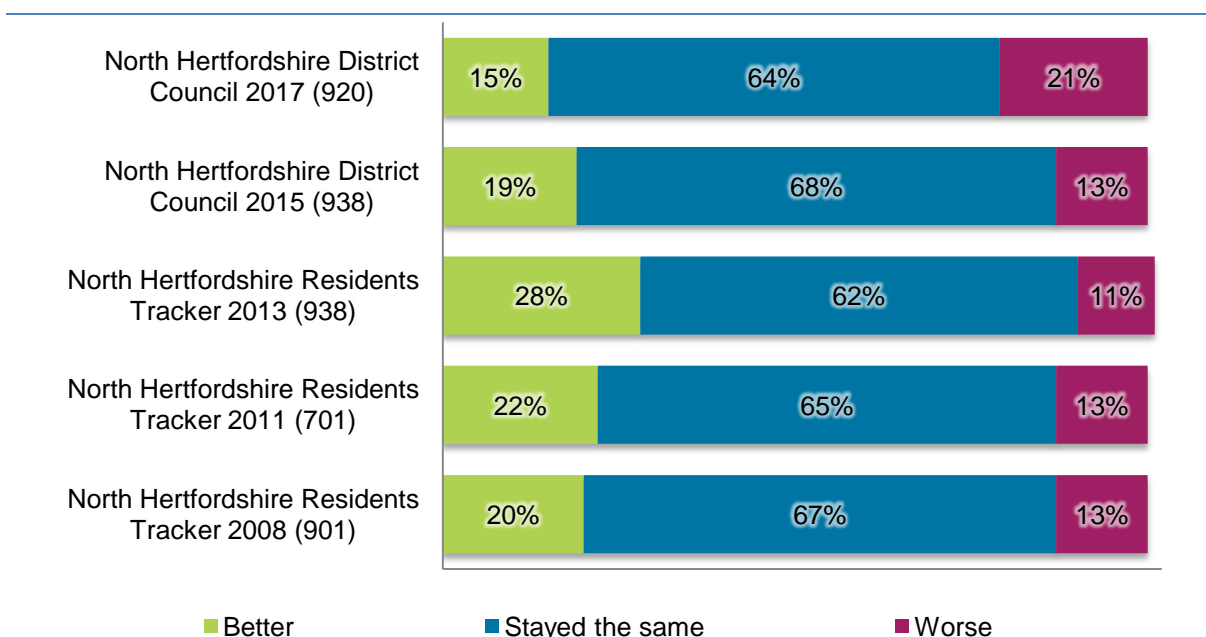
**Figure 3: How could the Council improve the overall running of North Hertfordshire? (All valid responses)\***



Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

Given that satisfaction with the way North Hertfordshire Council run things has declined since 2015, it is perhaps unsurprising that the proportion who state that the way the Council runs things has worsened in the last 2 years has increased significantly. Despite this, the majority feel that the way the Council runs things has remained the same.

**Figure 4: Thinking about the way North Hertfordshire District Council runs things, do you think it has got better, stayed the same or got worse over the last two years? (All valid responses)**



Unweighted sample bases shown in parentheses

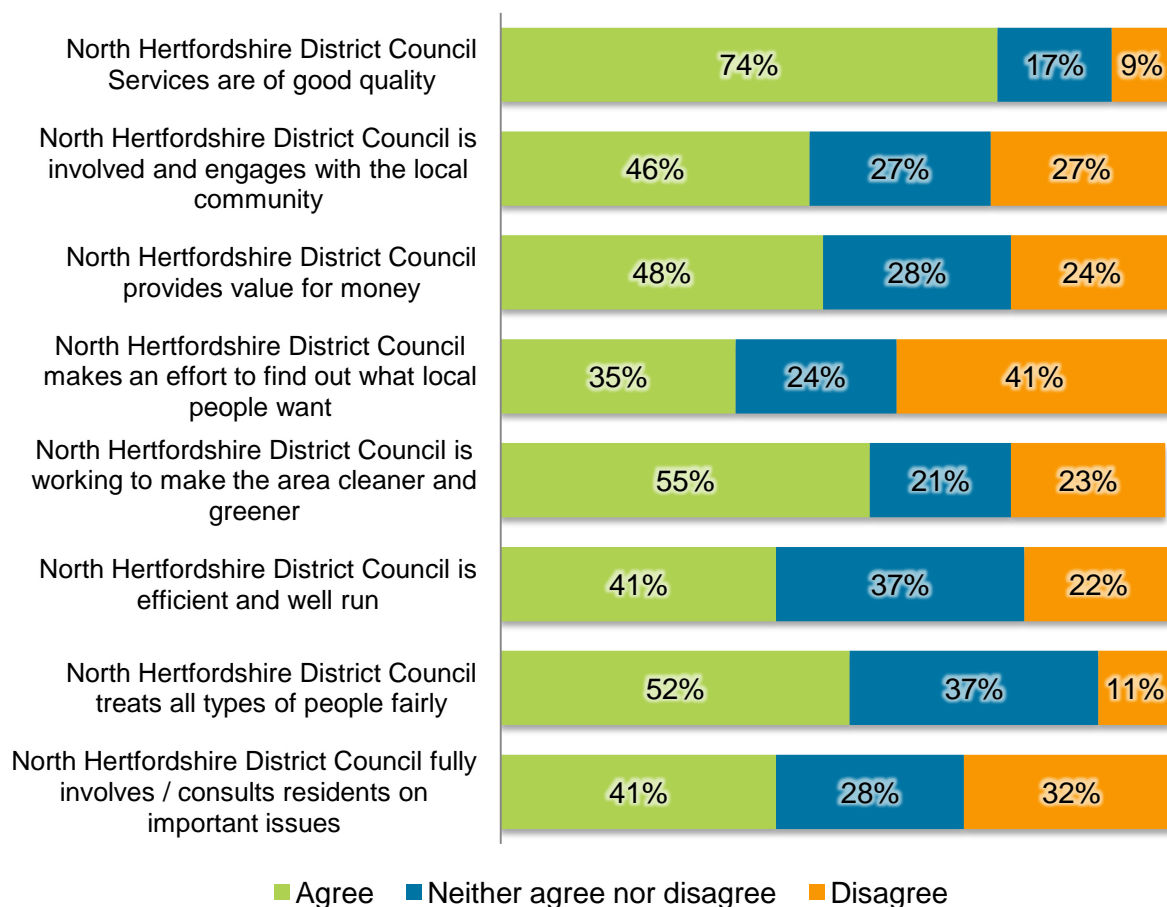
Residents living in Hitchin are significantly more likely to say the way North Hertfordshire District Council runs things has got better than the total average (20% cf. 15%), whilst those living in Royston are significantly less likely to say it has got better (9% cf. 15%).

As may be expected, those that are dissatisfied with the way NHDC runs things are significantly more likely to say it has got worse over the last 2 years than the total (59% cf. 21%) whilst significantly less likely to say it has got better (2% cf. 15%).

### 3.3 General perceptions of the Council

Residents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with various perceptions of the District Council. The highest proportion of residents agree that North Hertfordshire District Council services are of good quality (74%). This was followed by over half who agree that it is working to make the area cleaner and greener (55%) and treats all types of people fairly (52%). The lowest level of agreement is found in relation to the statement North Hertfordshire District Council makes an effort to find out what local people want (35%). Just over four in ten residents (41%) disagree with this statement. Later in the report it will be observed that residents largely feel uninformed about how to get involved in local decision making.

**Figure 5: Agreement with key statements about North Hertfordshire District Council (All valid responses)**



Unweighted sample base: 1001

Agreement that North Hertfordshire Council provides value for money at 48% is 2-percentage points below the October 2017 LGA benchmark of 50%.

Comparing the 2017 results to those collected in the 2015 survey shows that there has been a significant decrease in every measure, with the biggest being a 13-point decrease in those that agreed NHDC makes an effort to find out what local people want, and a 12-point decrease in agreement that the Council are working to make the area cleaner and greener.



**Table 3: Agreement with key statements about North Hertfordshire District Council 2008-2017 (All valid responses)**

	2008	2011	2013	2015	2017	% point change 2015-17
Services are of a good quality	76%	80%	81%	79%	74%	-5%
Is working to make the area cleaner and greener	70%	69%	72%	67%	55%	-12%
Treats all types of people fairly	64%	67%	63%	63%	52%	-11%
Provides value for money	43%	58%	56%	54%	48%	-6%
Is involved and engages with the local community	NA	55%	56%	53%	46%	-7%
Is efficient and well run	58%	52%	53%	51%	41%	-10%
Fully involves/consults residents on important issues	NA	50%	49%	51%	41%	-10%
Makes an effort to find out what local people want	NA	49%	48%	48%	35%	-13%

Residents living in Baldock & District are significantly more likely to agree that NHDC provides value for money, whilst those in Letchworth are significantly more likely to agree the Council is working to make the area cleaner and greener.

Those in Southern Rural share the lowest level of agreement in every measure compared to the other areas, with agreement the Council involves and engages the community, provides value for money and works to make the area cleaner and greener all significantly lower than the total average.

**Table 4: Agreement with key statements about North Hertfordshire District Council by area (All valid responses)**

	Baldock & District (118)	Hitchin (264)	Letchworth (259)	Royston (150)	Southern Rural (210)
Services are of good quality	73%	75%	74%	74%	72%
Is involved and engages with the local community	51%	45%	49%	49%	<u>38%</u>
Provides value for money	<b>57%</b>	50%	52%	42%	<u>41%</u>
Makes an effort to find out what local people want	37%	34%	37%	34%	34%
Is working to make the area cleaner and greener	54%	56%	<b>61%</b>	57%	<u>46%</u>
Is efficient and well run	45%	37%	<b>47%</b>	39%	37%
Treats all types of people fairly	56%	50%	53%	54%	50%
Fully involves / consults residents on important issues	45%	42%	43%	38%	35%

\*For tables, figures significantly higher than the total are displayed in bold, whilst those significantly lower than the total are displayed underlined.

Agreement with the measures increases amongst those who receive/read Outlook compared to those who don't. However, whilst levels in agreement are higher amongst

those who receive Outlook, none are statistically significant compared to those who don't receive it.

**Table 5: Council perceptions by Outlook receipt (All valid responses)**

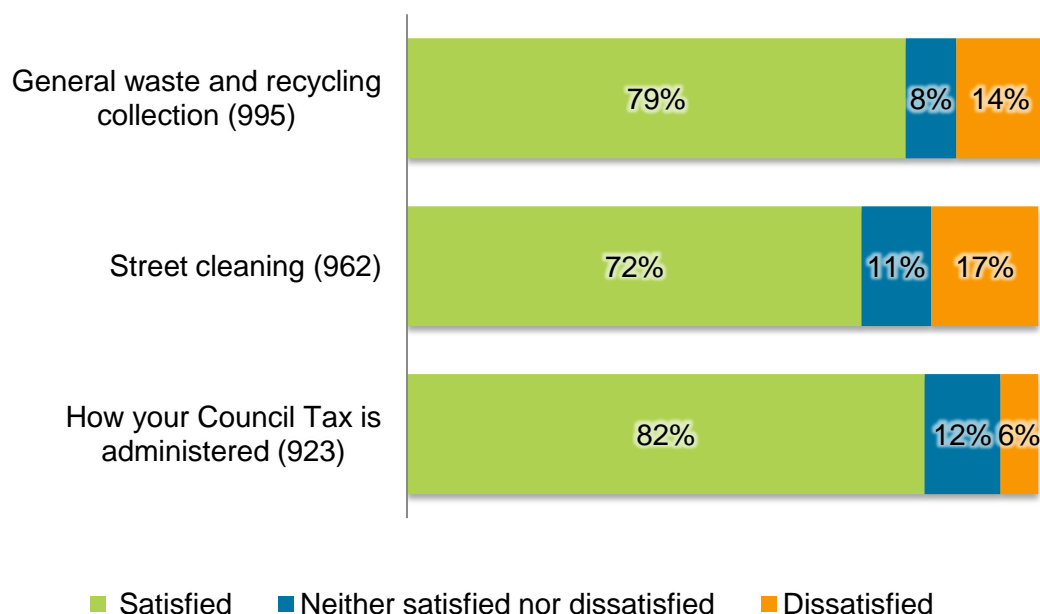
	Yes (719)	No (227)
North Hertfordshire District Council Services are of good quality (1001)	79%	76%
North Hertfordshire District Council is involved and engages with the local community (1001)	48%	43%
North Hertfordshire District Council provides value for money (1001)	50%	45%
North Hertfordshire District Council makes an effort to find out what local people want (1001)	36%	32%
North Hertfordshire District Council is working to make the area cleaner and greener (1001)	55%	53%
North Hertfordshire District Council is efficient and well run (1001)	40%	40%
North Hertfordshire District Council treats all types of people fairly (1001)	53%	50%
North Hertfordshire District Council fully involves / consults residents on important issues (1001)	41%	38%

## 4 Council Services

### 4.1 Universal Services

Around eight in ten North Hertfordshire residents are satisfied with the administration of Council Tax (82%) and the general waste and recycling collection (79%). Satisfaction with street cleaning is slightly lower amongst residents at 72%, however this is above the LGA benchmark of 70%.

**Figure 6: Satisfaction with universal Council services (All valid responses)**



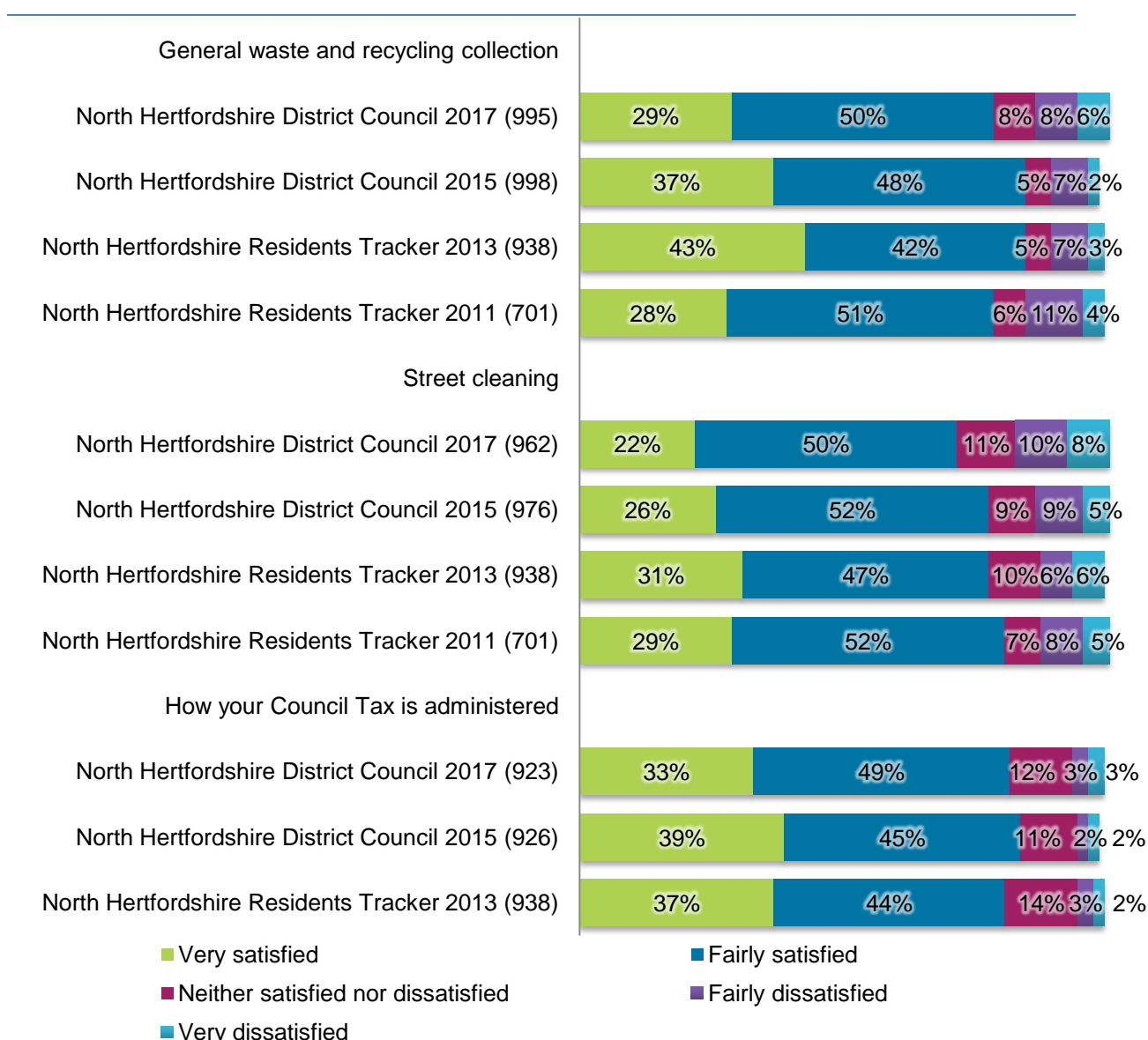
Unweighted sample bases in parenthesis

Neither satisfaction with general waste and recycling nor satisfaction with street cleaning vary significantly by area, so no particular locations for further improvement are evident within the data.

The detailed responses from 2017 are shown alongside those from previous residents' surveys below. Satisfaction with general waste and recycling collection at 79% is significantly lower than the previous year (86%), which is also the case for the proportion of those who were very satisfied (29% cf. 37%).

Overall satisfaction with street cleaning has also seen a significant decline in satisfaction compared to 2015 (72% cf. 78%) and has again also seen a significant drop in those who are very satisfied (22% cf. 26%). The views given in relation to how Council Tax is administered are again lower than the previous year, however this change is not statistically significant.

**Figure 7: Satisfaction with universal services 2011-2017 (All valid responses)**

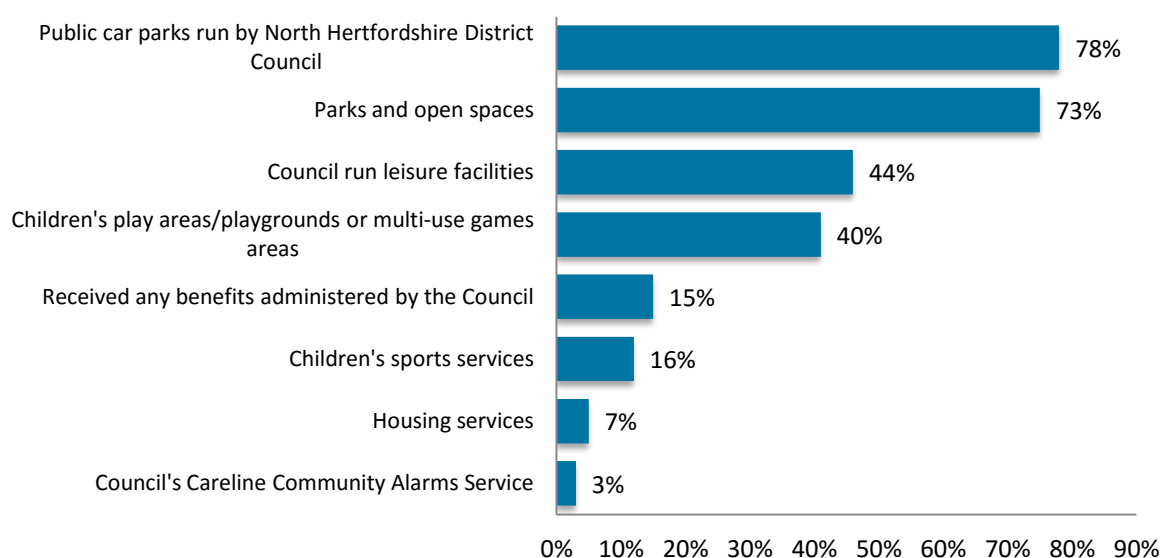


Unweighted sample bases in parenthesis

## 4.2 Service use and satisfaction

When asked whether residents have used various Council services within the last year, public car parks run by North Hertfordshire District Council (78%) and parks and open spaces (73%) are those most frequently used by residents. Beneath this, just under half (44%) indicate that they have used Council run leisure facilities in the last year and two in five (40%) have used children's play areas/playgrounds or multi-use games areas.

**Figure 8: Can you tell me whether you have used any of the following within the last year? (All valid responses)**



Unweighted sample bases vary

Comparing these usage levels to those recorded in previous iterations of this survey shows that public car parks run by NHDC and parks and open spaces are consistently the services that are most commonly used by residents. In 2017 there has been a 4-percentage point increase in the proportion that state that they have used children's and sports services, which is a significant increase. However, whilst usage is higher this year, usage still falls significantly below the levels measured in 2013 and 2011.

**Table 6: Service use 2011-2017 (All valid responses)**

Service/facility	% users 2011	% users 2013	% users 2015	% users 2017	% point change 2015-17
Parks and open spaces	78%	79%	75%	73%	-2%
Public car parks run by North Hertfordshire District Council	77%	78%	78%	78%	0%
Council run leisure facilities	55%	48%	46%	44%	-2%
Children's Play Areas/ playgrounds or multi-use games areas	41%	46%	41%	40%	-1%
Children's sports services	22%	21%	12%	16%	+4%
Housing services	6%	4%	5%	7%	+2%

The table below shows the proportion of each age group who have used each of the listed services. Figures in bold represent significantly higher usage rates compared to the total, whilst figures underlined show significantly lower usage rates compared to the total average.

**Table 7: Service use by age (All valid responses)**

	Total	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
Parks and open spaces	73%	68%	<b>81%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>81%</b>	72%	71%	<u>46%</u>
Children's play areas/playgrounds or multi-use games areas	40%	<u>16%</u>	<b>56%</b>	<b>64%</b>	36%	35%	41%	<u>18%</u>
Children's sports services	16%	11%	20%	<b>35%</b>	15%	<u>8%</u>	<u>7%</u>	<u>4%</u>
Council run leisure facilities	44%	41%	<b>54%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<u>36%</u>	<u>36%</u>	<u>20%</u>
Public car parks run by North Hertfordshire District Council	78%	<u>65%</u>	80%	78%	<b>87%</b>	82%	80%	<u>60%</u>
Housing services	7%	5%	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>	5%	5%	4%	4%
Council's Careline Community Alarms Service	3%	0%	1%	3%	4%	3%	4%	<b>6%</b>
Received any benefits administered by the Council	15%	<u>2%</u>	14%	19%	<u>10%</u>	10%	17%	<b>35%</b>

Looking at service use by area shows that:

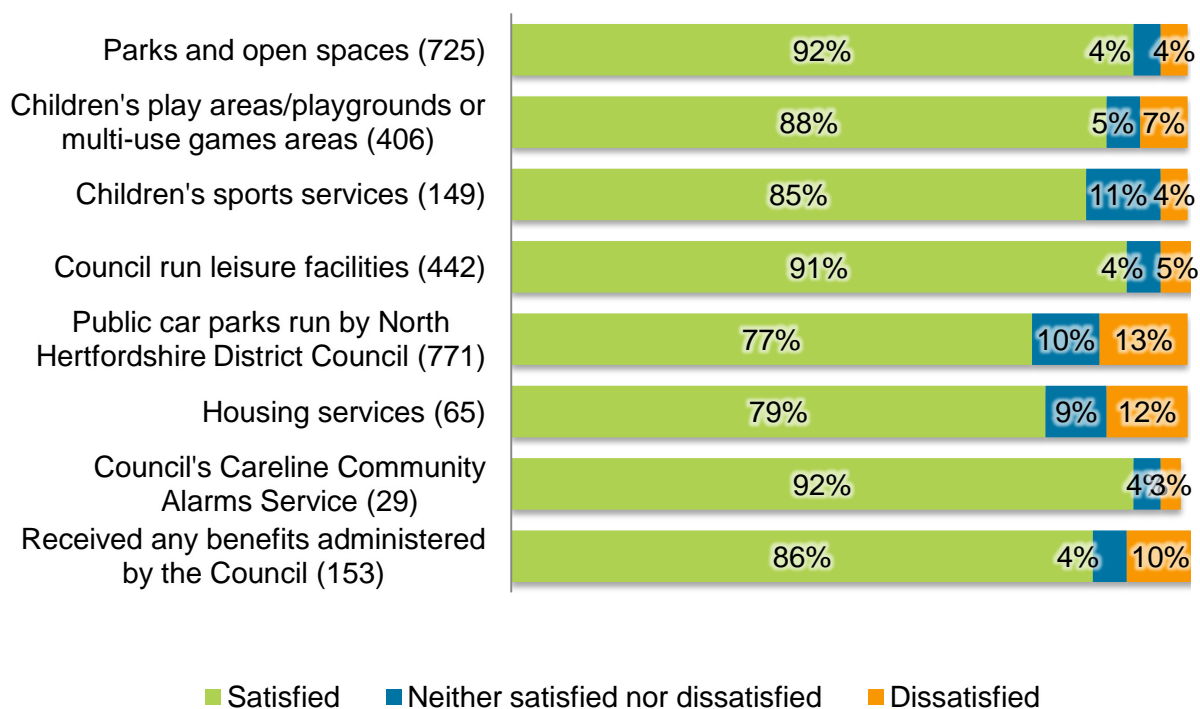
- Baldock & District residents are significantly more likely to use Council run leisure facilities than Southern Rural residents;
- Hitchin residents are least likely to have received any benefits administered by the Council

**Table 8: Service use by area (All valid responses)**

	Baldock & District	Hitchin	Letchworth	Royston	Southern Rural
Parks and open spaces	80%	72%	71%	73%	71%
Children's play areas/playgrounds or multi-use games areas	38%	41%	37%	41%	43%
Children's sports services	16%	15%	17%	14%	15%
Council run leisure facilities	<b>56%</b>	42%	45%	48%	<u>37%</u>
Public car parks run by North Hertfordshire District Council	83%	82%	74%	80%	73%
Housing services	9%	5%	8%	8%	5%
Council's Careline Community Alarms Service	2%	4%	4%	1%	3%
Received any benefits administered by the Council	12%	<u>11%</u>	18%	14%	18%

Those who had indicated that they had used a listed Council service were then asked to state how satisfied they were with it. Based on the responses given which are summarised in the figure below, user satisfaction levels are generally very high. This is particularly the case for the Council's Careline Community Alarms Service (92%), parks and open spaces (92%) and Council run leisure facilities (91%). The lowest user satisfaction is seen among users of Council car parks (77%) and housing services (79%).

**Figure 9: Service satisfaction among users (Where used in the last year)**



Unweighted sample bases in parenthesis

By area, Letchworth residents indicate higher levels of satisfaction in comparison to other residents for public car parks run by North Hertfordshire District Council (83%). This was the only statistically different satisfaction score amongst the areas for any of the measures.



The user satisfaction levels in 2017 are fairly consistent with those recorded in 2015 as demonstrated by the table below. The biggest difference is a 4-percentage drop in satisfaction for Children's sports services; however this is not significant due to the low base size.

**Table 9: User satisfaction for listed services 2011-2017 (All valid responses)**

	% satisfied 2011	% satisfied 2013	% satisfied 2015	% Satisfied 2017	% point change 2015-17
Parks and open spaces	89%	93%	93%	92%	-1%
Children's sports services	93%	92%	89%	85%	-4%
Council run leisure facilities	92%	90%	91%	91%	0%
Children's play areas/playgrounds or multi-use games areas	87%	90%	90%	88%	-2%
Public car parks run by North Hertfordshire District Council	75%	76%	77%	77%	0%
Housing services	79%	76%	77%	79%	+2%

### 4.3 Service priorities

The majority of North Hertfordshire residents feel that general waste and recycling collection (57%) is the most important service the District Council provides (this was also the most important service in the 2015, 2013 and 2011 Residents' Surveys). The next most commonly selected service area is housing services with 15% indicating that this is the most important, followed by parks and open spaces which are chosen by 10% of residents.

The two most commonly selected services selected by each age group are shown in the table below. While general waste and recycling collections are most commonly selected as a priority by all age groups, beneath this there is some variation in the different services. Both the youngest and oldest age groups are significantly more likely than the total average to find street cleaning the most important service. Residents aged 65-74 are significant more likely to find planning services the most important, whilst 0% of those aged 75+ consider it the most important.

**Table 10: Which of the following services provided by North Hertfordshire District Council do you think is the most important? (All valid responses)**

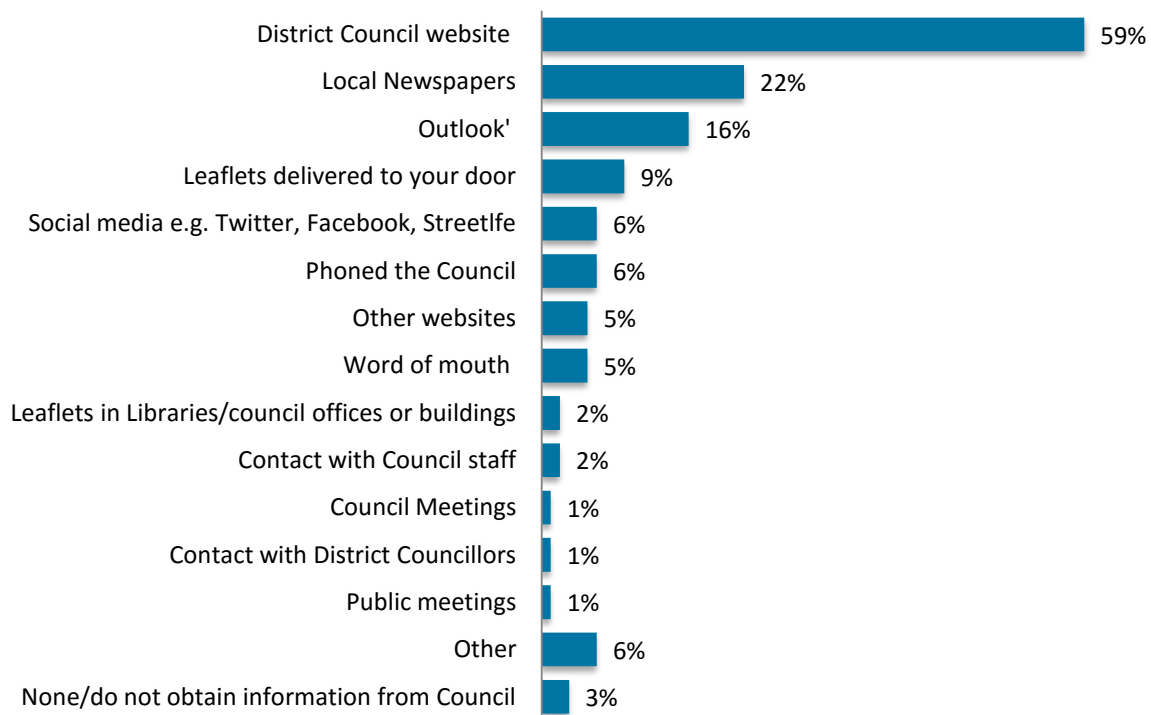
	Total	Age						
		16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
General waste and recycling collection	57%	35%	55%	55%	58%	67%	61%	65%
Parks and open spaces	10%	16%	13%	15%	8%	8%	2%	6%
Street cleaning	5%	16%	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%	13%
Public car parks	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
Council leisure centres	2%	2%	4%	2%	3%	0%	0%	2%
Museums	1%	0%	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%
Planning services	5%	4%	4%	2%	7%	5%	14%	0%
Housing services	15%	21%	26%	18%	15%	16%	13%	10%
Other	3%	2%	3%	3%	6%	1%	6%	2%
<b>Unweighted Bases</b>	<b>947</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>115</b>

## 5 Information and communication

### 5.1 Key information channels

All respondents were asked how they normally obtain information about North Hertfordshire District Council. The highest proportion of residents obtain information from the District Council website (59%), followed by local newspapers (22%) and 'Outlook' magazine (16%). It is worth noting that some respondents may have confused North Hertfordshire District Council with Hertfordshire County Council, given that 9% stated that they obtain information through leaflets which North Hertfordshire District Council does not send out anymore. The full range of sources mentioned are shown in the figure below; please note respondents could select more than one information source.

**Figure 10: Where do you normally obtain information about North Hertfordshire District Council if you need it? (All valid respondents)**



Unweighted sample base: 968

These top three sources have consistently made up the top three since the 2011 residents survey as shown by the table overleaf. However, for the first time, local newspapers (22%) have become a more common choice for people to obtain information about NHDC than the 'Outlook' magazine (16%).

It should be noted that although there has been a shift since 2008 towards residents obtaining information online, some of the shifts in information channels used from 2008 to 2011 are due to a change in the way the question was asked from using a prompted list of information channels in 2008, to having an unprompted list in 2011.

**Table 11: Top 3 ways that residents obtain information 2008-2017 (All valid responses)**

2008 (990)	2011 (735)	2013 (996)	2015 (981)	2017 (968)
Outlook (75%)	District Council website (56%)	District Council website (60%)	District Council website (60%)	District Council website (59%)
Local newspapers (74%)	Outlook (23%)	Outlook (22%)	Outlook (17%)	Local Newspapers (22%)
Leaflets delivered to your door (44%)	Local newspapers (19%)	Local newspapers (16%)	Local newspapers (17%)	Outlook (16%)

Given that technology usage and media consumption can vary within the population, it is important to review responses to this question by age. As illustrated in the table overleaf, analysing responses in this way shows that:

- Use of Outlook as an information source increases with age. This theme will be expanded upon in questions covering the Outlook publication later in this chapter.
- Local newspapers are mentioned more commonly by residents aged 55 and over. Although perhaps surprisingly, a higher percentage of 16-24 year olds use local newspapers than 25-34 year olds and 35-44 year olds.
- Using the Council website to obtain information is most commonly done by residents aged 25-34 (74%) and 35-44 (70%).
- Those aged 25-34 most commonly mention other websites as sources of information on the Council.
- Those aged 75+ are significantly more likely to have phoned the Council for information.

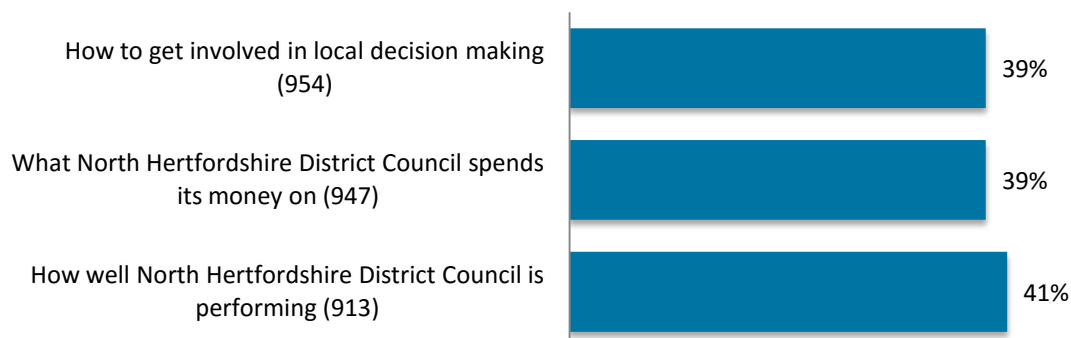
**Table 12: Where do you normally obtain information about North Hertfordshire District Council if you need it? – valid responses by age**

	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
'Outlook'	0%	<u>2%</u>	<u>9%</u>	18%	<b>27%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>29%</b>
Local Newspapers	19%	<u>9%</u>	<u>14%</u>	20%	<b>28%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>30%</b>
Social media	9%	8%	9%	5%	5%	4%	<u>2%</u>
Leaflets delivered to your door	7%	5%	8%	9%	12%	11%	7%
District Council website	64%	<b>74%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>66%</b>	57%	<b>46%</b>	<u>15%</u>
Other websites	8%	<b>10%</b>	5%	7%	3%	<u>1%</u>	<u>1%</u>
Word of mouth	9%	6%	3%	4%	4%	5%	<b>11%</b>
Phoned the Council	5%	<u>1%</u>	4%	7%	7%	8%	<b>15%</b>
Council Meetings	0%	0%	1%	<b>2%</b>	1%	1%	2%
Local radio stations	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%
Leaflets in Libraries/council offices or buildings	2%	0%	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%
Contact with Council staff	0%	0%	<u>0%</u>	<u>0%</u>	<b>6%</b>	<b>6%</b>	2%
Contact with District Councillors	0%	0%	0%	1%	<b>2%</b>	2%	1%
Exhibitions and Roadshows	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Public meetings	0%	0%	1%	*%	1%	1%	1%
Posters	0%	0%	0%	1%	<b>2%</b>	0%	0%
Councillor Surgeries	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	<b>1%</b>	0%
Other	2%	3%	4%	4%	6%	9%	<b>12%</b>
None/do not obtain information from Council	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	<u>0%</u>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Unweighted Bases</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>112</b>

## 5.2 Feeling informed

Around four in ten residents feel informed about how to get involved in local decision making, what the Council spends its money on and being informed of how well NHDC is doing.

**Figure 11: To what extent do you feel well informed or not about the following...? – very or fairly well informed (All valid responses)**



Unweighted valid sample bases in parenthesis

The proportion of those informed in regards to how well NHDC is performing and what money is being spent on have seen significant drops since the 2015 survey.

**Table 13: Residents feeling informed 2008-2017 (All valid responses)**

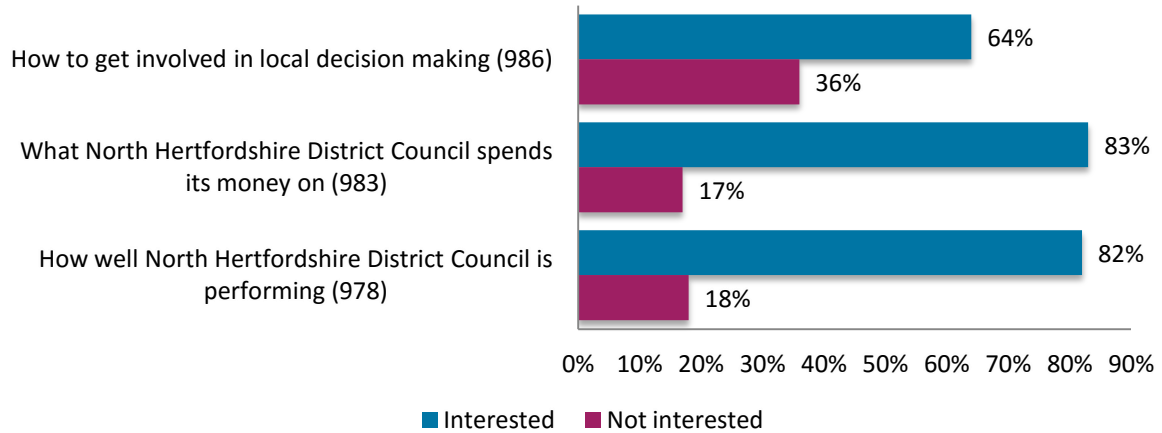
	Informed 2008	Informed 2011	Informed 2013	Informed 2015	Informed 2017	% point change 2015-17
How well NHDC is performing	78%	51%	57%	54%	41%	-13%
What NHDC spends its money on	79%	52%	54%	55%	39%	-16%
How to get involved in local decision making	81%	37%	40%	44%	39%	-5%

Those aged 75+ are significantly more likely to feel informed about how well NHDC is performing and how to get involved in local decision making, whilst those aged 16-24 are significantly more likely to feel uninformed about all three measures.

By area, Letchworth residents are significantly more likely than the total to feel not well informed at all about getting involved in decision making compared to the total average (27% cf. 23%) whilst those in Southern Rural are significantly less likely to feel not well informed at all (17% cf. 23%). Residents in Hitchin are significantly less likely than the total average to feel well informed about how well North Hertfordshire District Council is performing (36% cf. 41%).

Residents this year were asked how interested they were in being informed about the three measures. Over eight in ten residents were interested in being informed about how NHDC spends its money (83%) and how well they were performing (82%). Around two thirds were interested about getting involved in local decision making (64%).

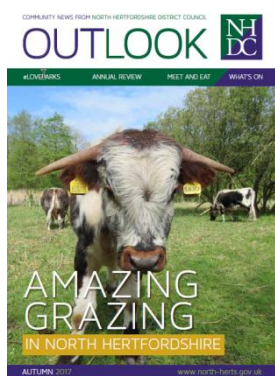
**Figure 12: How interested are you in being informed of the following...?**



Those living in Hitchin are significantly more likely to want to be informed about what NHDC spends its money on compared to Letchworth residents (89% cf. 77%). Hitchin residents are also the most likely to want to be informed about how well the Council is performing, with a significantly higher result than the total average (86% cf. 82%).

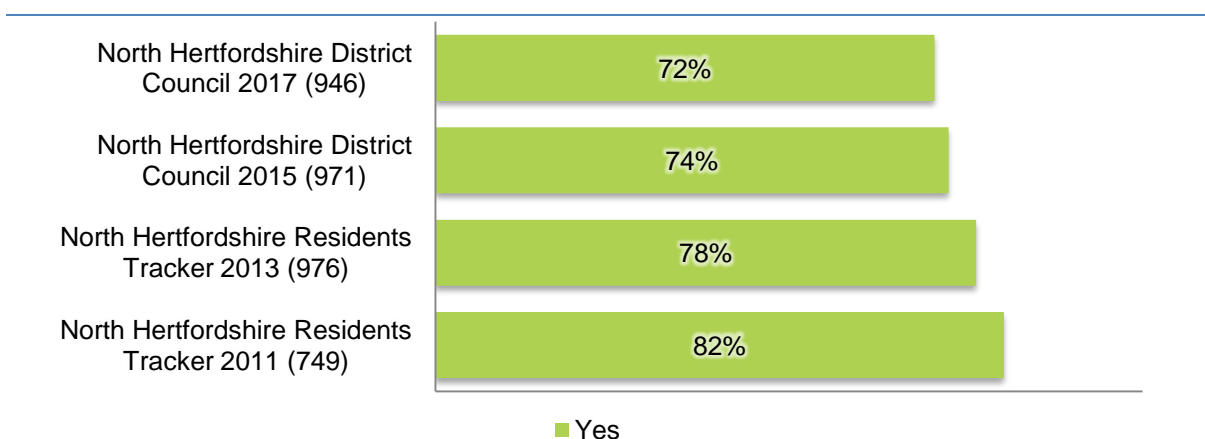


### 5.3 Outlook



Outlook is the Council's magazine for residents. The magazine is delivered to all households in the area on a quarterly basis. When asked whether they have seen or have had a copy of Outlook delivered to their door, 72% of residents answered yes, with over a quarter (28%) saying no. The proportion answering positively to this question is slightly below the 74% seen in 2015 and a 6-percentage drop off from 2013, however, checks may be necessary to establish if there are any distribution issues.

**Figure 13: Have you seen, or had a copy of Outlook delivered to your door? (All valid responses)**



Unweighted sample bases in parenthesis

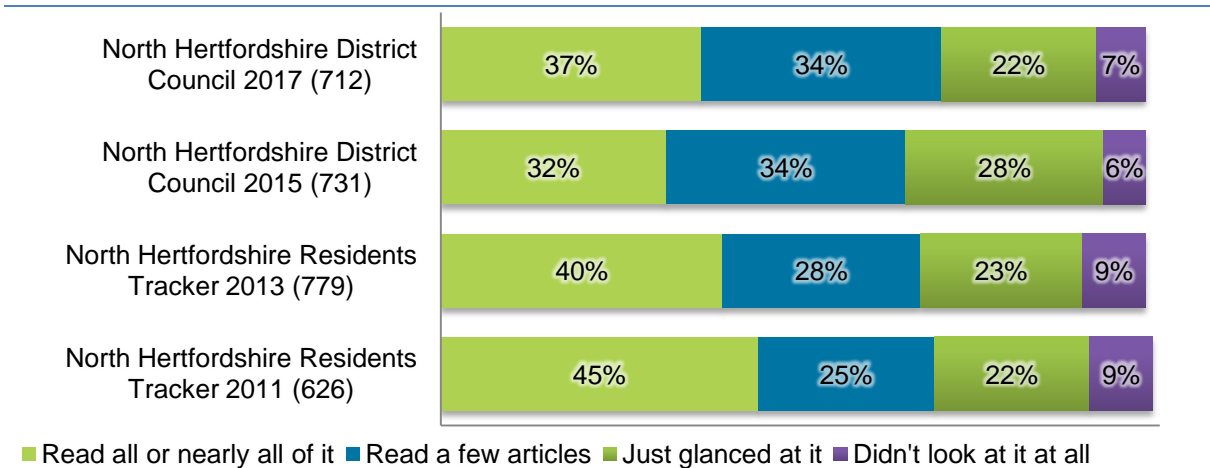
Residents of Royston are significantly more likely to say that they have not received or seen a copy of Outlook (41%), as shown by the table below. This finding has increased by 7-percentage points since 2015 (34%). Conversely, those in Southern Rural are significantly more likely than the total average to say they do receive Outlook (78% cf. 72%).

**Table 14: Outlook receipt by area (All valid responses)**

	Area					
	Total	Baldock & District	Hitchin	Letchworth	Royston	Southern Rural
Yes	72%	69%	76%	72%	59%	78%
Unweighted Bases	946	107	252	243	144	200

Among those who have seen or received a copy of Outlook, significantly more residents said that they read all or nearly all of it than the previous year's finding (37% cf. 32%). This was also the most commonly chosen option this year.

**Figure 14: Interaction with Outlook among recipients (Where seen a copy of Outlook or had a copy delivered)**



Unweighted sample bases in parenthesis

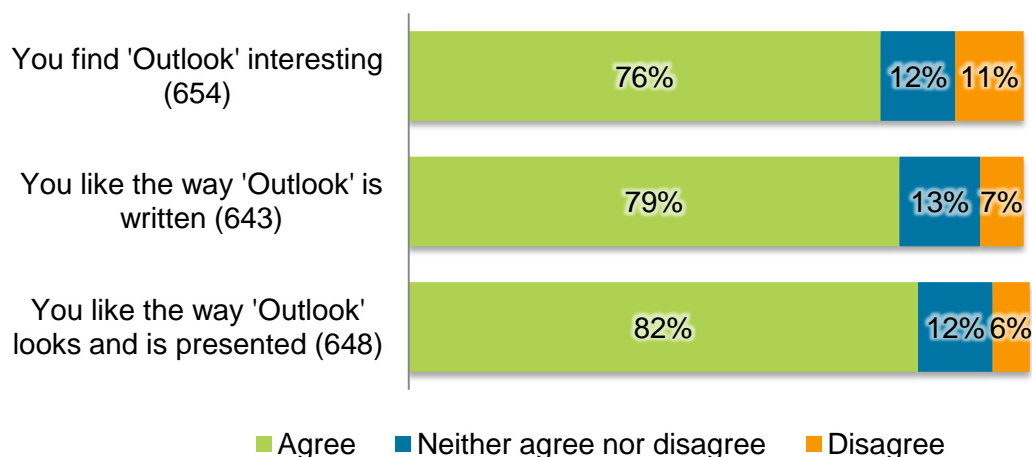
The extent which each age group engages with Outlook where received is shown in the table below. This demonstrates that there is a greater tendency for older residents to read all or most of this publication. Those aged 25-34 are both the least likely to read all or nearly all of the magazine and, together with 16-24 year olds, the most likely to not look at it at all.

**Table 15: Interaction with Outlook Magazine content by age (Where seen / received)**

	16 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75+
Read all or nearly all of it	20%	<u>12%</u>	<u>27%</u>	<u>29%</u>	44%	<b>48%</b>	<b>64%</b>
Read a few articles	40%	38%	<b>43%</b>	38%	30%	31%	<u>22%</u>
Just glanced at it	20%	30%	23%	26%	23%	<u>15%</u>	<u>11%</u>
Didn't look at it at all	20%	<b>20%</b>	7%	7%	<u>3%</u>	6%	3%
<b>Unweighted Bases</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>103</b>

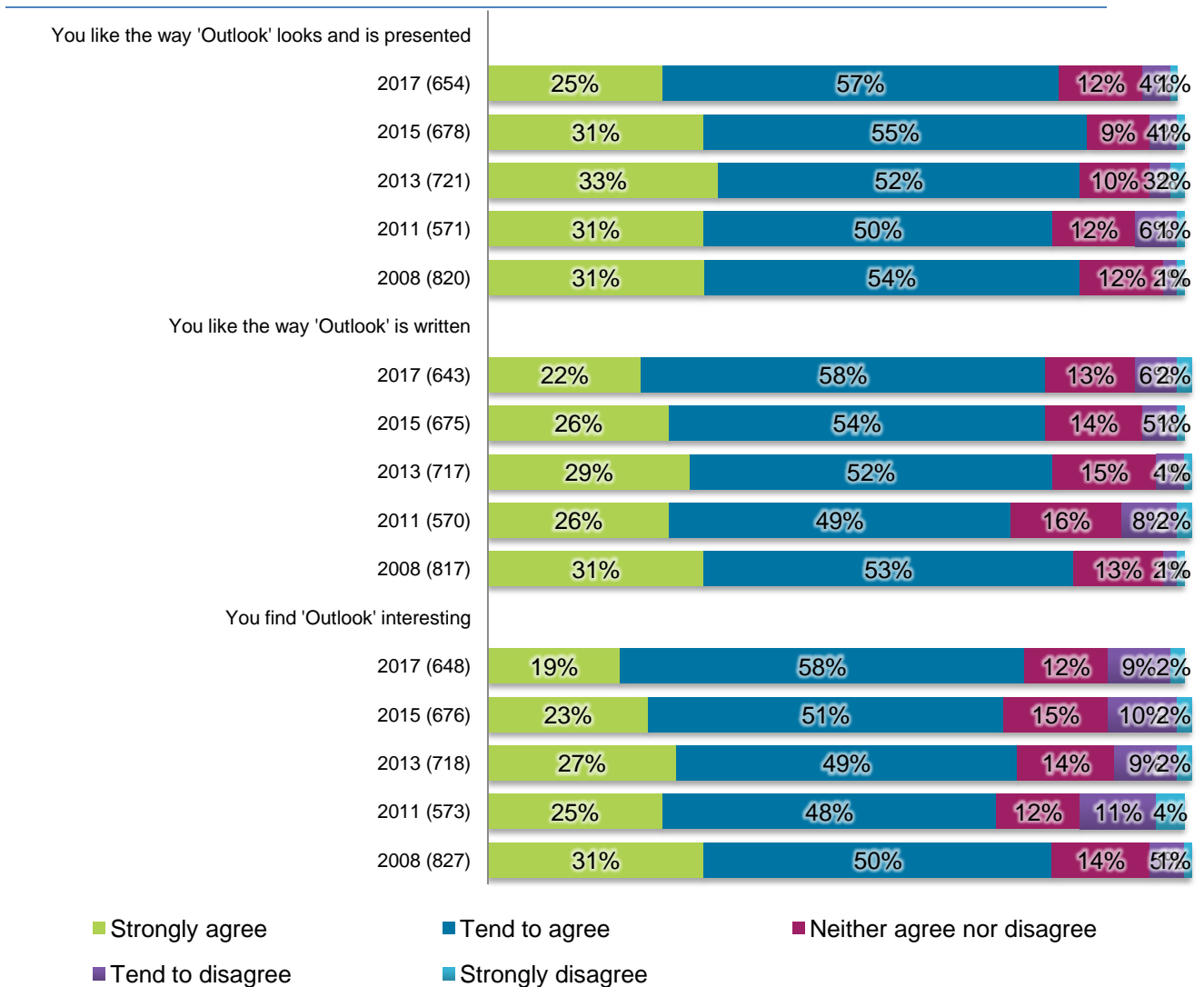
The feedback on the content and format of Outlook is positive. More than seven in ten (76%) of those who receive Outlook and read it to some extent (glance at it, read a few articles, read all or nearly all of it) find it interesting. Four in five (79%) like the way Outlook is written and 82% like the way Outlook is presented.

**Figure 15: Views on Outlook content and formatting (Valid responses, those who have read some of Outlook)**



The agreement that Outlook is interesting at 76% is marginally higher than the 73% observed in 2015. Agreement that residents like the way Outlook is written is around the same (79% in 2017 and 80% in 2015), whilst agreement with liking the way Outlook is presented falls by 3-percentage points, however this isn't significant.

**Figure 16: Views on Outlook content and format 2008-2017 (Where read a copy of Outlook)**



Unweighted sample bases in parenthesis

When looking at perceptions of the magazine by age, 25-34 and 45-54 year olds are significantly less likely to find the magazine interesting (62% and 68%), whilst those 75 or over are significantly more likely to agree in this regard (91%).

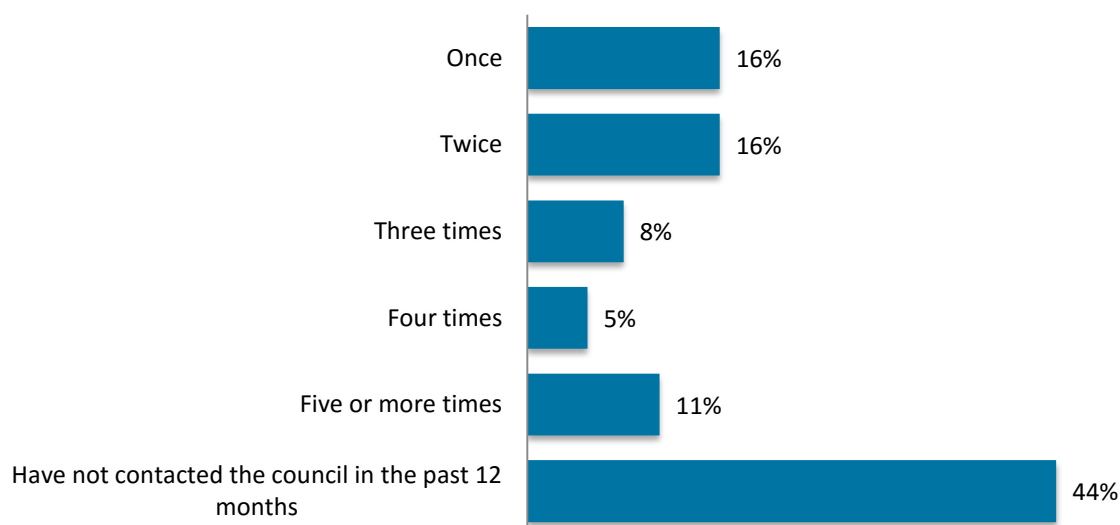
The same sentiment is shared by 75 and over's in regards to how Outlook is written, with 91% again in agreement, significantly higher than the total. 65-74 year olds are also largely in agreement that they like the way the magazine is written, with 88% agreeing. 25-34 year olds are significantly less likely than the total to find the magazine well written (59%).

Whilst 65-74 (90%) and 75+ (92%) year olds are significantly more likely to agree the magazine is written well, none of the age groups are significantly lower than the total in terms of agreement.

## 6 Contact with the Council

In the last 12 months, 56% of residents have contacted North Hertfordshire District Council. This is slightly higher than observed in 2015 (53%), which reinforces the idea that high quality contact handling is extremely important, given that over half of residents are having some form of contact. Just over one in ten residents (11%) have contacted the Council five or more times in the past 12 months.

**Figure 17: In the last 12 months, how many times have you contacted North Hertfordshire District Council? (All valid responses)**

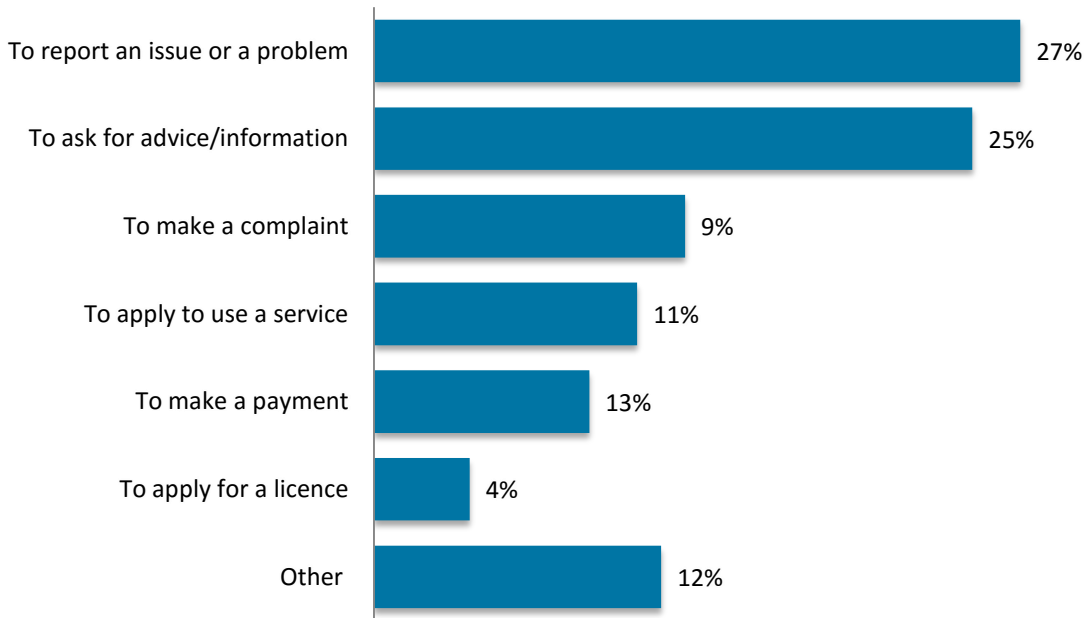


Unweighted sample base: 957

Residents aged 16-24 are the least likely to have contacted the Council in the last 12 months, with 72% saying they haven't done so, which is significantly higher than the total. 35-44 year olds are significantly more likely to have contacted NHDC at least five times in the last year compared to the total (16% cf. 11%).

As is shown in the figure below, reporting an issue or problem is the most common reason for Council contact (27%), followed by to ask for advice/information (25%). These were also the most common reasons for contact in 2015 (28% and 23% of residents respectively having given these reasons).

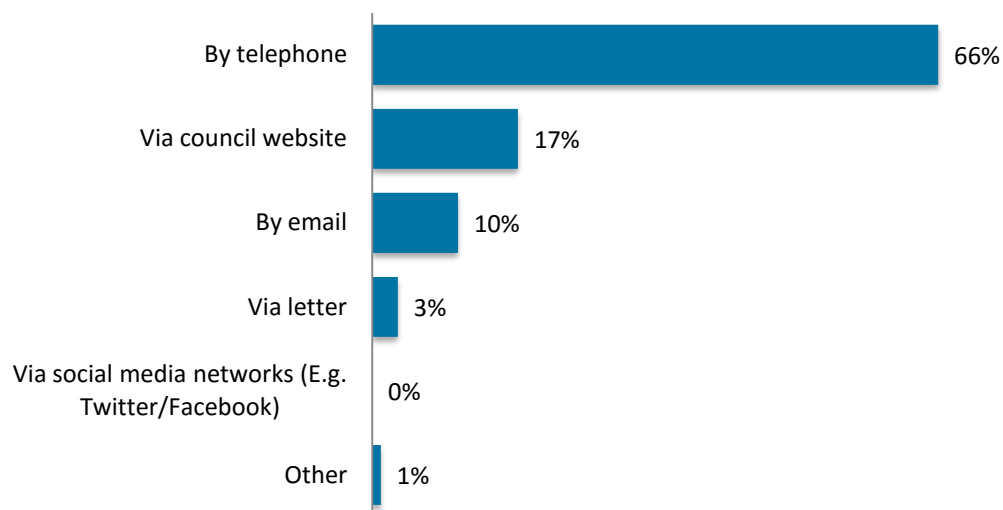
**Figure 18: Which of these describes the reason why you made your most recent contact with the Council? (Where contacted the Council in the last 12 months)**



Unweighted sample base: 549

Two thirds of residents making contact contacted the Council by telephone (66%). This is a similar level to the 2015 findings (67%) and remains by far the most popular method of contact, but it is below the 74% seen in 2013 and the 75% recorded in 2011. However, this cannot be seen as evidence of channel shift as the question asked in 2017 and 2015 was a single response question, whereas more than one response was possible in previous years.

**Figure 19: How did you contact the Council? (Where contacted the Council in the last 12 months)**



Unweighted sample base: 551

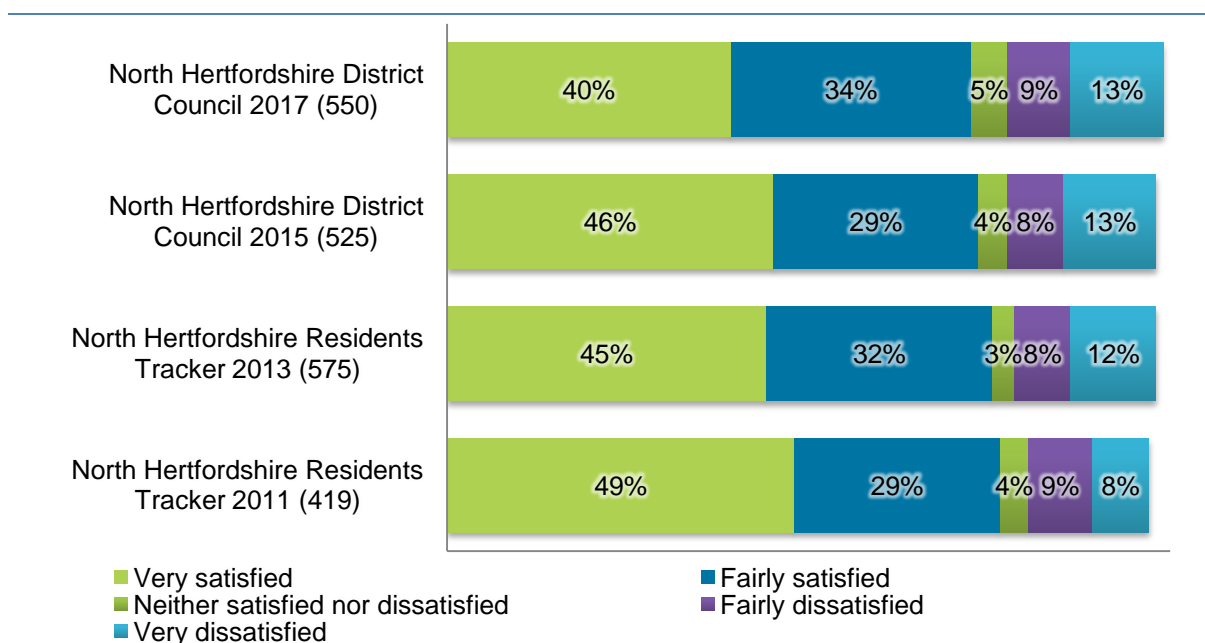
Cross referencing the contact channels used by the reasons given for contact shows how particular types of enquiry are more commonly made. Telephone contact is most commonly used for reporting an issue or problem (31%) whilst contact via the website is the most likely used channel to apply for a licence (10%).

**Table 16: Reason for Council contact by channel used (where contact made in the last 12 months)**

	In person	Telephone	Email	Council website
To make a payment	9%	9%	4%	14%
To ask for advice/information	24%	25%	25%	27%
To report an issue or a problem	14%	<b>31%</b>	17%	22%
To make a complaint	4%	<b>15%</b>	18%	<u>3%</u>
To apply to use a service	11%	10%	13%	17%
To apply for a licence	3%	<u>2%</u>	2%	<b>10%</b>
Other	34%	<u>9%</u>	<b>22%</b>	8%
<b>Unweighted Bases</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>93</b>

When considering their satisfaction with the service they received the last time they contacted the Council, three quarters (74%) were satisfied. Encouragingly the single most common response on the 5-point scale was 'very satisfied' which was chosen by 40% of residents. The satisfaction level recorded in 2017 regarding Council contact is in line with that seen in 2015 where 75% were satisfied. The proportion of those that said they were very satisfied has seen a significant drop since the previous year.

**Figure 20: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service you received the last time you contacted with the Council? (Where contacted the Council in the last 12 months)**



Unweighted sample bases shown in parentheses

Table 17 below shows the satisfaction levels by contact channel. Those who contacted NHDC by email were significantly less likely to be satisfied (59% cf. 74%) whilst being significantly more likely to be dissatisfied (35% cf. 22%).

**Table 17: Satisfaction with service received upon contact by contact channel (Where contacted the Council in the last 12 months)**

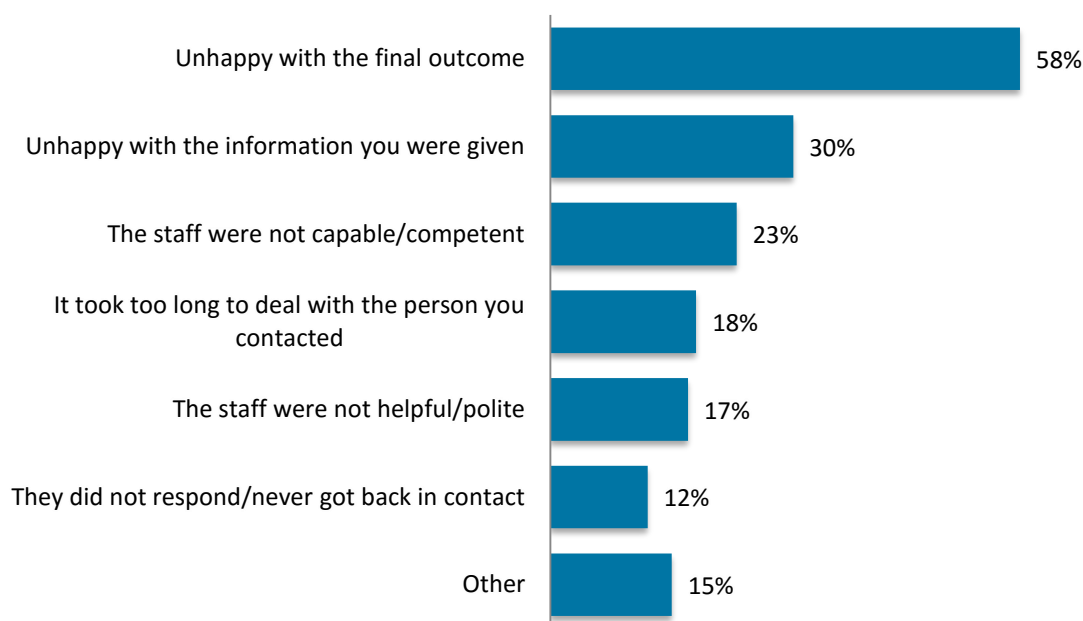
	In person	Telephone	Email	Council website
Satisfied	77%	75%	59%	77%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	5%	4%	6%	6%
Dissatisfied	19%	21%	35%	16%
<b>Unweighted Bases</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>93</b>

Of the residents who said that they are dissatisfied with the service they received the last time they contacted the Council (22%), the highest proportion are unhappy with the final outcome (58%). Given that this response was given by nearly twice as many



of those stating that they were unhappy with the information given (30%), this suggests that managing expectations as much as possible in terms of outcomes is important. It must be recognised that residents rarely differentiate between service processes and outcome, but the mentions of capability, speed and politeness issues in the reasons given suggests that some scope for improvement remains.

**Figure 21: Why were you dissatisfied with the service you received the last time you were in contact with the Council? (Where dissatisfied with the service they received)**



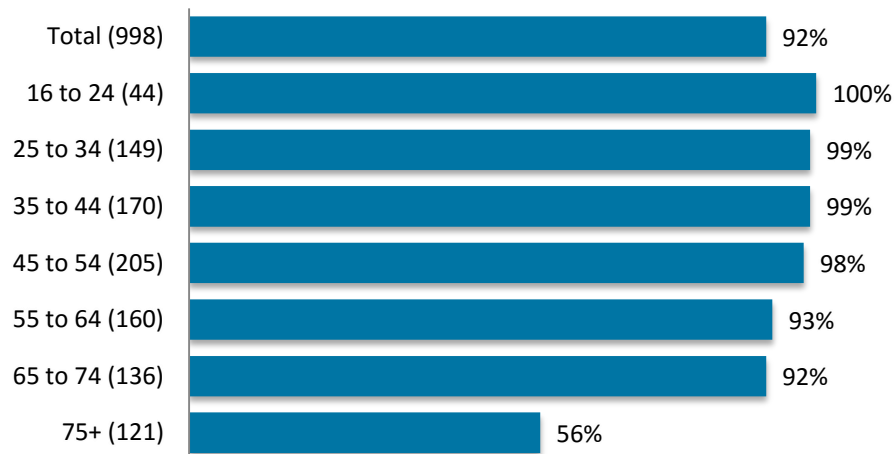
Unweighted sample base: 120

Residents in Letchworth are significantly more likely to feel that the staff were not helpful/ polite towards them when contacting the council (32% cf. 17%). Conversely, residents of Southern Rural were significantly less likely to feel that the staff were not helpful or polite (4% cf. 17%).

## 6.1 Internet usage

Nine in ten (92%) North Hertfordshire residents have access to the internet. Analysis shows that for all but one age group, at least nine in ten have access, the exceptions being those aged 75+ (56%), although this proportion has seen a 10-percentage point increase since 2015.

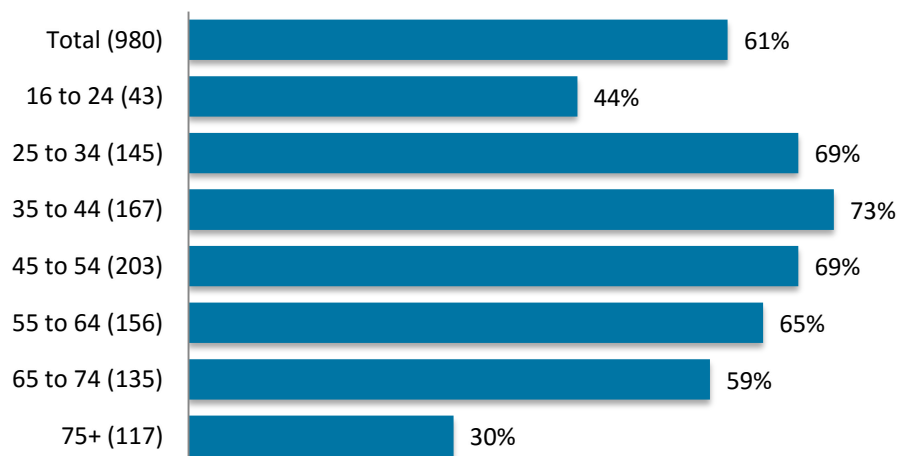
**Figure 22: Do you have access to the Internet? (All valid responses)**



Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

Six in ten (61%) of all respondents have visited North Hertfordshire District Council's website over the last 12 months. Around three quarters (73%) of residents aged 35-44 have visited the website in the last 12 months. The lowest proportion is those aged 75+ with just 30% visiting the website, followed by 16-24 years olds where 44% have been on the website.

**Figure 23: Have you visited North Hertfordshire District Council's website in the last 12 months? (All valid responses)**

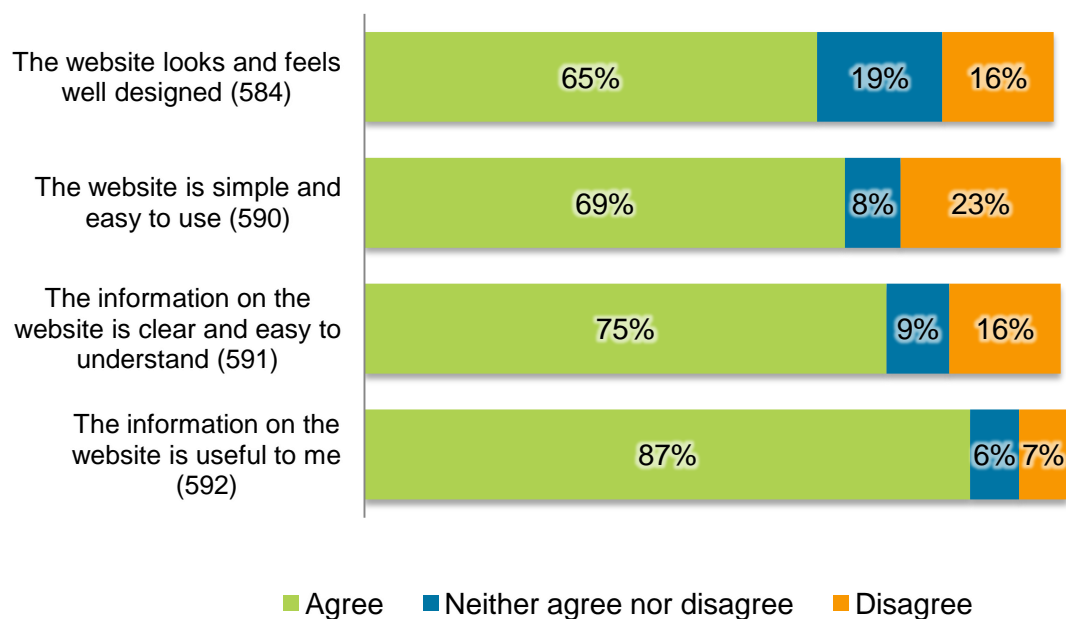


Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

Just under nine in ten visitors (87%) to the website suggest that the information on the website is useful to them; three quarters (75%) agree that it is clear and easy to understand, while around seven in ten feel it is simple and easy to use (69%). 65% of residents feel the website looks and feels well designed.

It is worth noting that almost a quarter of respondents (23%) disagreed that the website was easy to use. Agreement that it is easy to use decreases to 59% for residents aged 45-54 and 57% for those aged 75+.

**Figure 24: Visitor views on Council website (Where visited North Hertfordshire District Council's website)**



Unweighted sample bases in parentheses

## 7 Unweighted sample profile

	Count	%
<b>Age</b>		
Aged 16 to 24	44	4.5
Aged 25 to 34	149	15.1
Aged 35 to 44	170	17.2
Aged 45 to 54	205	20.8
Aged 55 to 64	160	16.2
Aged 65 to 74	137	13.9
Aged 75 or over	122	12.36
Refused	14	1.4
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	453	45.3
Female	548	54.8
<b>Economic status</b>		
An employee in a full time job	394	39.9
An employee in a part time job	118	11.9
Self - Employed	99	10
On a Government supported training programme	1	0.1
In full time education	11	1.1
Unemployed and available for work	49	5
Permanently sick or disabled	9	1
Wholly retired from work	271	27.4
Looking after the home	24	2.4
Doing something else	13	1.3
Refused	12	1.2
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White British	873	89.9
White Irish	11	1.1
White Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1	0.1
White Any other White background	24	2.5
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups White and Black Caribbean	3	0.3
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups White and Black African	4	0.4
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups White and Asian	1	0.1
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups Any other mixed/Multiple ethnic background	3	0.3
Asian or Asian British Indian	18	1.9
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	2	0.2
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	4	0.4
Asian or Asian British Chinese	2	0.2
Asian or Asian British Any other Asian background	3	0.3
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British African	5	0.5

## Residents' Tracker Survey 2017

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British Caribbean	7	0.7
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British Any other Black/African/Caribbean background	1	0.1
Other ethnic group Other	9	0.9
Refused	30	3
<b>Long term illness or disability</b>		
Yes	166	16.6
No	819	81.8
Don't know	4	0.4
Refused	12	1.2

## 8 Appendix: Statement of Terms

### **Compliance with International Standards**

BMG complies with the International Standard for Quality Management Systems requirements (ISO 9001:2008) and the International Standard for Market, opinion and social research service requirements (ISO 20252:2012) and The International Standard for Information Security Management (ISO 27001:2013).

### **Interpretation and publication of results**

The interpretation of the results as reported in this document pertain to the research problem and are supported by the empirical findings of this research project and, where applicable, by other data. These interpretations and recommendations are based on empirical findings and are distinguishable from personal views and opinions.

BMG will not publish any part of these results without the written and informed consent of the client.

### **Ethical practice**

BMG promotes ethical practice in research: We conduct our work responsibly and in light of the legal and moral codes of society.

We have a responsibility to maintain high scientific standards in the methods employed in the collection and dissemination of data, in the impartial assessment and dissemination of findings and in the maintenance of standards commensurate with professional integrity.

We recognise we have a duty of care to all those undertaking and participating in research and strive to protect subjects from undue harm arising as a consequence of their participation in research. This requires that subjects' participation should be as fully informed as possible and no group should be disadvantaged by routinely being excluded from consideration. All adequate steps shall be taken by both agency and client to ensure that the identity of each respondent participating in the research is protected.

With more than 25 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

BMG serves both the public and the private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of the most up to date technologies and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.

