

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

CITIZENS' PANEL SURVEY – SPRING 2008

*Analysis carried out by NWA Social Research
on behalf of the Dacorum Borough Council*

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL
CITIZENS' PANEL SURVEY – SPRING 2008
C O N T E N T S

	Page No
A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
B. METHODOLOGY.....	6
C. SURVEY FINDINGS	9
1. Contacting the Council.....	9
1.1 Frequency and method of contact	9
1.2 Future contact.....	10
1.3 Preferred method and time of contact	12
2. Sportspace (Removed due to commercial sensitivity. Please contact Sportspace for further information)	
3. Financial Accounts	15
3.1 Summary of Accounts	15
3.2 Council Annual Report.....	22
4. Fraud against the Council	22

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL
CITIZENS' PANEL SURVEY – SPRING 2008

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

A.1 Dacorum Borough Council's Citizens' Panel is a body of residents who have expressed a willingness to give their views to the Council via self-completion postal questionnaires, and currently comprises 1,119 members. The Spring 2008 Panel survey was used to review residents' opinion on the following issues:

1. Contacting the Council
2. Sportspace – Dacorum Sports Trust
3. Council's financial accounts
4. Fraud against the Council

A.2 Questionnaires were posted to all Citizens' Panel members in April 2008. The questionnaire was also linked through the Dacorum Borough Council website to enable Panel members to complete the survey online. A total of 756 completed questionnaires (including 70 via the Internet), were returned prior to the analysis, and a further 11 questionnaires were received after the analysis, giving a Panel response of 68.5%.

Contacting the Council

A.3 Respondents were asked 'about how many times' had they contacted 'Dacorum Borough Council about a Council service during the last 12 months'. The majority of all respondents (62.2%) had made contact for this purpose at least once in the last 12 months.

A.4 More than four in five (83.7%) of those that had made contact about a Council service in the last 12 months had made contact by 'telephone'. Smaller minorities had 'visited a Council office' (25.7%), 'E-mailed via the website' (19.7%), and written a 'letter' (10.4%), whilst only 0.9% had made contact by 'fax'.

A.5 'Telephone' was the method of contact most likely to be used in the future, with 92.4% of all respondents saying that they would be 'very' or 'fairly likely' to use this method. The majority (56.4%) of respondents stated that they would be likely to contact the Council by 'e-mail via the website' in the future,

and around two in five respondents said they would be likely to make contact by 'visiting a Council office' (41.5%), and by 'letter' (39.6%). Only very few respondents thought that they would be likely to make contact by 'fax' (3.1%).

- A.6 'Telephone' was clearly the most preferred method of contact, referred to by 65.8% of respondents as their '1st preference', and by 89.4% as a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd preference. The next most favoured option was contact by 'e-mail via the website' (57.1% '1st, 2nd, or 3rd preference'), followed by 'visit a Council office' (55.7% '1st, 2nd, or 3rd preference'), and by 'letter' (48.6% '1st, 2nd, or 3rd preference').
- A.7 The most convenient days for making contact with the Council were identified as 'any weekday' (47.4%) and 'any day is convenient' (32.3%). Only small minorities of respondents referred to individual weekdays, with Saturday (12.7%) being the only day mentioned by more than one in ten, rising to 17.1% of those in paid employment.
- A.8 The most convenient time of day for making contact was identified as 'any time is convenient' (36.8%). However, 31.1% said it would be most convenient to make contact with the Council in the 'morning', 12.1% in the 'evening' (rising to 16.3% of those in paid employment), 10.9% in the 'afternoon', and 7.3% around 'lunchtime'.

Sportspace facilities used

Sportspace (Removed due to commercial sensitivity. Please contact Sportspace for further information)

Financial Accounts

A copy of the Council's Summary of Accounts for 2006-2007 was provided to respondents for them to read before answering questions in this section.

- A.28 The majority of all respondents considered the Council's Summary of Accounts to be 'very' or 'fairly useful', both in 'providing information about the Council's financial standing' (73.8%), and in 'helping to judge how well the Council is performing' (58.7%).
- A.29 In terms of 'helping to judge how well the Council is performing', nearly a quarter (23.7%) of respondents felt that the Summary of Accounts was 'not very useful', and 11.7% that it was 'not at all useful'. Fewer respondents said that the Summary of Accounts was 'not very useful' (15.5%), or 'not at all useful' (5.9%) in 'providing information about the Council's financial standing'.
- A.30 The large majority (89.4%) of all respondents said that they would read at least some of the Summary of Accounts if it was delivered to their house: 28.4% would read 'all of it', 27.2% 'most of it' and 33.8% 'some of it'. Only 7.2% of respondents said they would read 'none of it', whilst 3.4% were 'unsure'.

- A.31 Nearly two thirds (63.1%) of all respondents considered the Summary of accounts to have 'about the right amount' of detail, whilst a quarter (24.8%) felt that it had 'too little detail', 1.7% felt it had 'too much detail', and 10.4% gave 'not sure' responses.
- A.32 Just under a quarter (23.5%) of the total sample offered comments when asked to say what additional detail they would like, if they thought that the Summary contained 'too few details'. The principal responses related to the need for a 'more detailed breakdown' of the Accounts, particularly expenditure by service area (8.2%), the need for 'more explanation and/ or examples' (4.7%), and requests for 'overall performance information/ comparisons' (3.2%), e.g. with similar Councils. A further 2.1% of respondents wanted explanation of the 'adjustments' made to the figures about Council 'reserves'.
- A.33 Over two thirds (69.2%) of all respondents found the Summary of Accounts 'easy' to understand, whilst one in ten (9.8%) found it 'difficult' to understand, 16.7% gave 'neither easy or difficult' responses, and 4.2% 'don't know'.
- A.34 Amongst those respondents who offered suggestions as to how the Summary of Accounts might be made easier to understand, the main requests were for 'more explanation/ examples and definitions', and improvements to the 'clarity/ presentation' of the Summary.
- A.35 The majority of all respondents (60.3%) thought that it would be a good idea for the Council to publish an Annual Report, three to six months after the year end, although 17.7% said that 'no' this is not a good idea, and 22.0% were 'not sure'.
- A.36 Those respondents that said 'yes' publishing an Annual Report three to six months after the year's end is a good idea were most likely to say that this was because they could 'assess the Council's performance/ see how the money is spent' and because it 'shows accountability/ transparency' in the dealings of the Council.
- A.37 Respondents that said 'no' to the idea of publishing an Annual Report, or who were 'not sure' gave reasons principally relating to it being unnecessary, costing too much, and people not being interested. These respondents also suggested that instead the Annual Report should be made available only on the Council website or to those who specifically requested it, and the 'objectivity' of such an Annual Report was questioned.
- A.38 Respondents were asked to indicate what information they would like an Annual Report to contain. More than two thirds of all respondents would like there to be a 'summary of the Council's priorities' (80.1%), 'information on how well the Council has performed against priorities' (75.0%), a 'summary of

financial accounts' (71.5%), and 'comparisons with the previous year's financial accounts' (67.5%).

- A.39 18.9% of all respondents referred to some 'other' information that they would like to be contained in an Annual Report. These included information on 'future plans/ action plans', 'performance comparisons', 'details/ breakdown of expenditure and income', and details about the 'salaries/ expenses/ interests' of Councillors.

Fraud against the Council

- A.40 Respondents were asked whether or not they agreed or disagreed with a series of five statements about Dacorum Borough Council's stance against fraud. For each of the statements the major response (between 34.3% and 50.9% of all responses) was 'not sure'. Furthermore, over one in five respondents gave 'neither agree nor disagree' responses in relation to each of the five statements.
- A.41 The level of agreement was greatest in relation to the statements 'the Council makes strong efforts to deter, prevent and detect fraud and corruption' (30.5% agree/ 6.9% disagree), 'the Council treats all concerns and allegations about fraud and corruption sensitively and seriously' (27.2% agree/ 5.5% disagree), and 'the Council encourages anyone with concerns about fraud and corruption to come forward and report it' (32.7% agree/ 12.2% disagree). Agreement was lowest in relation to the statements 'Dacorum Borough Council does a good job in preventing and detecting Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit fraud' (17.7% agree/ 13.0% disagree) and 'other fraud and corruption' (14.4% agree/ 9.6% disagree).
- A.42 Four in five (80.0%) of all respondents said that they would be likely to report any 'concerns or suspicions regarding fraud against the Council' that they had to the Council, whilst 9.1% said they were 'not very likely' and 2.6% 'not at all likely' to report such concerns.
- A.43 Only 21.3% of all respondents said that they knew how to go about reporting a concern about fraud or corruption to the Council: the majority (61.8%) of respondents did not know how to do this, and 16.8% were 'not sure'.
- A.44 More than nine out of ten (93.0%) of all respondents expressed concern that 'fraud against the Council means that local taxpayers may be having to pay more than they should because some people are dishonest'. Only small minorities of respondents were 'not very concerned' (5.4%), or 'not at all concerned' (0.3%) about this possibility, whilst 1.4% gave 'not sure' responses.

B. METHODOLOGY

Background & Survey Objectives

B.1 Dacorum Borough Council's Citizens' Panel is a body of residents who have expressed a willingness to give their views to the Council via self-completion postal questionnaires, and currently, following this survey, comprises 1,119 members. The Spring 2008 Panel survey was used to review residents' opinion on the following topics:

1. Contacting the Council
2. Sportspace – Dacorum Sports Trust
3. Council's financial accounts
4. Fraud against the Council.

Survey Methodology & Analysis

The Questionnaire

B.2 The questionnaire was developed by the Council in consultation with NWA Social Research: a copy of the questionnaire, marked-up with topline findings is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.

Mailings – Postal and Electronic

B.3 Questionnaires were posted to all of the 1,157 Citizens' Panel members on 2nd April 2008, using Royal Mail (second class postage). The questionnaire was also linked through the Dacorum Borough Council website to enable those who wished to, to complete the survey online. An email was sent to all those 548 Panel members who had provided an email address giving the link. 18 Panel members stood down, and 20 postal questionnaires were returned by the Royal Mail, 'address unknown', giving an overall panel size of 1,119. Reminders were sent out by post to those 618 Panel members who had not responded on 17th April 2008, together with a second copy of the questionnaire.

Response

B.4 A total of 756 completed questionnaires (including 70 via the Internet), were returned by the start of the analysis, giving a valid response rate of 67.6%. A further 11 questionnaires were received after the analysis, giving a Panel response of 767, i.e. 68.5%.

Analysis

B.5 Data was analysed to tables using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Version 15. Tables of Results are attached as **Appendix 2**.

B.6 Frequency tables (showing counts and count percentages), giving full details of 'missing' responses, were shown for all questions from the survey,

unweighted. These frequency counts are attached as **Appendix 3** to this report.

- B.7 The response from the Panel was not fully representative of the population of the Borough especially in respect of younger males. ‘Weightings’ on age and gender interlocked were applied to make the data representative of population in terms of ‘age’ and ‘gender’.

	Population Estimate (%)	Achieved Current (%)	Weight Age x Gender
18 to 24 MALE	4.4	1.7	2.571973782
18 to 24 FEMALE	4.5	3.4	1.327470339
25 to 39 MALE	13.3	6.4	2.07157969
25 to 39 FEMALE	13.4	16.5	0.812069923
40 to 64 MALE	21.7	27.0	0.804471608
40 to 64 FEMALE	21.9	23.5	0.930288389
65 and over MALE	10.4	13.3	0.784754552
65 and over FEMALE	10.4	8.2	1.272833603

- B.8 Tables were then produced showing ‘weighted’ percentages (and unweighted counts) for each question, for the overall sample, and for the following variables:

Age: 18 to 24 years; 25 to 39 years; 40 to 64 years; 65+ years.

Gender: Male and Female.

Long-standing illness/ disability: ‘Yes’ and ‘No’.

Ethnic group: ‘White – British/ Irish/ Other; ‘Other Minority Groups’

Paid employment: ‘Yes’ and ‘No’

Tenure: ‘Privately owned/ mortgaged’ and ‘Rented’

Access to car/ van in household: ‘Yes – one or more’ and ‘No’

Area: Four area sub-groups, reflecting geographical areas of the Borough were also included as cross-breaks:

Hemel Hempstead

Adeyfield East
 Adeyfield West
 Bennetts End
 Boxmoor
 Chaulden & Shrubhill
 Corner Hall
 Gadebridge
 Grovehill
 Hemel Hempstead Central
 Highfield & St Pauls
 Leverstock Green
 Nash Mills
 Warners End
 Woodhall Farm

Tring

Aldbury & Wiggington
 Tring Central
 Tring East
 Tring West

Berkhamsted

Berkhamsted Castle
 Berkhamsted East
 Berkhamsted West
 Northchurch

Rural

Apsley
 Ashridge
 Bovington, Flaunden &
 Chipperfield

- B.9 As with all self-completion questionnaires, some individuals did not complete all questions. This may be because they did not have an opinion on the question asked, but we cannot make this assumption in full confidence. Full details of such ‘missing data’ are shown in the unweighted Tables of Frequencies.
- B.10 Figures are ‘rounded’ to the nearest 0.1% by the statistical software (SPSS). Due to this ‘rounding’ process, in some instances tables of percentages may not add up to 100% (i.e. they may add up to 99.9% or 100.1%). Also, in some instances, again due to the rounding process, the reported ‘total satisfaction/ dissatisfaction’ may not exactly equal the ‘very’ + ‘fairly’ responses, e.g. ‘very satisfied’ = 2.14% (reported as 2.1%) plus ‘fairly satisfied’ = 2.14% (reported as 2.1%) gives ‘total satisfied’ = 4.28% (reported as 4.3%).
- B.11 All survey results are subject to a ‘margin of error’ (‘Confidence Interval’): this is based on both the sample number and the proportion of respondents giving a particular response. The following table shows the Confidence Intervals at the ‘95% Confidence Level’ relating to the sample sub-groups for ‘age’, ‘gender’, and ‘area’ and for the overall sample (756 respondents).

Sampling Error: Confidence Intervals (at the 95% Confidence Level)
for Sample Sub-Groups

		Unweighted Count	Response 50%/ 50%	Response 10%/ 90%
			± %	± %
Age	18 to 24 years	38	15.9	9.5
	25 to 39 years	171	7.5	4.5
	40 to 64 years	376	5.1	3.0
	65 years and over	160	7.7	4.6
Gender	Male	366	5.1	3.1
	Female	389	5.0	3.0
Geographical Area	Tring	99	9.8	5.9
	Berkhamsted	114	9.2	5.5
	Rural	125	8.8	5.3
	Hemel Hempstead	410	4.8	2.9
TOTAL RESPONSE		756	3.6	2.1

C. SURVEY FINDINGS

1. **Contacting the Council**

1.1 **Frequency and Method of Contact**

Q1: About how many times have you contacted Dacorum Borough council about a Council service during the last 12 months?

Q2: If you have contacted the Council at all about a Council service during the last 12 months, what method(s) of contact did you use?

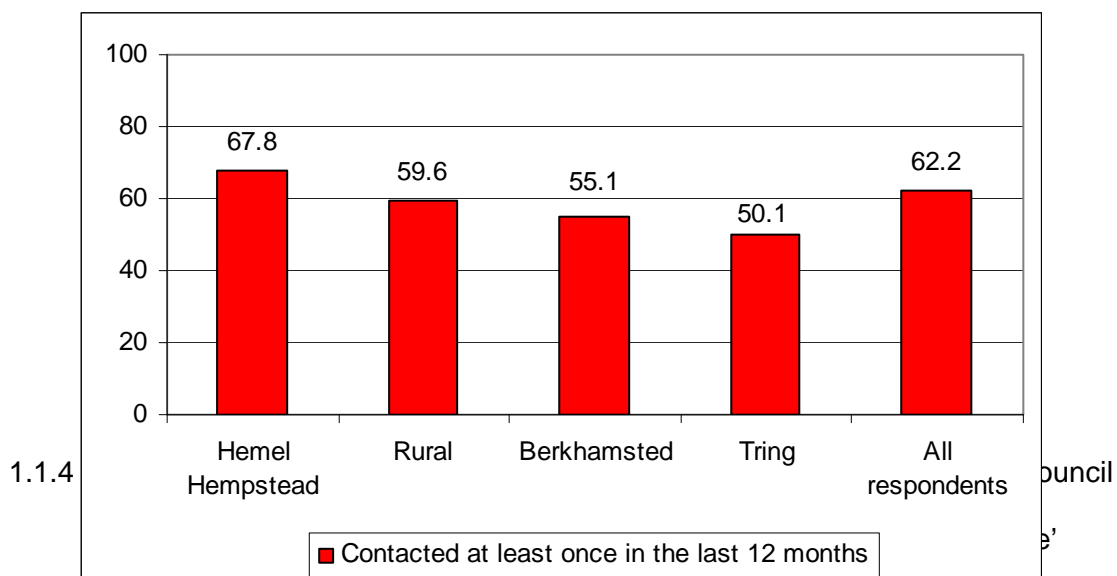
(Appendix 2, pages 1 and 2 refer)

1.1.1 Respondents were asked 'about how many times' had they contacted 'Dacorum Borough Council about a Council service during the last 12 months'. The majority of all respondents (62.2%) had made contact for this purpose at least once in the last 12 months: 36.6% had made contact 'once or twice', 15.0% '3 or 4 times', 6.6% '5 or 6 times', 2.7% '7 to 12 times' and only 1.3% 'more than 12 times'. However, 37.8% had not made contact about a Council service during the last 12 months.

1.1.2 The proportion of respondents that had made contact about a Council service at least once during the last 12 months rose with age, from 54.1% of 18 to 24 year olds to 67.6% of those aged '65+ years'. Those respondents not in paid employment (70.3%), those suffering from a 'long-standing illness/ disability' (69.9%), and those living in 'rented' accommodation (76.2%) were more likely than others to have made contact at least once in the last 12 months.

1.1.3 The percentage of respondents that had made contact about a Council service at least once also varied significantly by area of residence, from 50.1% in Tring, to more than two thirds of respondents living in Hemel Hempstead (67.8%).

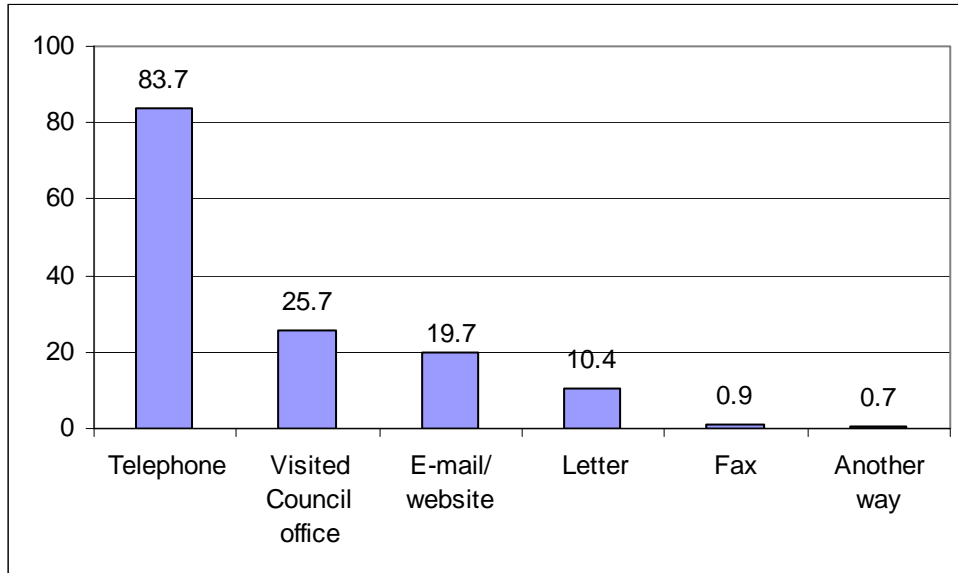
Contact with the Council about a Council Service during the last 12 months
(Q1: % response – by area and for all respondents)



(19.7%), and written a 'letter' (10.4%), whilst only 0.9% had made contact by 'fax'. Four respondents (0.7%) had made contact in some 'other' way, including two that had spoken directly to a Councillor, and 1.2% could not recall how they had made contact.

Contact with the Council – Methods of Contact

(Q1: % response – all those that had made contact about a Council service in the last 12 months – Base No. = 464 respondents)



1.1.5 Usage of 'e-mail via the website' to make contact about a Council service was significantly higher (28.3%) amongst 25 to 39 year olds.

1.2 Future Contact

Q3: If you were to contact the Council in the future, how likely would you be to use the following methods?

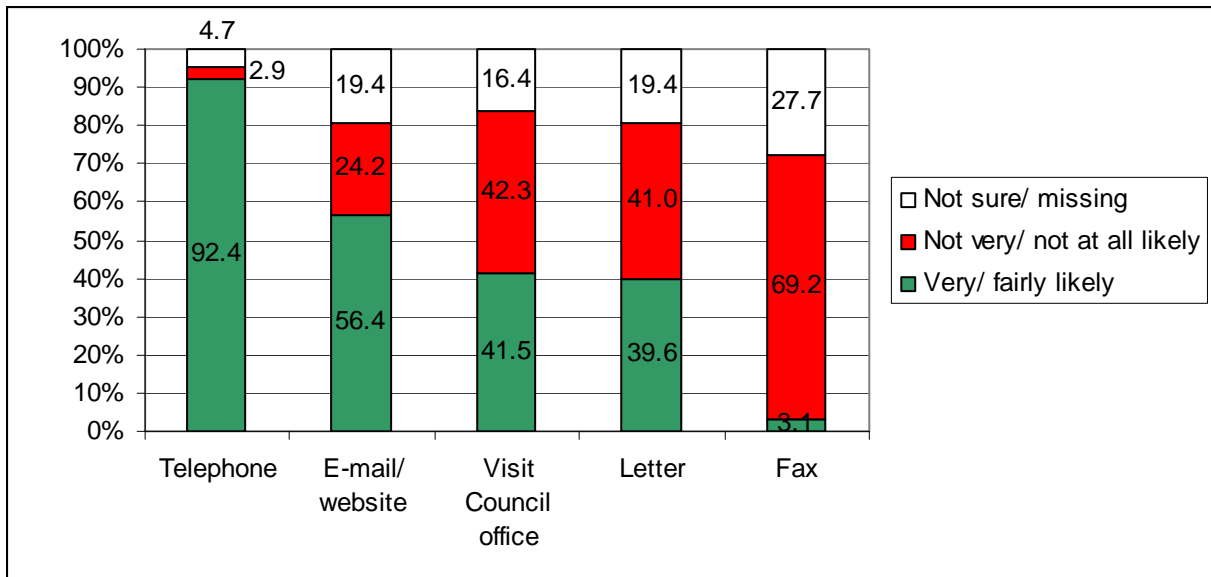
Q3a: If you were to visit a Council Office, which office would you be most likely to visit?

(Appendix 2, pages 3 to 8 refer)

1.2.1 Respondents were asked to indicate, if they were to contact the Council in the future, how likely they would be to make contact by telephone, letter, fax, e-mail, and by visiting a council office. The level of 'missing' data was high for this question, rising to 25.4% in the case of making contact by 'fax'.

1.2.2 'Telephone' was the method of contact most likely to be used in the future, with 92.4% of all respondents saying that they would be 'very' or 'fairly likely' to use this method (77.8% 'very likely' + 14.6% 'fairly likely'). The majority (56.4%) of respondents stated that they would be likely to contact the Council by 'e-mail via the website' in the future, and around two in five respondents said they would be likely to make contact by 'visiting a Council office' (41.5%), and by 'letter' (39.6%). Only very few respondents thought that they would be likely to make contact by 'fax' (3.1%).

**How likely would you be to use the following methods
to contact the Council in the future?
(Q3: % response – total sample)**



1.2.3 The proportion of respondents that felt they would be likely to contact the Council by e-mail via the website was highest among those aged 18 to 24 years (64.9%) and 25 to 39 years (72.4%), falling to only 25.5% of those aged 65 years and over.

1.2.4 The majority (71.1%) of all respondents said that they would be most likely to visit a Council office at Hemel Hempstead, if they were to visit a Council office in the future. Much smaller minorities of respondents thought they would be most likely to visit an office in Berkhamsted (15.7%), or Tring (9.6%), whilst 0.5% were 'not sure' which office they would be most likely to visit, and 3.2% were 'not likely to visit a Council office'. The table below shows responses to Question 3a analysed by 'area'. It can be seen that 96.4% of respondents living in the Hemel Hempstead area, 75.8% in Tring, and 87.2% in Berkhamsted felt they would be most likely to visit a Council office in their area. Respondents living in 'Rural' areas would be most likely to visit a Council office in Hemel Hempstead (80.3%).

			Q3a) If you were to visit a Council Office, which office would you be most likely to visit?					Total
			Hemel Hempstead	Berkhamsted	Tring	Not sure	Not likely to visit a Council Office	
Area	Hemel Hempstead	Row %	96.4%	.7%	.2%		2.7%	100.0%
	Tring	Row %	15.9%	5.2%	75.8%		3.1%	100.0%
	Berkhamsted	Row %	9.7%	87.2%		.8%	2.3%	100.0%
	Rural	Row %	80.3%	10.2%	1.1%	2.2%	6.2%	100.0%
All respondents	Row %		71.0%	15.7%	9.6%	.5%	3.2%	100.0%

1.3 Preferred Method and Time of Contact

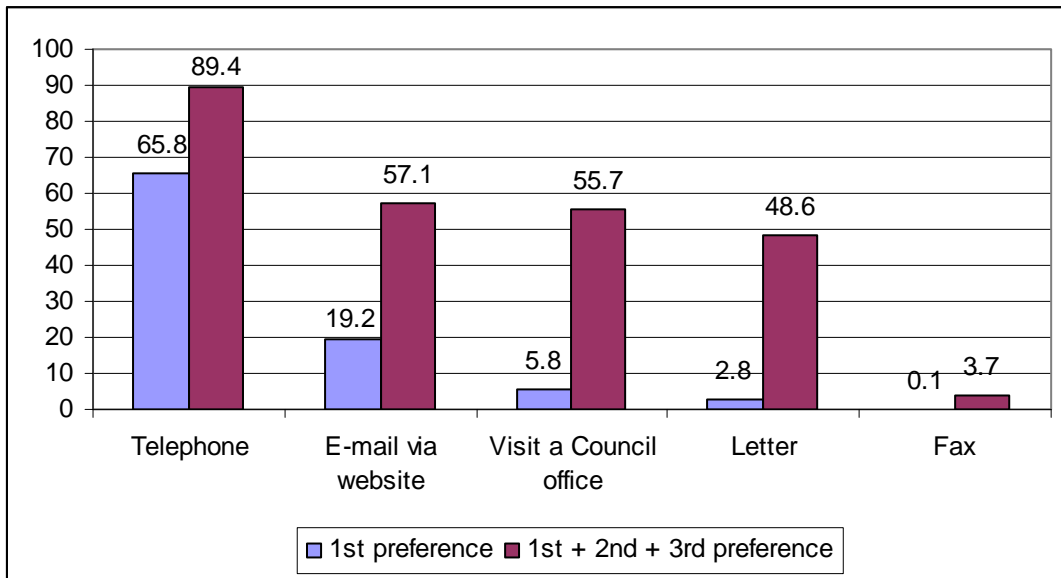
Q4: Which methods would you most prefer to use to contact the Council?

Q5: Please tell us when it is most convenient for you to contact Dacorum Borough Council a) Most convenient day, and b) Most convenient time of day?

(Appendix 2, pages 9 to 15 refer)

- 1.3.1 'Telephone' was clearly the most preferred method of contact, referred to by 65.8% of respondents as their '1st preference', and by 89.4% as a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd preference. The next most favoured option was contact by 'e-mail via the website' (57.1% '1st, 2nd, or 3rd preference'), followed by 'visit a Council office' (55.7% '1st, 2nd, or 3rd preference'), and by 'letter' (48.6% '1st, 2nd, or 3rd preference').

Most preferred methods of contacting the Council
(Q4: % response – total sample)



- 1.3.2 Only very few respondents would most prefer to make contact by 'fax' (3.7% '1st, 2nd, or 3rd preference'), or by 'other' methods (1.9% '2nd or 3rd preference').

1.3.3 The table below shows respondents 1st preference for making contact with the Council (Question 4) against the likelihood of them using these methods to make contact with the Council in the future (Questions 3.1 to 3.5). It can be seen that 97.7% of those whose 1st preference was to make contact by telephone, would be very or fairly likely to use the telephone to make contact in the future.

		Q4) 1st Preference									
		Telephone		Letter		Fax		E-mail/ via website		Visit a Council office	
		Unweighted Count	Col %	Unweighted Count	Col %	Unweighted Count	Col %	Unweighted Count	Col %	Unweighted Count	Col %
Q3.1) Telephone	Very/ fairly likely	489	97.7%	19	78.1%	1	100.0%	117	84.7%	26	57.7%
	Not very/ not at all likely			4	17.5%			15	9.6%	5	9.3%
	Not sure/ missing	11	2.3%	1	4.4%			10	5.7%	13	33.0%
Total		500	100.0%	24	100.0%	1	100.0%	142	100.0%	44	100.0%
Q3.2) Letter	Very/ fairly likely	206	39.1%	22	90.3%			45	32.7%	14	29.2%
	Not very/ not at all likely	191	40.4%	2	9.7%	1	100.0%	81	57.7%	11	24.7%
	Not sure/ missing	103	20.4%					16	9.6%	19	46.1%
Total		500	100.0%	24	100.0%	1	100.0%	142	100.0%	44	100.0%
Q3.3) Fax	Very/ fairly likely	14	2.9%	3	11.2%			5	3.7%		
	Not very/ not at all likely	342	68.3%	16	66.7%	1	100.0%	114	81.6%	23	47.4%
	Not sure/ missing	144	28.8%	5	22.1%			23	14.7%	21	52.6%
Total		500	100.0%	24	100.0%	1	100.0%	142	100.0%	44	100.0%
Q3.4) E-mail/ via website	Very/ fairly likely	248	49.8%	9	39.4%	1	100.0%	137	97.2%	10	19.5%
	Not very/ not at all likely	148	29.1%	11	45.0%			1	.6%	13	27.8%
	Not sure/ missing	104	21.1%	4	15.6%			4	2.2%	21	52.6%
Total		500	100.0%	24	100.0%	1	100.0%	142	100.0%	44	100.0%
Q3.5) Visit a Council office	Very/ fairly likely	199	40.6%	7	30.7%	1	100.0%	32	23.2%	39	88.3%
	Not very/ not at all likely	209	40.5%	14	57.5%			92	66.2%	1	2.1%
	Not sure/ missing	92	18.9%	3	11.8%			18	10.6%	4	9.6%
Total		500	100.0%	24	100.0%	1	100.0%	142	100.0%	44	100.0%

1.3.4 Furthermore, 90.3% of those whose 1st preference was to make contact by letter, would be likely to write a letter to make contact in the future, whilst 78.1% were likely to make contact by telephone. 97.2% of those whose 1st preference was to make contact by e-mail, would be likely to use e-mail to make contact in the future, whilst 84.7% were likely to make contact by telephone. 88.3% of those whose 1st preference was to make contact by visiting a Council office, would be likely to visit a Council office to make contact in the future, whilst 57.7% were likely to make contact by telephone.

1.3.5 When asked about the most convenient days for making contact with the Council, 'any weekday' (47.4%) and 'any day is convenient' (32.3%) were the most frequent responses. Only small minorities of respondents referred to individual weekdays, with Saturday (12.7%) being the only day mentioned by more than one in ten, rising to 17.1% of those in paid employment.

		Unweighted Count	Col %
Q5a) Most convenient day?	Any weekday	346	47.4%
	Any day is convenient	236	32.3%
	Saturday	88	12.7%
	Monday	13	2.0%
	Wednesday	9	1.0%
	Friday	8	1.5%
	Sunday	7	.9%
	Not sure	7	.9%
	Thursday	5	.6%
	Tuesday	4	.5%
	Not sure	7	.9%
Total		723	100.0%

1.3.6 The most convenient time of day for making contact, was identified by respondents as 'any time is convenient' (36.8%). However, 31.1% said it would be most convenient to make contact with the Council in the 'morning', 12.1% in the 'evening' (rising to 16.3% of those in paid employment), 10.9% in the 'afternoon', and 7.3% around 'lunchtime'. Only one respondent (0.1%) felt it would be most convenient to contact the Council 'during the night', and 1.8% were 'not sure'.

		Unweighted Count	Col %
Q5b) Most convenient time of day?	Any time is convenient	282	36.8%
	Morning	235	31.1%
	Afternoon	77	10.9%
	Evening	77	12.1%
	Lunchtime (12 Noon-2.00pm)	50	7.3%
	During the night	1	.1%
	Not sure	11	1.8%
Total		733	100.0%

1.3.7 Older respondents were more likely than younger respondents to consider the 'morning' to be the most convenient time of day for making contact: the percentage of respondents indicating 'morning' to be most convenient rose

from 19.8% of 18 to 24 year olds, up to 40.5% of those aged 65 years and over.

2. Sportspace

(Removed due to commercial sensitivity. Please contact Sportspace for further information)

3. Financial Accounts

3.1 Summary of Accounts

A copy of the Council's Summary of Accounts for 2006-2007 was provided to respondents for them to read before answering the questions in this section.

How useful is the Summary of Accounts?

Q18: Overall, how useful did you find the Summary of Accounts in a) providing information about the Council's financial standing, and b) helping you to judge how well the Council is performing?

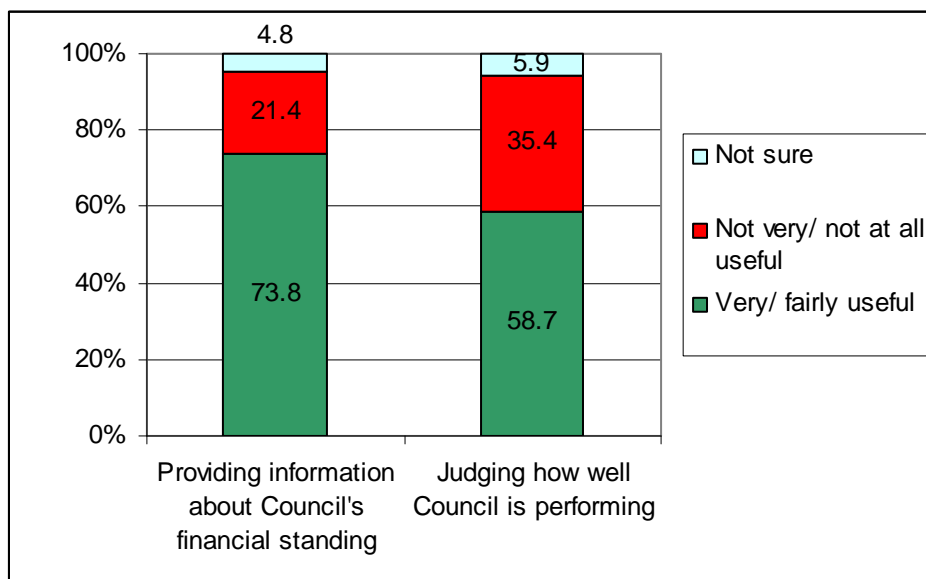
Q18c: If there is anything else you found the Summary useful for please write in brief details

Q18d: If the Summary of Accounts was delivered to your house, would you be likely to read...?

(Appendix 2, pages 37 to 39 refer)

- 3.1.1 The majority of all respondents considered the Council's Summary of Accounts to be 'very' or 'fairly useful', both in 'providing information about the Council's financial standing' (73.8%), and in 'helping to judge how well the Council is performing' (58.7%).

How useful did you find the Summary of Accounts
(Q18a/b: % response – all respondents)



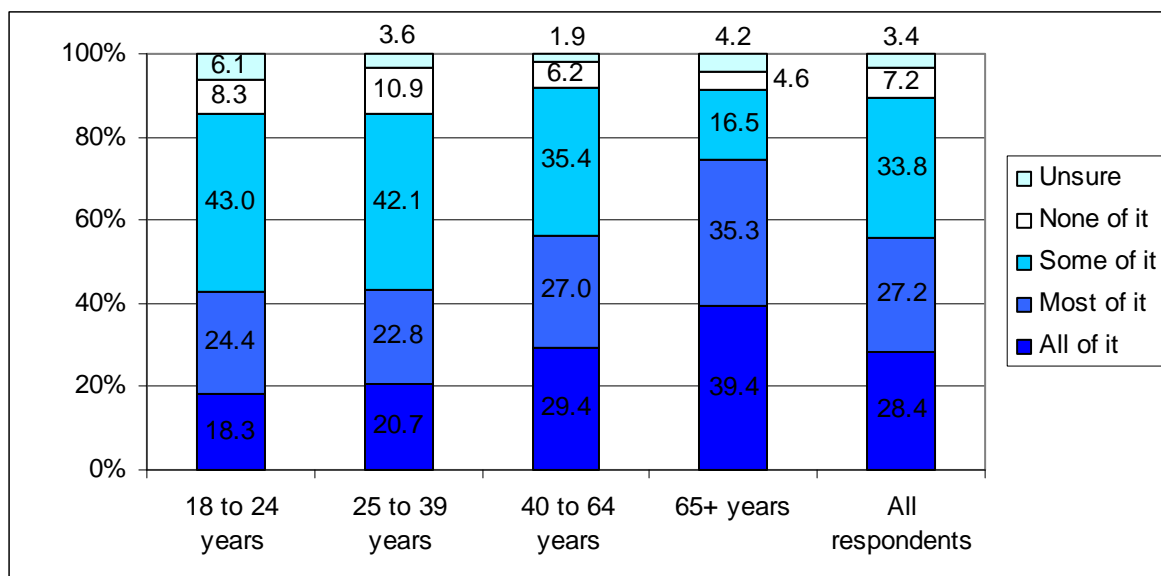
3.1.2 However, in terms of ‘helping to judge how well the Council is performing’, nearly a quarter (23.7%) of respondents felt that the Summary of Accounts was ‘not very useful’, and over one in ten (11.7%) that it was ‘not at all useful’. Fewer respondents said that the Summary of Accounts was ‘not very useful’ (15.5%), or ‘not at all useful’ (5.9%) in ‘providing information about the Council’s financial standing’.

3.1.3 When asked if there was anything else they found the Summary useful for, only 8.7% of the total sample offered comments. The principal response was that the Summary was ‘informative about Council spending and income’ (3.6%), whilst 2.3% commented on aspects of the ‘clarity and presentation of the Summary’. Full details can be found in Appendix 4.

		Unweighted Count	Col %
Q18c) If there is anything else you found the Summary useful for, please write in brief details	(no comments made)	695	91.3%
	Informative about Council spending/ income	28	3.6%
	Clarity/ presentation of Summary	14	2.3%
	Other negative comments	8	1.2%
	Not enough spent on roads/ highways	5	.6%
	Other	6	1.0%
Total		756	100.0%

3.1.4 The large majority (89.4%) of all respondents said that they would read at least some of the Summary of Accounts if it was delivered to their house: 28.4% would read ‘all of it’, 27.2% ‘most of it’ and 33.8% ‘some of it’. Only 7.2% of respondents said they would read ‘none of it’, whilst 3.4% were ‘unsure’.

How much of the Summary of Accounts would you be likely to read?
(Q18d: % response – by age group and for all respondents)



3.1.5 Older respondents were clearly more likely to indicate that they would read all or most of the Summary of Accounts, and less likely to read 'none of it', than younger respondents, should the Summary be delivered to their house.

3.1.6 On an area basis, there was little significant variation in the amount of the Summary that respondents felt they would read, although respondents in 'Berkhamsted' (12.7% 'none of it') were somewhat more likely to say that they would read 'none of it' than respondents in 'Tring' (4.4%) and 'Rural' areas (4.3%).

Level of Detail

Q19: In terms of detail – do you think the Summary of Accounts has...?

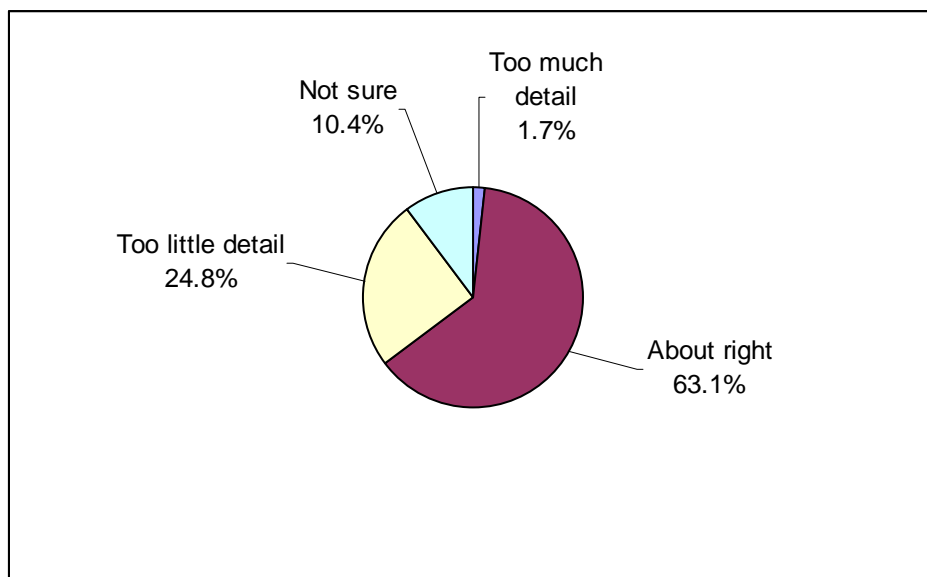
Q19a: If you think the Summary contains too much detail – what would you leave out?

Q19b: If you think the Summary contains too little detail – what additional detail would you like?

(Appendix 2, page 40 refers)

3.1.7 Nearly two thirds (63.1%) of all respondents considered the Summary of accounts to have 'about the right amount' of detail, whilst a quarter (24.8%) felt that it had 'too little detail', 1.7% felt it had 'too much detail', and 10.4% gave 'not sure' responses.

Level of detail in the summary of Accounts
(Q19: % response – all respondents)



3.1.8 Just under a quarter (23.5%) of the total sample offered comments when asked to say what additional detail they would like, if they thought that the Summary contained too few details. The principal responses related to the need for a ‘more detailed breakdown’ of the Accounts, particularly expenditure by service area (8.2%), the need for ‘more explanation and/ or examples’ (4.7%), and requests for ‘overall performance information/ comparisons’ (3.2%), e.g. with similar Councils. A further 2.1% of respondents wanted explanation of the ‘adjustments’ made to the figures about Council ‘reserves’, 1.3% wanted clearer definitions of the ‘service areas’, and 0.9% wanted information about ‘salaries/ pensions’ paid to Council employees. All the comments are listed verbatim at Appendix 4.

		Unweighted Count	Col %
Q19b) If you think the Summary contains too little detail - what additional details would you like?	(no comments made)	568	76.5%
	More detailed breakdown (particularly expenditure by service area)	65	8.2%
	More explanation/ examples	37	4.7%
	Overall performance/ comparisons	27	3.2%
	Explanation of ‘adjustments’	17	2.1%
	Definitions of services/ headings	12	1.3%
	Details of salaries/ pensions	6	.9%
	Other	24	3.0%
Total		756	100.0%

3.1.9 Amongst those few respondents (9) who commented on there being too much detail in parts of the Summary, two suggested simplifying the section on ‘Housing Revenue’ – please see Appendix 4 for details.

Ease of understanding the Summary

Q20: Did you find the Summary of Accounts easy to understand?

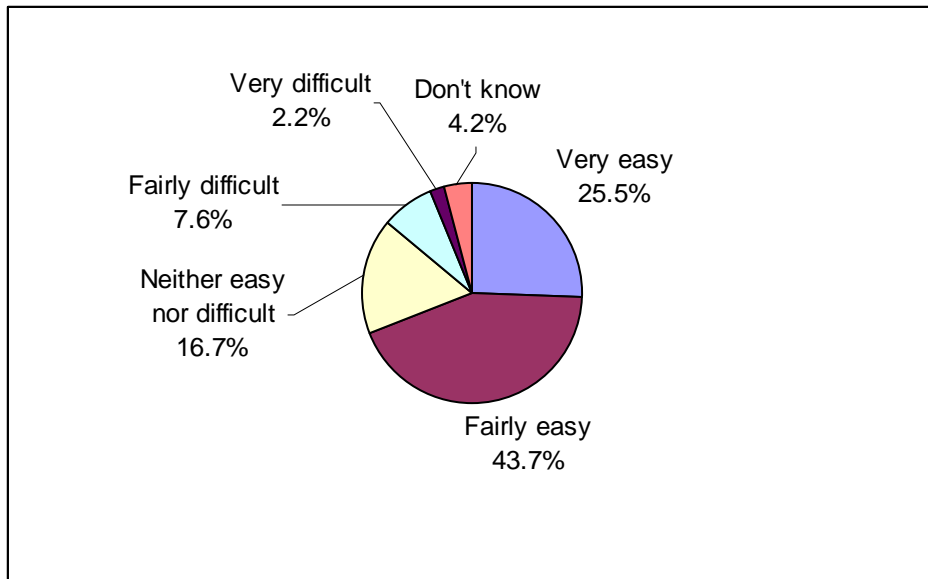
Q20a: If you have any suggestions as to how we could make the document easier to understand, please write details below

(Appendix 2, page 41 refers)

3.1.10 Over two thirds (69.2%) of all respondents found the Summary of Accounts ‘very’ (25.5%) or ‘fairly easy’ (43.7%) to understand, whilst one in ten (9.8%) found it ‘difficult’ to understand, 16.7% gave ‘neither easy or difficult’ responses, and 4.2% ‘don’t know’.

3.1.11 Respondents aged 18 to 24 years (21.4% ‘difficult’) and respondents living in ‘Tring’ (16.8%) were more likely to say that they found the Summary ‘very’ or ‘fairly difficult’ to understand, compared to the overall sample.

Did you find the Summary of Accounts easy to understand?
(Q20: % response – all respondents)



3.1.12 Amongst those respondents who offered suggestions as to how the Summary of Accounts might be made easier to understand, the main requests were for 'more explanation/ examples and definitions' (4.0%), improvements to the 'clarity/ presentation' of the Summary (3.4%), and for an 'explanation of the 'adjustments' (2.8%) made to the figures about Council 'reserves'.

		Unweighted Count	Col %
Q20a) If you have any suggestions as to how we could make the document easier to understand, please write details below	(no comments made)	645	86.6%
	More explanation/ examples/ definitions	32	4.0%
	Clarity/ presentation/ ease of understanding	26	3.4%
	Explanation of 'adjustments'	25	2.8%
	Other	11	1.2%
	More detailed breakdown	9	1.0%
	Performance comparisons	5	.5%
	Summary/ conclusion needed	3	.3%
Total		756	100.0%

3.2 **Council Annual Report**

Q21: The Council is considering publishing an Annual Report, three to six months after the year end – do you think this is a good idea?

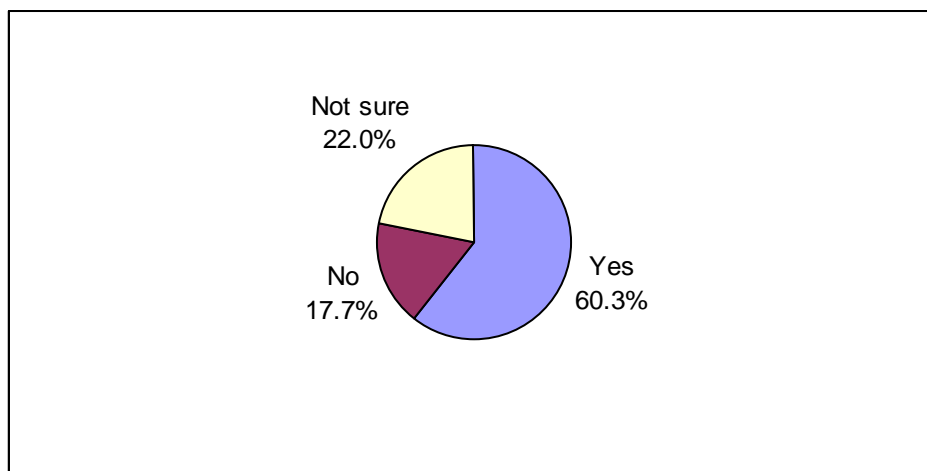
Q21a: Please say why

Q22: If the Council does publish an Annual Report, what information would you like it to contain?

(Appendix 2, pages 42 and 43 refer)

- 3.2.1 The majority of all respondents (60.3%) thought that it would be a good idea for the Council to publish an Annual Report, three to six months after the year end, although 17.7% said that ‘no’ this is not a good idea, and 22.0% were ‘not sure’.

Good idea for the Council to publish an Annual Report 3-6 months after year’s end?
(Q21: % response – all respondents)



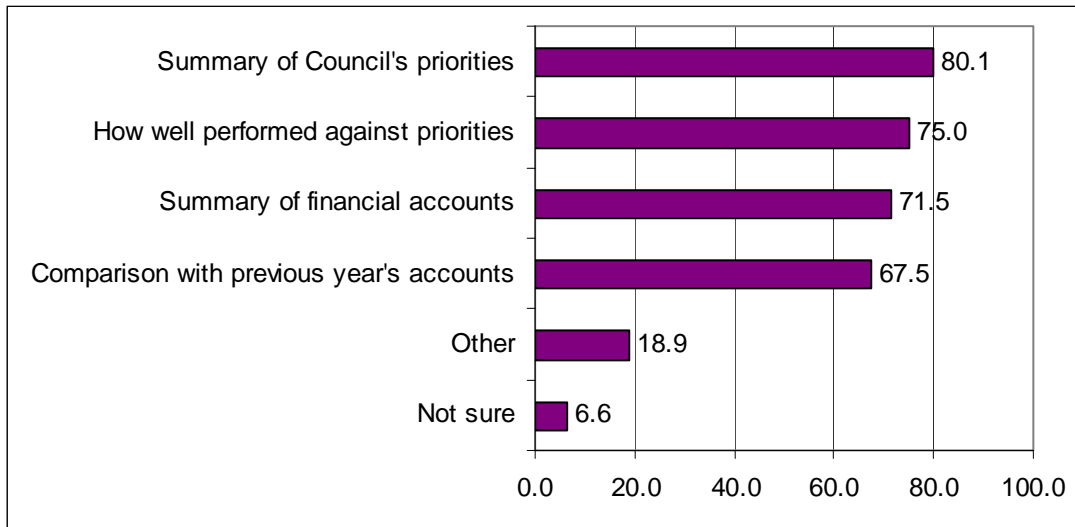
- 3.2.2 Males (65.6% ‘yes’) were more likely than females (55.2% ‘yes’) to agree that publishing an Annual Report, three to six months after the year-end, was a good idea.
- 3.2.3 Those respondents that said ‘yes’ publishing an Annual Report three to six months after the year’s end is a good idea were most likely to say that the reasons they held this opinion related to being able to ‘assess the Council’s performance/ see how the money is spent’ and because it ‘shows accountability/ transparency’ in the dealings of the Council.

		Q21) The Council is considering publishing an Annual Report, three to six months after the year end - do you think this is a good idea?						Total	
		Yes		No		Not sure		Unweighted Count	Col %
		Unweighted Count	Col %	Unweighted Count	Col %	Unweighted Count	Col %		
Q21) Please say why	Shows accountability/ transparency	89	27.5%					89	18.3%
	Not necessary/ would cost too much/ people not interested			76	69.2%	28	45.6%	104	20.4%
	Time-lapse after year's end	10	2.4%	9	10.6%	1	2.3%	20	4.2%
	Put on website to save money/ available on request only	7	2.2%	10	8.9%	7	13.0%	24	4.9%
	Can assess Council's performance/ see how money is spent/ keep public informed	193	61.9%					193	41.3%
	Objectivity of report			5	3.8%	5	7.4%	10	1.7%
	Other	22	5.9%	9	7.4%	19	31.8%	50	9.1%
Total		321	100.0%	109	100.0%	60	100.0%	490	100.0%

3.2.4 Respondents that said 'no' to the idea of publishing an Annual Report, or who were 'not sure' gave reasons principally relating to it being unnecessary, costing too much, and people not being interested. These respondents also suggested that instead the Annual Report should be made available only on the Council website or to those who specifically requested it, and the 'objectivity' of such an Annual Report was questioned.

3.2.5 Respondents were asked to indicate what information they would like an Annual Report to contain. Each of the four types of information listed on the questionnaire were selected by over two thirds of all respondents, with 'summary of the Council's priorities' (80.1%) being the type of information that most respondents would like to be included in the Report, followed by, 'information on how well the Council has performed against priorities' (75.0%), a 'summary of financial accounts' (71.5%), and 'comparisons with the previous year's financial accounts' (67.5%). (6.6% gave 'not sure' responses).

What information would you like an Annual Report to contain?
 (Q22: % response – all respondents)



3.2.6 In addition, 18.9% of all respondents referred to some 'other' information that they would like to be contained in an Annual Report, with the main categories of information requested being information on 'future plans/ action plans', 'performance comparisons', 'details/ breakdown of expenditure and income', and details about the 'salaries/ expenses/ interests' of Councillors. All the comments made by respondents are listed verbatim at Appendix 4.

		Unweighted Count	Col %
Q22)	(none mentioned))	593	81.1%
Anything else	Future plans/ action plans	33	4.4%
	Performance comparisons	30	4.0%
	Details/ breakdown of expenditure and income	26	3.9%
	Salaries/ expenses/ interests	14	2.1%
	Other	12	1.5%
	Objectivity/ transparency of report	9	1.1%
	Details of on-going projects	5	.7%
	Justification of Council's priorities	4	.5%
	Report summary	3	.4%
	Don't want report/ not necessary	2	.2%
Total		731	100.0%

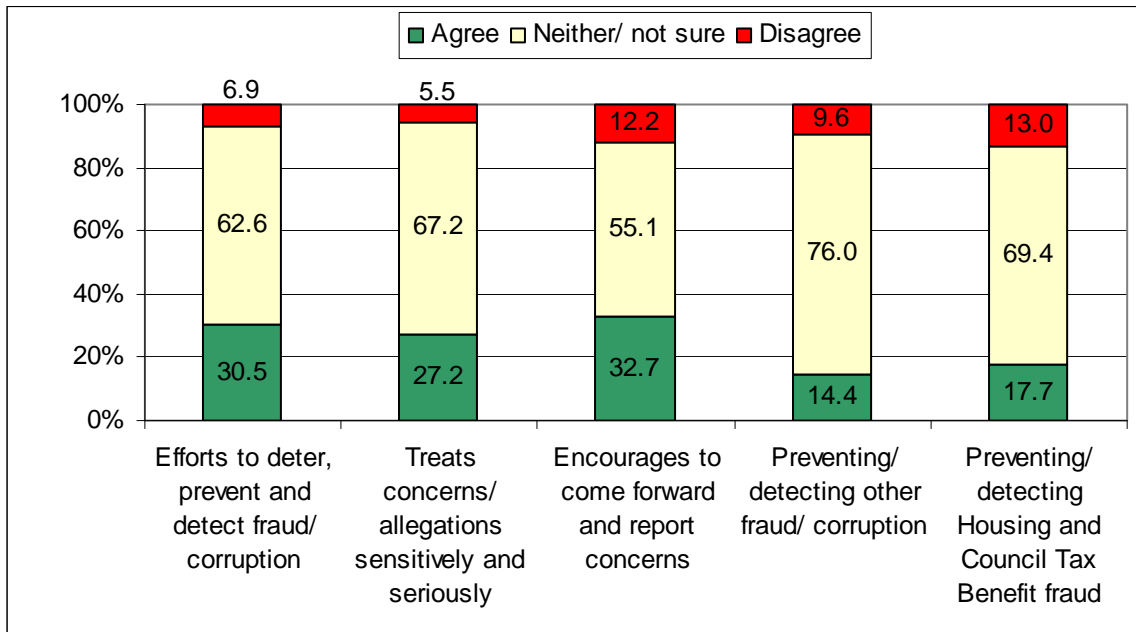
4. Fraud against the Council

Council's Stance Against Fraud

*Q23: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about Dacorum Borough Council's stance against fraud?
 (Appendix 2, pages 44 to 48 refer)*

4.1 Respondents were asked whether or not they agreed or disagreed with a series of five statements about Dacorum Borough Council's stance against fraud. For each of the statements the major response was 'not sure', with the proportion of all respondents giving this response ranging from 34.3% in relation to the Council encouraging people to come forward and report concerns, up to 50.9% in relation to the Council doing a good job in preventing and detecting 'other fraud and corruption'. Furthermore, over one in five respondents gave 'neither agree nor disagree' responses in relation to each of the five statements.

Council's stance against fraud – agree/ disagree statements
(Q23: % response – all respondents)



4.2 The level of agreement was greatest in relation to the statements 'the Council makes strong efforts to deter, prevent and detect fraud and corruption' (30.5% agree/ 6.9% disagree), 'the Council treats all concerns and allegations about fraud and corruption sensitively and seriously' (27.2% agree/ 5.5% disagree), and 'the Council encourages anyone with concerns about fraud and corruption to come forward and report it' (32.7% agree/ 12.2% disagree). Agreement was lowest in relation to the statements 'Dacorum Borough Council does a good job in preventing and detecting Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit fraud' (17.7% agree/ 13.0% disagree) and 'other fraud and corruption' (14.4% agree/ 9.6% disagree).

4.3 The level of disagreement with the statement 'Dacorum Borough Council does a good job in preventing and detecting Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit fraud' was significantly higher amongst the subgroups of respondents aged 18 to 24 years (27.4% 'disagree'), belonging to 'other minority ethnic groups' (35.4% 'disagree'), and living in 'Hemel Hempstead' (16.1% 'disagree'), when compared with the overall sample.

Reporting concerns about fraud or corruption

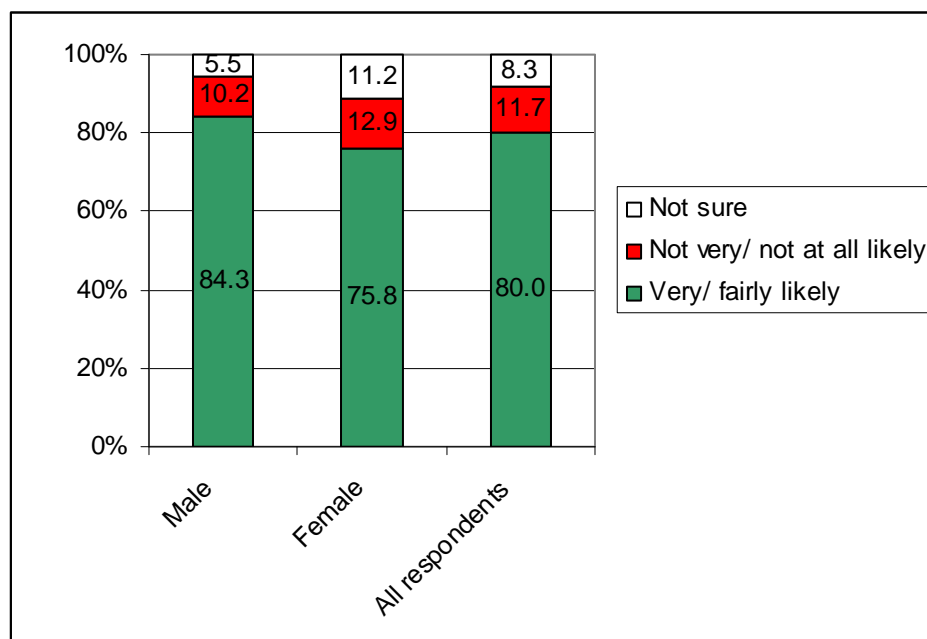
Q24: If you had some concerns or suspicions regarding fraud against the Council, how likely would you be to report these concerns to the Council?

Q25: If you wanted to report a concern about fraud or corruption to the Council, do you know how to do this?

(Appendix 2, pages 49 and 50 refer)

- 4.4 Four in five (80.0%) of all respondents said that they would be likely to report any ‘concerns or suspicions regarding fraud against the Council’ that they had to the Council (38.3% ‘very likely’ + 41.7% ‘fairly likely’), whilst 9.1% said they were ‘not very likely’ and 2.6% ‘not at all likely’ to report such concerns.

How likely would you be to report concerns about fraud or corruption to the Council?
(Q24: % response – by gender and for all respondents)



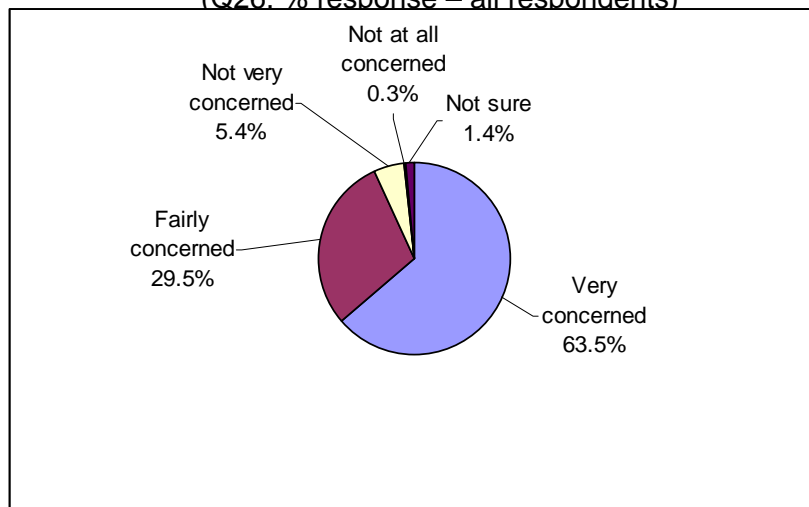
- 4.5 Males (84.3% ‘very/ fairly likely’) were more likely than females (75.8% ‘very/ fairly likely’) to say that they would report any suspicions about fraud or corruption to the Council, and the proportion of respondents saying that they would be likely to report suspicions increased with age from 66.8% amongst 18 to 24 year olds, up to 85.1% of those aged 65 years and over.
- 4.6 Only just over one in five (21.3%) of all respondents said that they knew how to go about reporting a concern about fraud or corruption to the Council: the majority (61.8%) of respondents did not know how to do this, and 16.8% were ‘not sure’.
- 4.7 Respondents aged 65 years and over (30.7% ‘yes’), those suffering from a long-standing illness/ disability (28.2% ‘yes’), and those living in ‘rented accommodation (29.4% ‘yes’) were more likely than others to know how to report concerns about fraud or corruption to the Council. The level of awareness of how to report such concerns also varied significantly by area from 15.3% in ‘Berkhamsted’ to 23.5% in ‘Hemel Hempstead’.

Level of concern that fraud against the Council means higher Council Tax

*Q26: How concerned are you, if at all, that fraud against the Council means that local taxpayers may be having to pay more than they should because some people are dishonest?
(Appendix 2, page 51 refers)*

- 4.8 More than nine out of ten (93.0%) of all respondents expressed concern that 'fraud against the Council means that local taxpayers may be having to pay more than they should because some people are dishonest' (63.5% 'very concerned' + 29.5% 'fairly concerned'). Only small minorities of respondents were 'not very concerned' (5.4%), or 'not at all concerned' (0.3%) about this possibility, whilst 1.4% gave 'not sure' responses.

Concern that fraud against the Council means local taxpayers have to pay more
(Q26: % response – all respondents)



- 4.9 Only in the area of 'Berkhamsted' (86.1%), and amongst respondents living in rented accommodation (86.1%) did the proportion of respondents 'very' or 'fairly concerned' about fraud against the Council causing local taxpayers to have to pay more fall below 90%.