

Agenda Item No: 10
Report To: Executive Committee



Date: 10th June 2010

Report Title: Developing a new 5 Year Business Plan for Ashford – update on progress and the results from the ‘Have Your Say It’s Your Borough’ consultation

Report Author: John Bunnett, Chief Executive

Summary: This paper provides an overview of progress to date with the development of a new business plan for the Council and provides the detailed results of the Facts International research conducted with almost 1500 residents and businesses across the Borough between 18th February and 31st March.

The survey sought to understand what residents would like to see the Council and its partners prioritise in terms of support for the local community and more specifically the services they would like to see Ashford Borough Council prioritise and focus upon in the future.

The results of the survey are attached in this paper and a presentation of the full results will be delivered by Facts International, in advance of the Executive meeting (6.15pm) on 10th June by Muriel Esposito from Facts International, the Research Agency responsible for the development and analysis of the questionnaire.

Key Decision: No

Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: **1. The Executive be asked to note the results of the ‘Have Your Say it’s Your Borough’ survey.**

2. To authorise the formation of a cross party Member Working Group to assist in the development of the plan and agree a further phase of consultation. This would require a budget of fifteen thousand pounds which would be funded from reserves.

Policy Overview / Financial Implications: This work will inform the Council’s priorities and spending for the period 2011-2016.

Risk Assessment	None
Equalities Impact Assessment	Not Applicable
Other Material Implications:	None
Exemption Clauses:	None
Background Papers:	Papers held by Brigid Burnham
Contacts:	Brigid Burnham

Report Title: Developing a new 5 Year Business Plan for the Council – update on progress and the results from the ‘Have Your Say It’s Your Borough’ consultation

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Executive on progress with the development of the Council's new 5 year business plan and share the detailed results from the Facts International survey conducted with almost 1500 residents between January and March 2010.

Issue to be Decided

2. To note the report and authorise the formation of a cross party Member Working Group and agree to the next phase of consultation.

Background

- The 4th February 2010 Executive agreed that a 5 Year Business Plan for Ashford Borough Council be developed to address a funding gap from an inevitable reduction in central government funding, re-orientate Ashford Borough Council around a new set of priorities and test delivery models for each Ashford Borough Council Service.
- As part of the 3 stage process to develop this plan a recommendation was made that we should specifically ask Ashford Borough Council residents which services they would like to see the Council prioritise to inform a Member led debate about priorities and spending. The outcome of this would form the basis of the business plan and budgeting for the next five years.
- This paper provides Members with an update on that engagement process and the results of the research analysed by Facts International, an Ashford based Market Research Company.

Progress to Date

- Extensive consultation has taken place with stakeholders, residents and council staff to input into the development of the council's new 5 year business plan. As the business plan development process is an iterative process, consultation will be ongoing throughout the development of the plan.
 - Participation by residents in the ‘Have your Say it’s Your Borough’ survey was promoted through 9 supermarket and town centre road-shows and presentations or promotion to the Parish Forum, Community Forums, housing tenants, youth groups, businesses and the LSP as well as promotion in the local newspaper, Ashford Voice and on the Ashford Borough Council website.
3. A Project Board comprising Management Team, the Head of Personnel and Development, Head of Communications and Marketing and representatives from Unison has been established to oversee the business plan development

process, supported by two operational steering groups, the Finance Group and the Policy Group.

4. Staff have been fully involved in the process through participation in the road-shows to promote completion of the questionnaire, and taking part in focus groups and workshops.
5. Outputs from these groups have included the identification and implementation of 37 staff ideas to deliver cost savings, and the development of a costed out prioritisation matrix. This will form the basis of the Executive's decision making on where the Council's priorities lie in the coming years.

Next Steps

6. The next step having gathered much of the background information to inform the plan is to start working closely with members. Clearly the Executive will play the key member role in developing the plan but is essential that all members from across all political parties and independent groups have an opportunity to influence the plan.
7. To that end, a Member Working Group is to be established with representation from across the political groups to ensure Member oversight and input as the business plan enters into an intensive phase of development.
8. Further resident and Member consultation at workshops to be held in the Council Chamber on 20th July and on-line. The resident workshops will be to an invited audience to ensure a cross section of the borough's population is represented. In addition, a further on-line consultation will take place, mirroring the resident and Member workshops. The on-line consultation will be supported by a high profile communications programme to promote and encourage participation by residents.
9. In order to fund the next steps outlined above I would request that a sum of fifteen thousand pounds be allocated from reserves.
10. A further report to the Executive on 2nd September.

Consultation

11. The Chief Executive consulted with the Leader of the Council.

Portfolio Holder's Views

I am delighted with the encouraging response from local people to our request for their views on how their money is best spent.

I am content that the Business Plan is developing according to the programme and look forward to the next phase of its development.

Email: john.bunnett@ashford.gov.uk

Ashford Borough Council Presentation

Monday 7th June 2010

FACTS
international



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Introduction

Research Objectives and Summary of Methodology

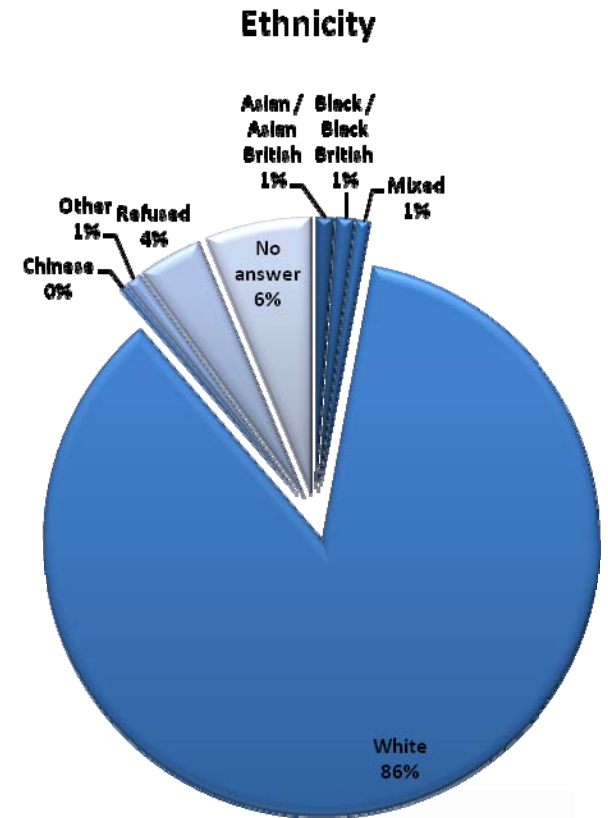
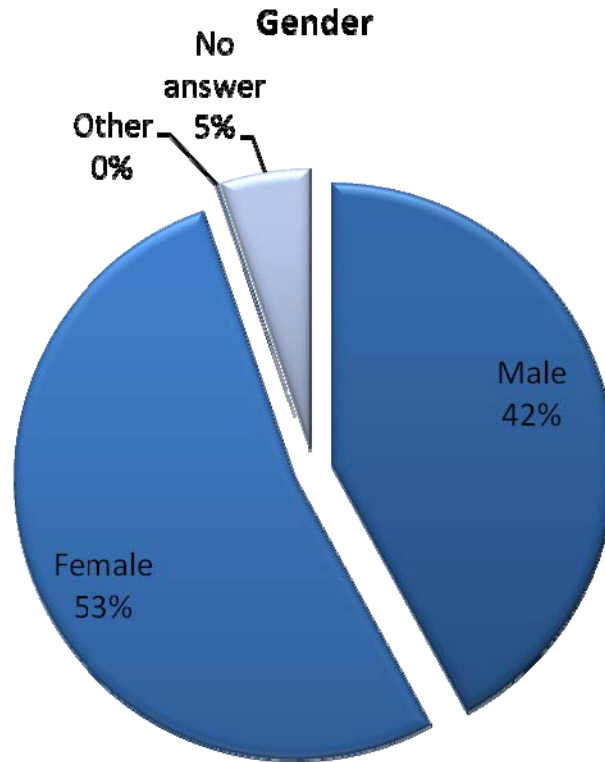
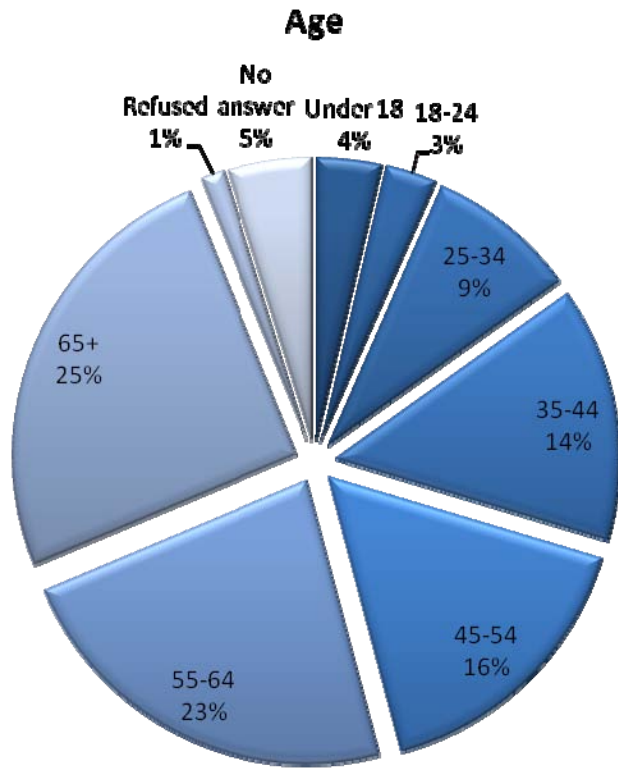
Objectives:

- Ashford Borough Council retained Facts International to co-ordinate a public consultation to inform the Council on:
 - Priorities in making Ashford a good place to live
 - Identify what residents would like the Council and its partners to prioritise in terms of support for the local community
 - Identify on which service areas residents would like to see the Council spend more / less
 - Identify which service areas residents would like the Council to focus on over the next 5 years

Methodology:

- Residents had a choice of completing a survey either online or on paper.
- Paper questionnaires were distributed in Ashford Voice and local newspaper as well as being handed out in various public locations in Ashford Town Centre; Online survey was hosted on Council's website
- Fieldwork took place between 18th February and 31st March 2010
- 1,478 questionnaires were analysed, 1139 were postal and 339 were web based.

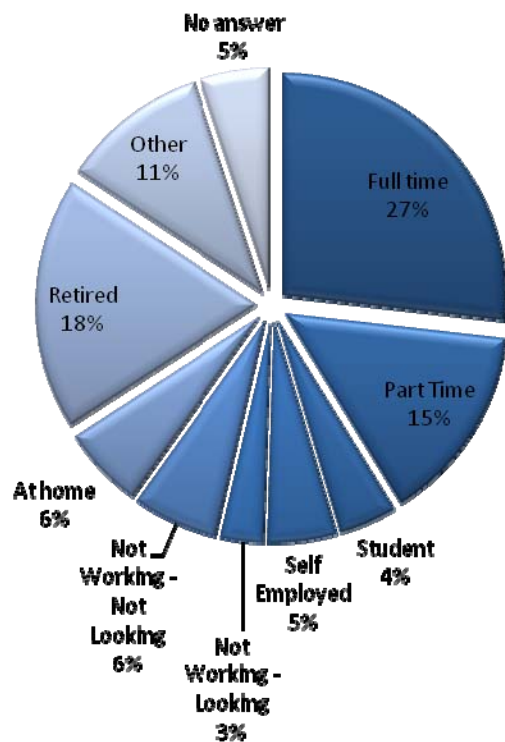
Demographic profile of residents who took part in this survey



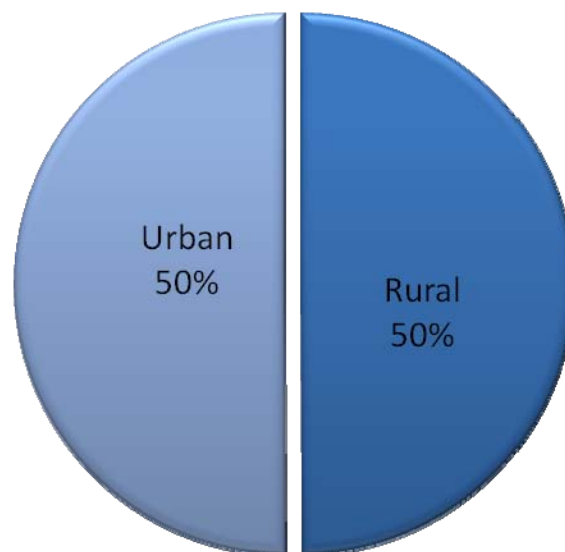
Q12: Which of the following age brackets apply to you? Q11: Gender; Q13: To which one of the following ethnic origins do you belong?
 Base: All respondents (1478)

Other residents' details who took part in this survey

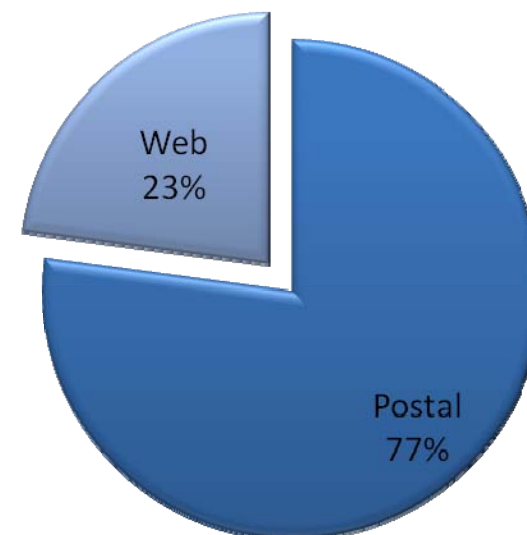
Work Status



Rural / Urban



Postal / Web

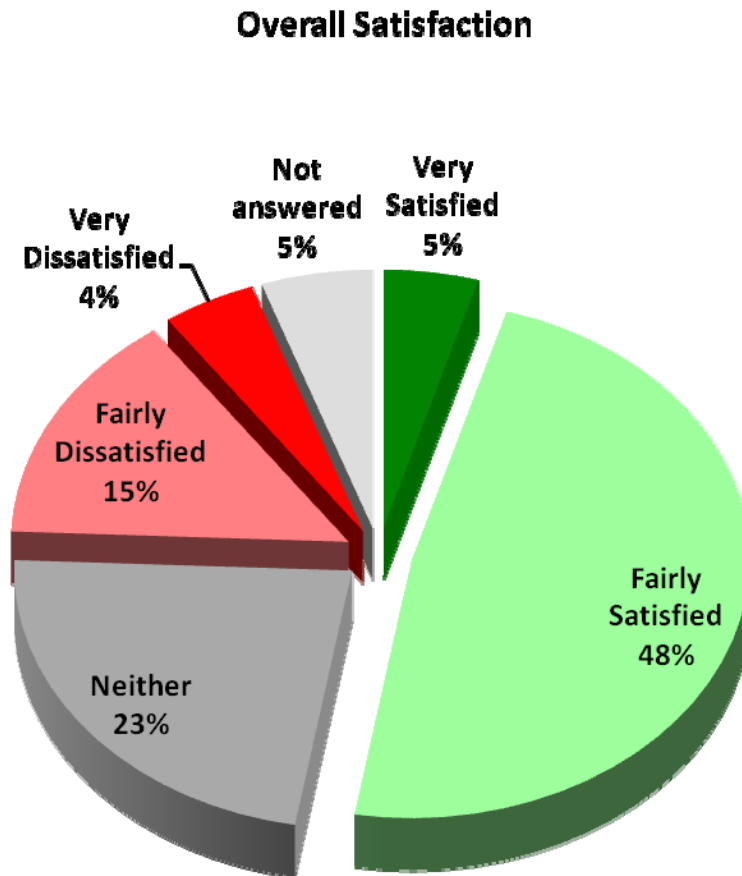


Q14: Which of the following best describes your current status? Method of completing survey. Base: All respondents (1478).

Q15: What area of the Ashford borough do you live in? Base: All respondents excluding not stated & other (1342)

Public Services in Ashford

In terms of overall public services provided in the Ashford borough, satisfied residents outnumber dissatisfied residents by a factor of 3 to 1.

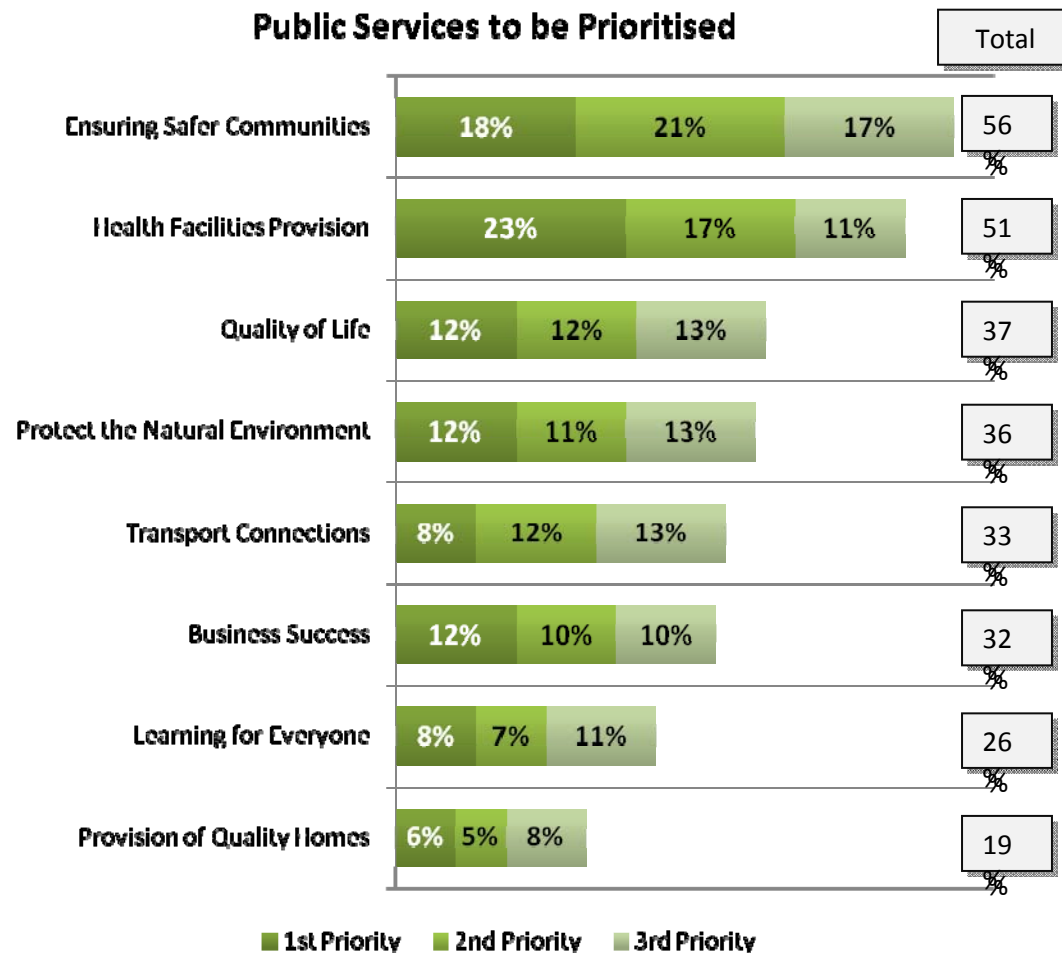


Comment:

- Over half the residents who participated in the survey are either very or fairly satisfied with the overall public services provided in the borough
- There are no notable demographic differences in public perceptions of the overall public services provided in the borough
- There are also no noticeable differences between rural and urban residents

Q1. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall public services provided in the Ashford borough?
Base: All respondents (1,478)

Over half the residents want services relating to ensuring safer communities and health facilities prioritised.



Comment:

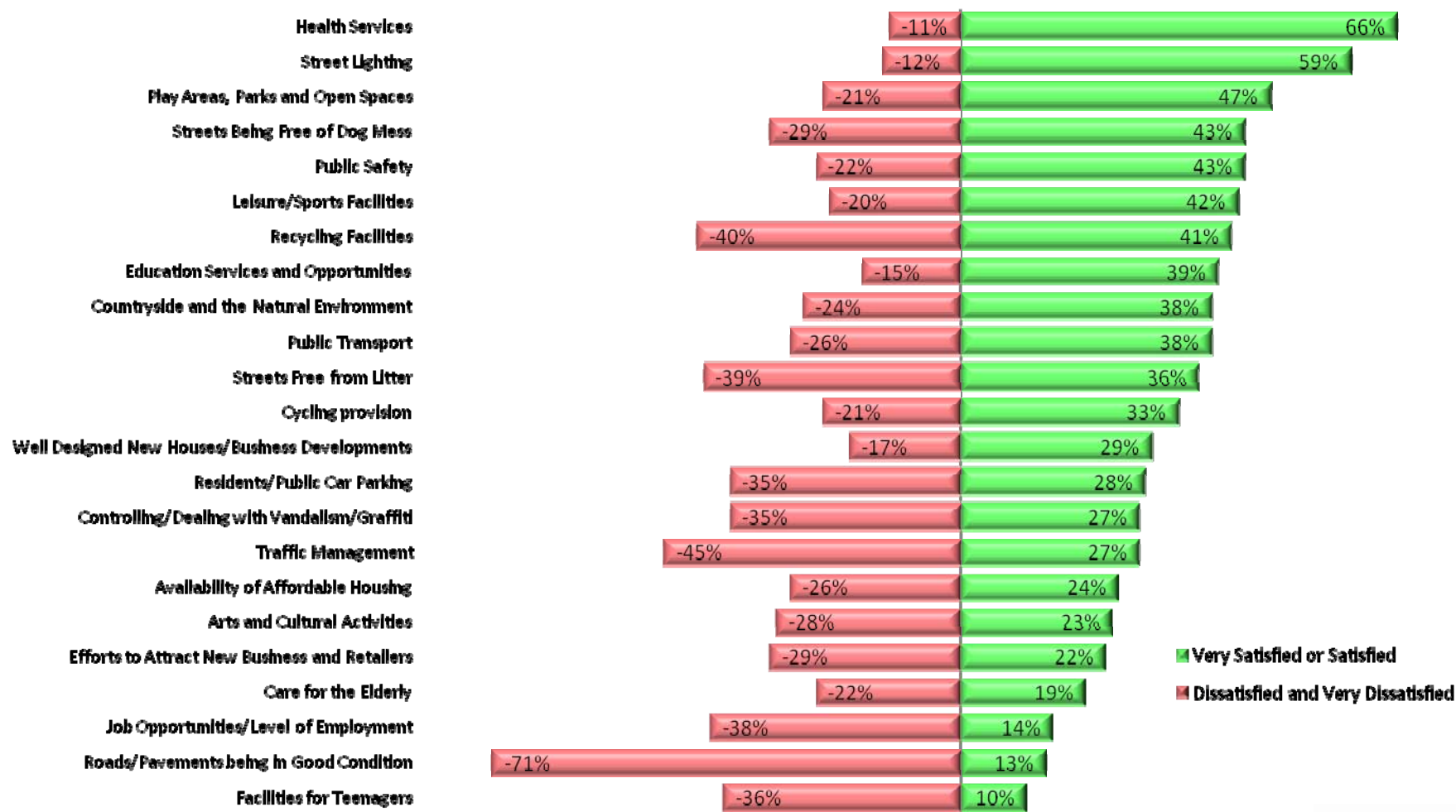
•While ‘ensuring safer communities’ received the most mentions in terms of ‘top 3’ priorities, it is the provision of health facilities that received the most ‘top priority’ mentions (from nearly 1 in 4 respondents)

•Significantly, older residents (65+) are more interested in prioritising health facilities, as are the ‘non-white’ ethnic groups

Q2. If you could chose just two or three services for public service providers to prioritise in the future, what would they be?
Base: All respondents (1,478)

On balance, residents are most satisfied with local health services and street lighting, and least satisfied with the condition of road & pavements

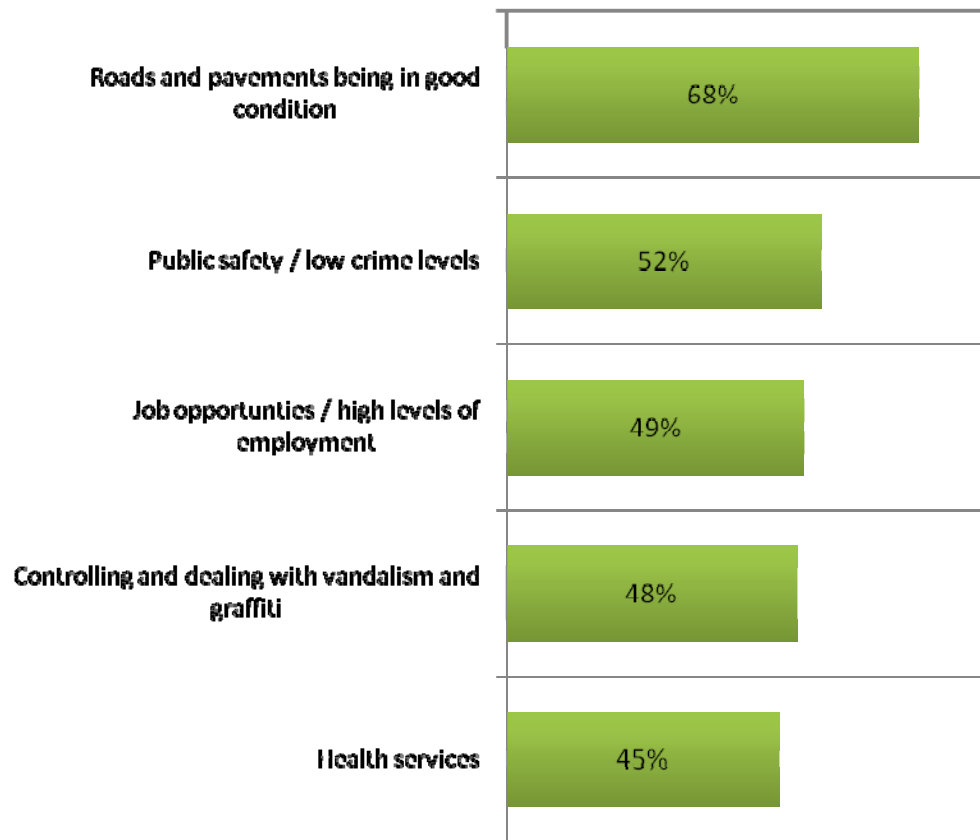
Satisfaction with public services provided in the borough



Q3. Thinking about the current public services provided within the borough of Ashford, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with ...
 Base: All respondents (1,478)

Whereas to improve the standard of living in Ashford, most residents felt improvements in roads and pavements are required

Services to be improved to enhance standard of living



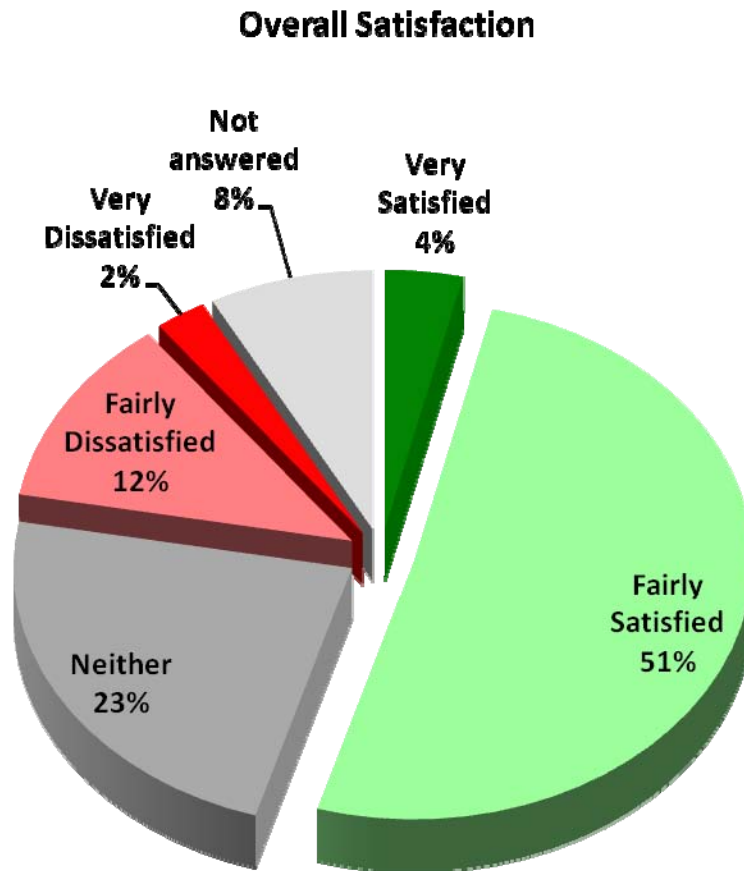
Comment:

- A significant proportion of the older residents aged 35+ would like to see roads and pavements improved, compared to those aged under 35
- Also more residents aged over 54 would like to see the vandalism and graffiti controlled and dealt with compared to those aged younger

Q4a. Tick which services you would like to see improved to enhance the standard of living in Ashford?
Base: All respondents (1,478)

Services Delivered by Ashford Borough Council

In terms of the range of services provided by Ashford Borough Council, satisfied residents outnumber dissatisfied residents by a factor of 4 to 1.



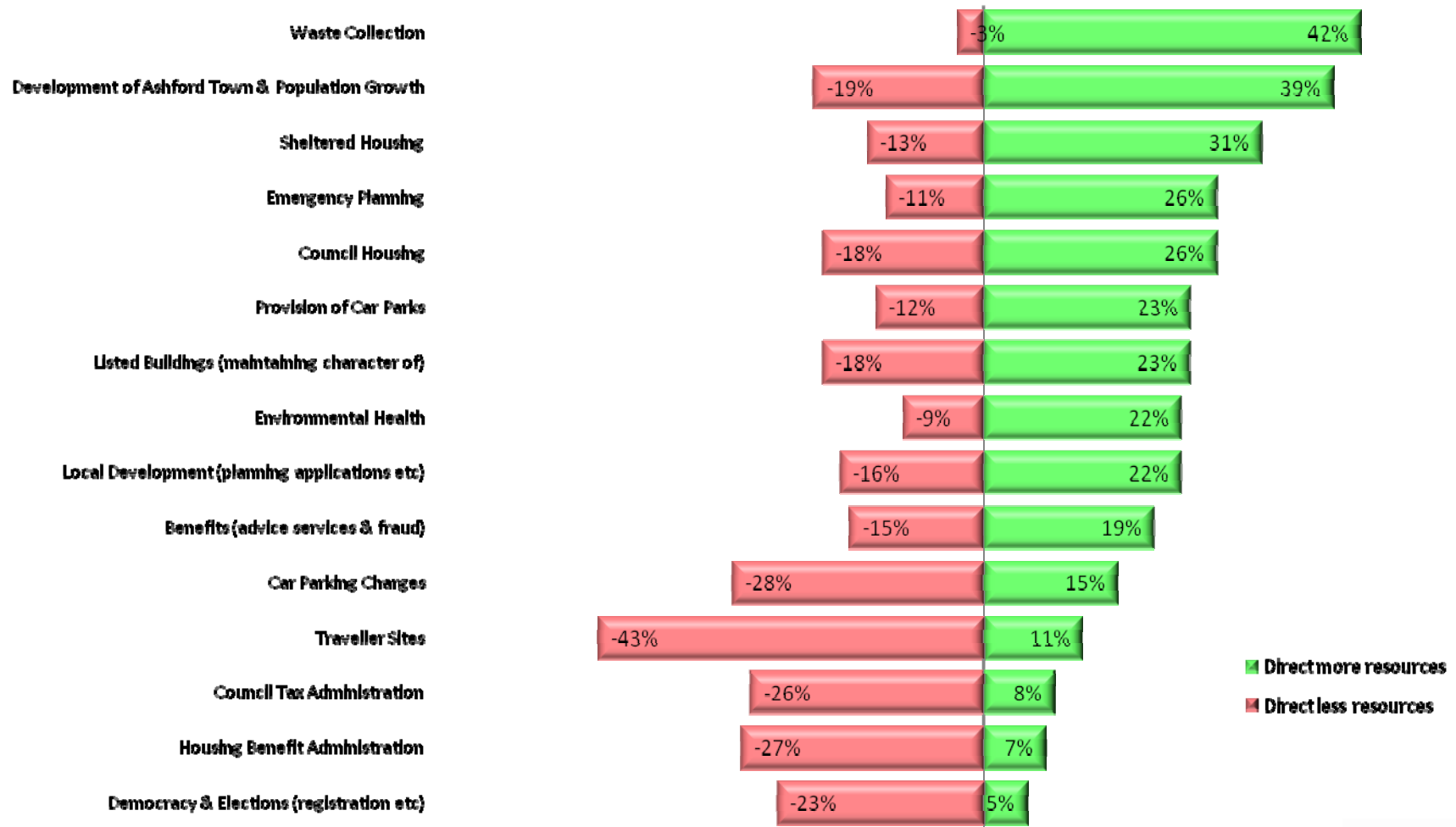
Comment:

- Over half the residents who participated in the survey are either very or fairly satisfied with the range of services provided by Ashford Borough Council
- A significantly greater proportion of senior citizens (aged 65+) are satisfied when compared with younger residents aged under 35
- There are no noticeable differences between residents in rural areas and those living in urban areas

Q7. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the range of services provided by Ashford Borough Council?
Base: All respondents (1,478)

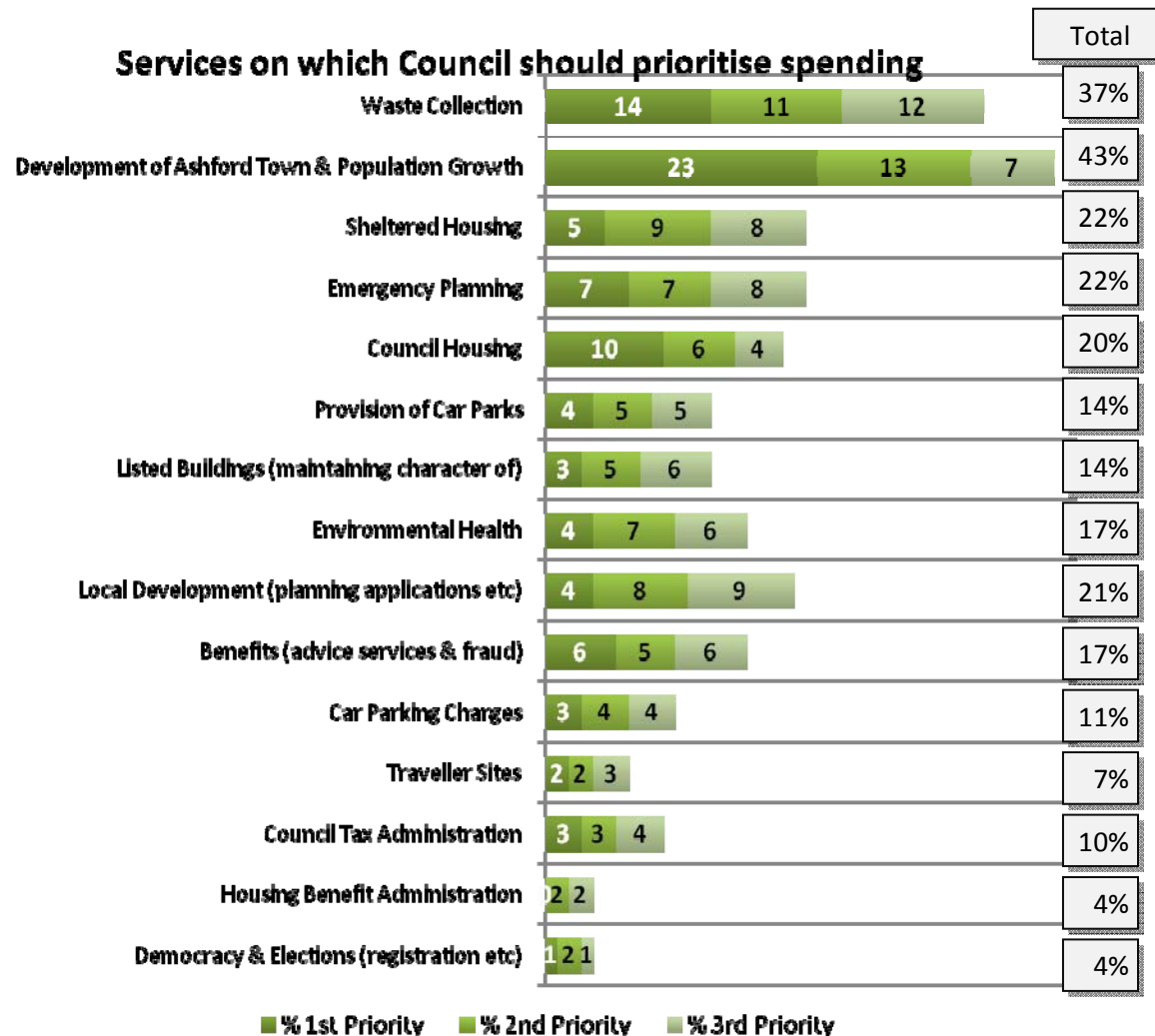
Residents are keen to see more resources directed at waste collection & development of the town and less directed to Traveller sites.

Future resource allocation



Q5a. For each service, please select whether you think Ashford Borough Council should direct more resources, less resources or about the same amount in the future?
 Base: All respondents (1,478)

And it is the development of Ashford , closely followed by waste collection, that residents feel the Council should prioritise for spending.



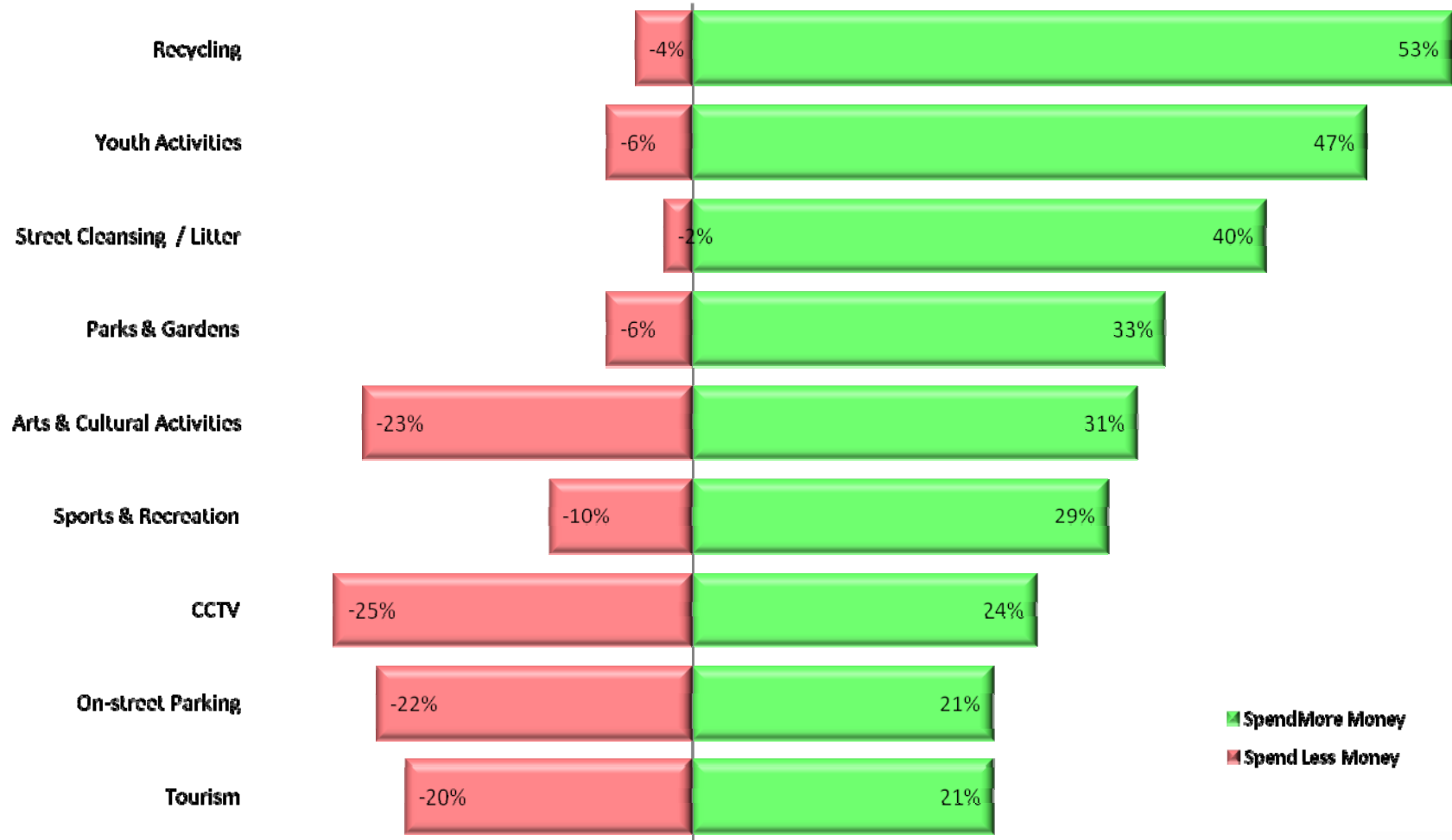
Comment:

- A significant proportion of older residents (55+) are more interested in money being spent on sheltered housing than are younger residents
- Interest in prioritising spend on the development of Ashford town decreases with age, but it remains the most mentioned priority spend area even among the over 65's.

Q5b. Please choose the top three services where you feel Ashford Borough Council should make their priority for spending in the next five years?
 Base: All respondents (1,478)

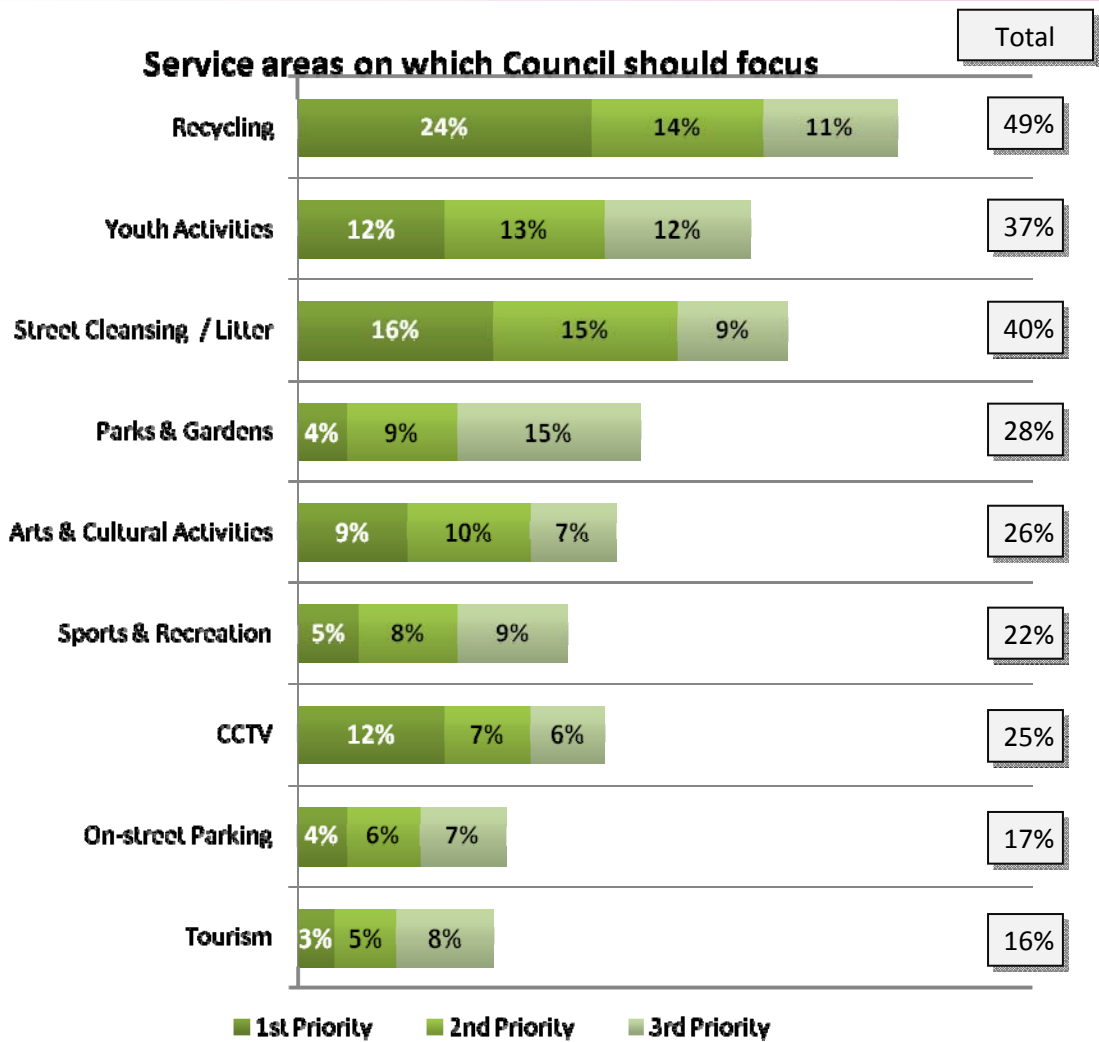
There is widespread agreement for the Council to spend more on certain services but views are more polarised about spending on other services.

Spend allocation for other service areas provided by Ashford Borough Council



Q6a. For each service, please tick whether you think Ashford Borough Council should spend more money, less money or about the same amount ?
 Base: All respondents (1,478)

Recycling, street cleansing and youth activities are the most frequently chosen other services on which the Council should focus.

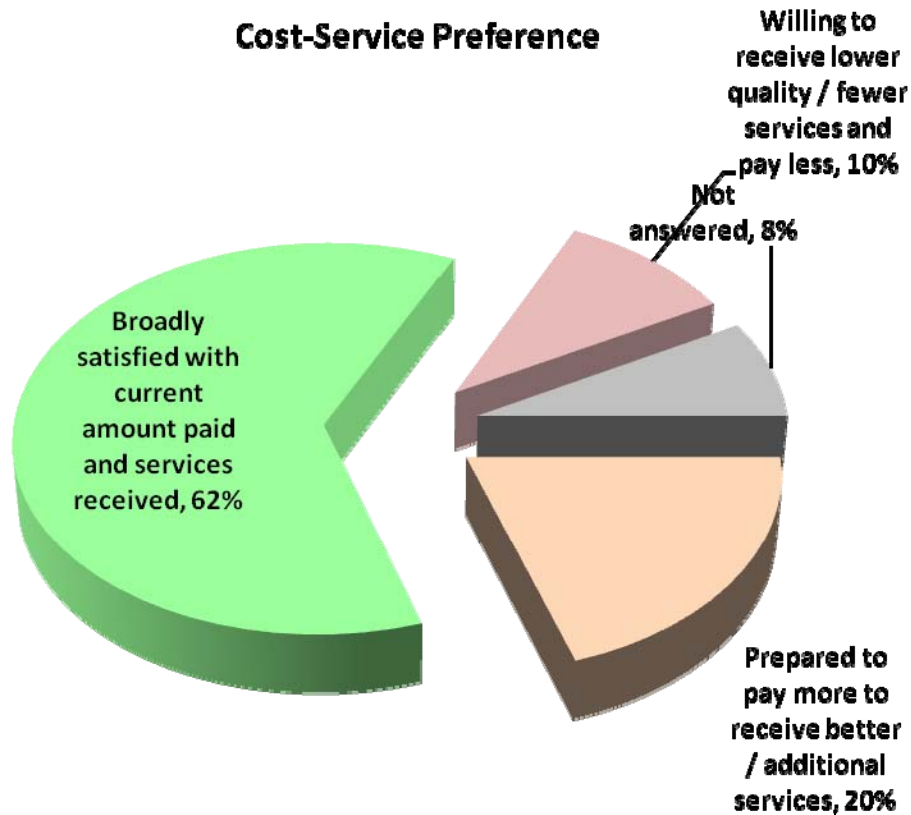


Comment:

- Men and residents aged 35+ are more likely to prioritise street cleansing and litter than other demographic groups
- Youth activities are more of a priority for a greater proportion of those aged under 54
- Parks & Gardens are a priority for more of the under 35s and over 65s than other age groups.

Q6b. Please choose the top three services that you feel Ashford Borough Council should focus upon over the next five years?
 Base: All respondents (1,478)

Most residents are broadly satisfied with the services received for the amount they pay.



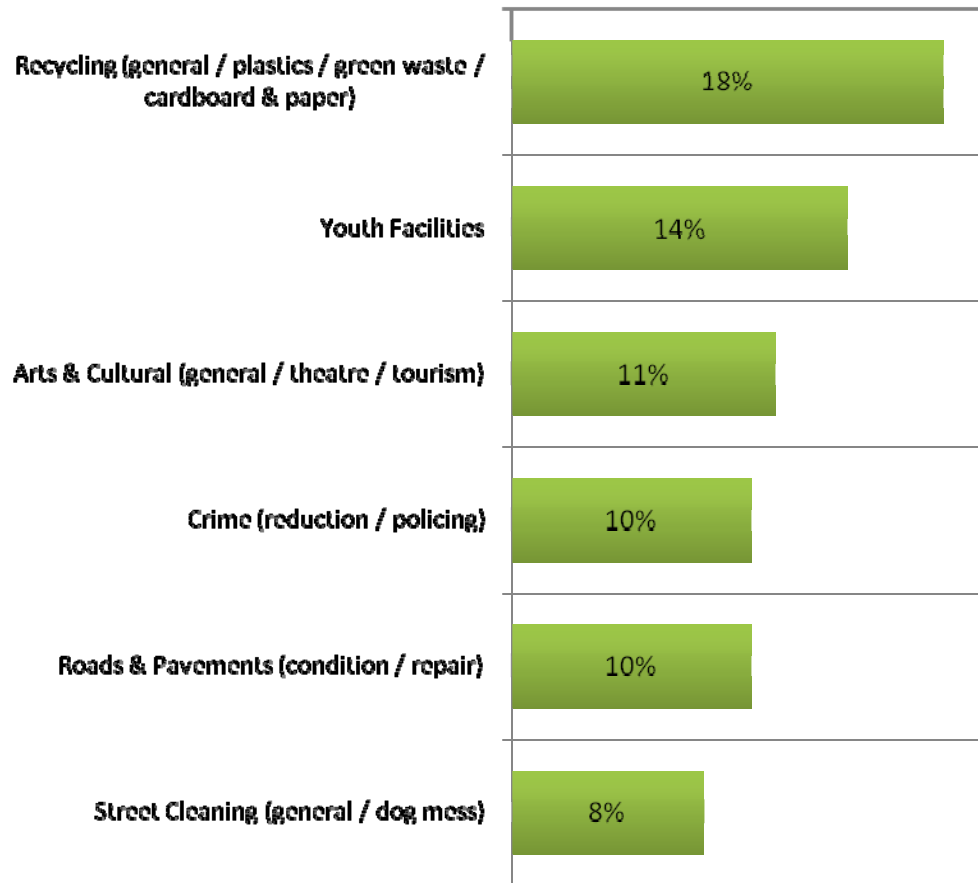
Comment:

- Significantly fewer senior citizens (aged 65+) are prepared to pay more for additional or better services compared with younger residents
- Significantly more women are satisfied with the status quo than are men.

Q8. Ashford Borough Council currently receives £2.60 per household per week in council tax ... to deliver its range of services. Which of the following statements comes closest to your own views in relation to the services provided by Ashford Borough Council ... ? Base: All respondents (1,478)

A range of services were mentioned by residents prepared to pay more to receive them, the most popular of which are shown below.

Services for which prepared to pay more

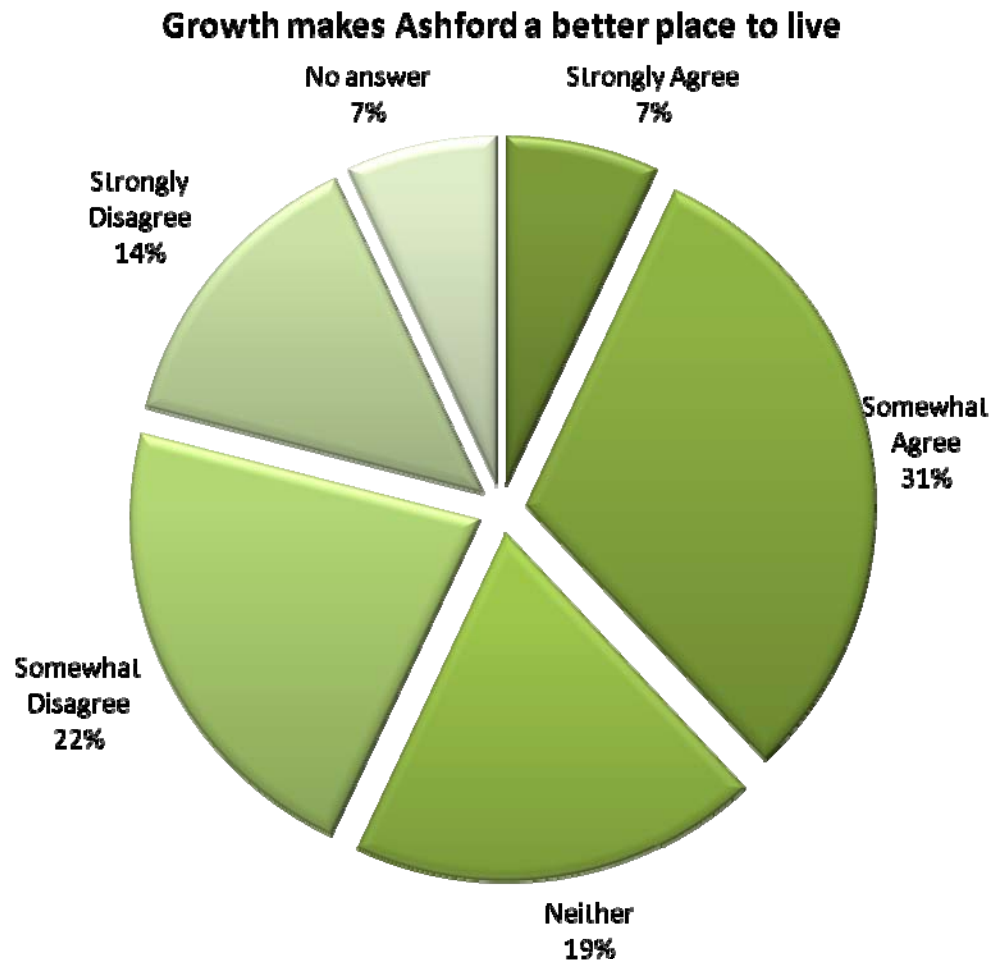


Comment:

- Females are more likely to pay more for youth facilities than males
- Older residents are prepared to pay more for street cleaning compared to younger residents aged under 35
- Older residents are also more interested in paying more for medical facilities, but this received few mentions among those under the age of 65

Q8a. If you said you would be prepared to pay more to receive better / additional services, which services would these be ?
 Base: All respondents prepared to pay more for better / additional services (291)

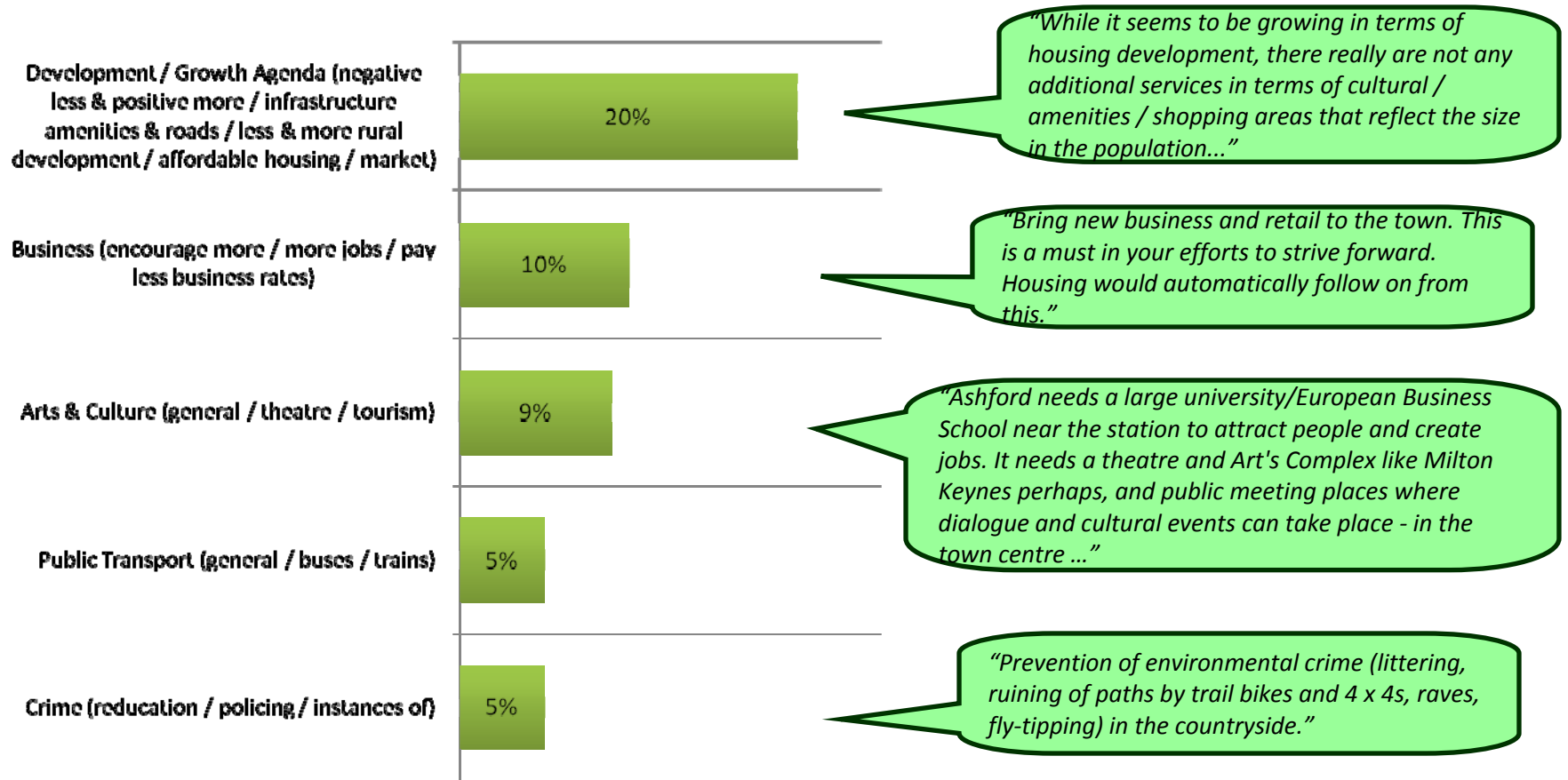
Similar proportions of residents disagree with the view that growth in Ashford is making it a better place to live as those agreeing with it.



Q9a. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the growth in Ashford is making it a better place to live? All respondents (1478)

Development and growth is the most commonly mentioned theme to improvement Ashford as a place to live.

Improvements to make Ashford a better place to live



Q9b. Is there one thing in particular that you feel could improve Ashford as a place to live? Base: All respondents (1478)

Executive Summary

Key findings

Urban & Rural Split / Satisfaction with the Area

- *Residents in rural areas provided virtually identical responses to urban residents across the entire consultation survey*
- *There are considerably more satisfied than dissatisfied residents when it comes to talking about the overall public services provided in the Ashford borough and the range of services provided by Ashford Borough Council.*

Local Strategic Partnership / Place. Key Findings

- *Priorities in making Ashford a good place to live centre around development & growth (i.e. infrastructure), business (i.e. encourage more) and art and culture.*
- *Safer communities and the provision of health service facilities are the services residents would like the Council and its partners to prioritise in terms of support for the local community ... but the highest level of dissatisfaction relates to the condition of roads and pavements*

Key findings

Ashford Borough Council. Key Findings

- *Waste collection, development of Ashford town / population growth are areas most mentioned by residents for the council to allocate more resources to, whereas the least resource is required for Travellers sites.*
- *Recycling, youth activities and street cleansing are the service areas most mentioned by residents for the Council to spend more on.*
- *Recycling, youth activities and street cleansing are also the service areas residents would like the Council to focus on over the next 5 years. However, certain segments of the population have differing views on the subject.*