

Residents' satisfaction - continuous monitoring

Stage 3 - July 2010

Report on findings

September 2010

1. Background & Methodology

This report summarises the results of the third stage of the regular satisfaction continuous monitoring surveys. The survey fieldwork took place during July 2010.

The questionnaire was distributed to:

- residents who've joined our own panel
- panellists currently on the Bucks CC Resident's Panel living in Aylesbury Vale
- posted on our website, and
- mailed to a random sample of households in the Winslow area (as a bank of questions about the new Winslow area office was included).

All were encouraged to complete the survey online of which a growing number did, up 15% from last survey to almost 35%.

Overall, there were 498 responses to the survey, giving a combined response rate of 28%, 63% from the panels; 21% from the random sample.

The questionnaire included a series of specific service related questions designed in conjunction with officers from these services as well as a number of corporate measures, which are used to track and monitor performance over a period of time.

To try to improve response rates, the order of questions was changed so that the service related questions featured at the start. The service related questions covered:

- Aylesbury Vale and County Times magazine
- The new Winslow area office
- Text alerts service
- Recycling
- Parking services
- Aylesbury town centre events

Key findings are reported. The full set of results for each question are provided in the data tabulations that are used as the basis of this report. Where percentage values do not add up to 100% this is due to computer rounding.

Where applicable, the report shows differing views and trends developing between the first, second and third surveys conducted in November, March and July.

2. Key points – more detail in section 4

Corporate questions

Satisfaction with the local area /AVDC

The results for these two questions, repeated from the previous survey, show a slight improvement. 88% said they were **'satisfied' overall with their local area** up 3%; whilst 67% residents are **'satisfied'** with the way we run things, up 12%.

The new series of **values** questions produced results which suggest that in some areas residents do not feel we act or live out what we say we do. A number of residents do not readily associate us with taking into account the views of local people when making major decisions that affect the local area. We also need to be more transparent when we make changes to services on the reasons why these changes are being made. The benefits to residents of any service changes need to be made clearer.

Service questions

The introduction of our new magazine **Aylesbury Vale and County Times** has had no detrimental impact on how informative people find the magazine or in terms of its overall rating. Whilst the recall of the new title is significantly lower than that of its predecessor District Link this should improve over time.

On the **kerbside recycling collection service**, 80% of residents said they were 'satisfied' with the service we provide. Residents would like us to increase the number of items they can recycle using this service with the most popular being cardboard and garden waste.

The survey also asked whether or not people would support the option to **purchase a wheeled bin** for recycling. Less than half of residents agreed (37%) with this idea. The main reasons given were that the current container met their needs or that it was too costly.

The idea of **rewarding** people to recycle more was also suggested. Whilst people can understand that this may encourage some people to recycle more, many believe that it will make no difference to their behaviour. These people recycle because they want to and can.

There is limited support to the idea of paying for a regular kerbside green waste collection.

In terms of **parking services**, the key factors that people consider when choosing where to park are location and price (including whether there is any free initial parking time). The two key priorities for improving local car parks from the list provided are car park security and cleanliness. A large variety and number of other suggested improvements were also mentioned by residents. These included introducing more pay on exit style car parks and keeping car parking prices as low as possible to help support local town centres and shopping amenities.

There is currently only limited awareness of our **free text alert** service although the sign up rate especially amongst younger residents is quite high suggesting that if we can continue to communicate the benefits of the service to more people, the take up rate will rise.

This survey was distributed to a larger number of people living in and around Winslow because a number of the questions focused on the new **Customer Service Centre** there. Currently the top two reasons why people visit there are to collect bus tokens/passes or to pay for one of our services. Looking ahead, people would like us to consider providing community safety advice and housing advice from this centre.

3. Next Stage

3.1 Services have been sent their results for their consideration. Their comments and actions are included in italics where appropriate. There are also a number of corporate actions highlighted eg developing the value for money campaign.

3.2 Decisions on the questions that could be included in the next wave of surveys will following best practice advice. The third survey will repeat some further tracking questions and new questions for services, including parking and community cohesion. Topics of further questions are being sought from Corporate Board.

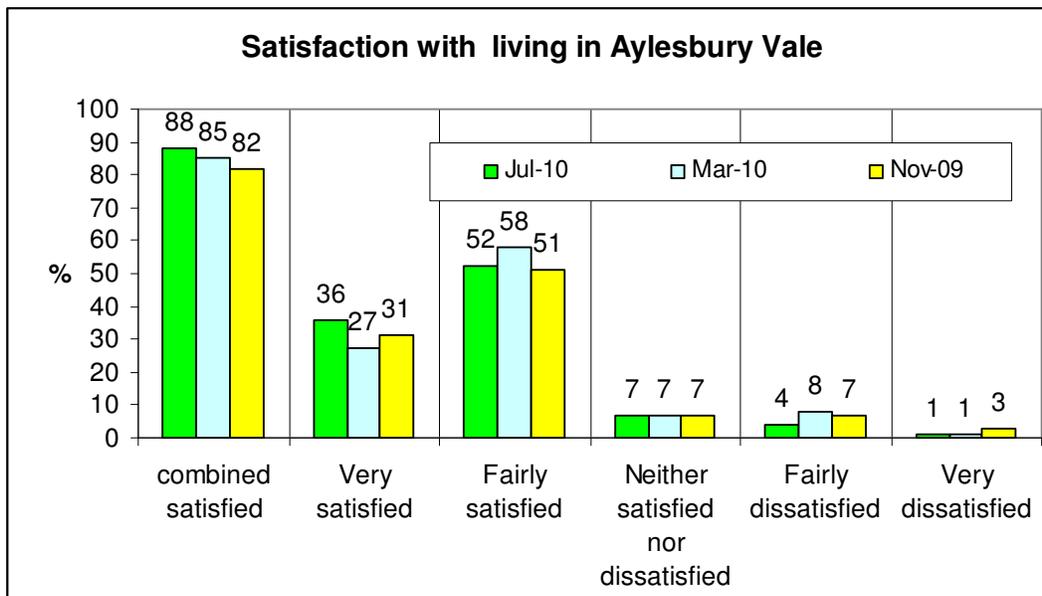
3.3 The next survey questionnaire is scheduled to be distributed w/c 21 June.

3.4 The planned autumn survey will not take place as it would clash with the Government's Place Survey, which is conducted from September to December 2010.

4. Summary of Responses

4.1 Level of satisfaction with your local area as a place to live (Q.30 to Q.32)

This question is one of the regular tracker questions that have featured in every survey.



Overall, 88% were 'very' or 'fairly satisfied' with where they lived compared, showing a steady improvement since the surveys started in November.

The most 'dissatisfied' residents tended to live in the Aylesbury postcodes a pattern, which has been repeated in previous surveys. There may be a seasonal feel good factor that improves the levels of satisfaction during the summer months elsewhere in the district. Aylesbury Vale is a rural district and many people tell us regularly that one of the best things about living here are the green open spaces, clearly something which can be enjoyed even more on sunny, dry days.

The residents that were ‘very satisfied’ were asked why they had said this. A common theme to many of the comments was the strong sense of community where people lived, the surrounding countryside, good access to shops along with good communication links.

The following quote from one resident summarise many of the comments made.

“I am new to Fairford Leys (consider this to be my local area) and I find it very clean, quiet when it needs to be, with good transport links.”

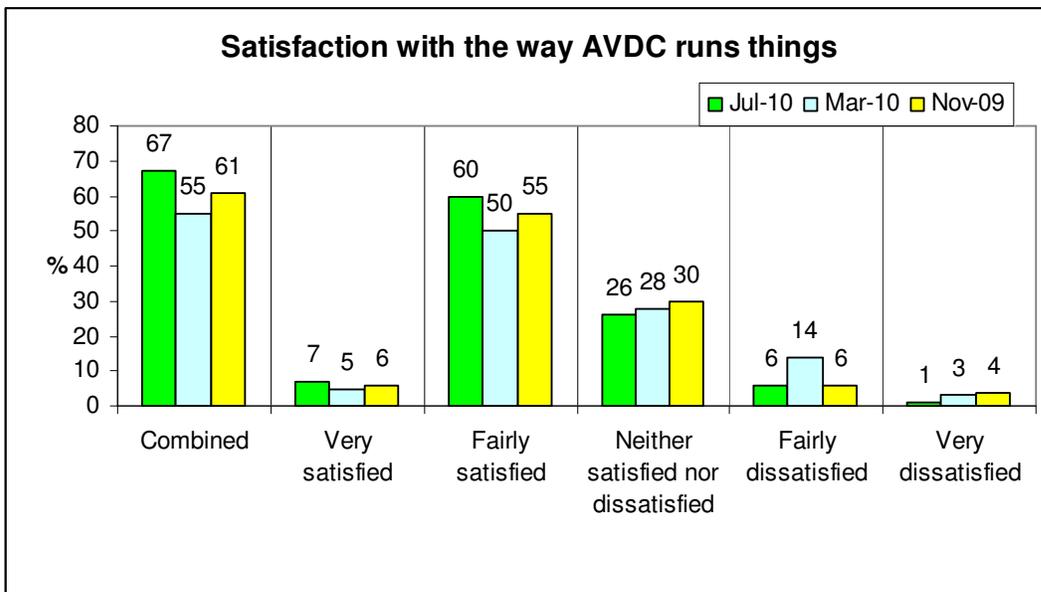
The questionnaire also asked anyone that had responded ‘fairly or very dissatisfied’ why this was the case. As the results suggest there were relatively few comments made. Some residents were concerned about the condition of their local roads, the volume of traffic and the cleanliness of the area.

“The road systems in Aylesbury are poor and badly thought out I can give you a list of a number of places and how I would improve them if you are really interested...I think this is without a doubt one of the reasons we don't have good employers coming to this town”

“No public transport, village used as rat-run, disintegrating roads, no pavements and no parking in town (Buckingham)”

4.2 Overall Satisfaction with the way AVDC runs things (Q.38 to Q40)

This is also one of the tracker questions that also appeared in the previous surveys. These figures below are based on all responses excluding those responding ‘don’t know/not sure’.



Overall, 67% of residents said they were 'satisfied' with the performance of AVDC with 7% 'dissatisfied'. These are an improvement on the results from April (55% and 17%) and more in line with the figures reported in December 2009. There is a link between how satisfied people are with where they live and with their perception on the performance of their local authority. If people are feeling more positive about their local area, they are also more likely to be feeling more positive about their local public service providers.

The residents that are the most 'satisfied' with our performance continue to be those living in the 'other parishes', 71%. The 'least satisfied' residents in terms of age, are those 50 or under. These are the people who are more likely to be under the most pressure in terms of the amount of disposable income they have and in life in general.

Those answering 'very satisfied' said it was because we offered the services they needed and that people felt we were doing our best to offer good value services to local residents.

Those who responded 'fairly or very dissatisfied' mentioned that there was still too much emphasis on Aylesbury at the expense of other areas in the district including Buckingham or the rural areas. Other residents are concerned about how and where we spend our money, whilst others measured our performance on the standard of services, which BCC rather than we provide.

4.3 Value for money (Q.33 to Q.36)

One of the major challenges facing any district or borough authority is to differentiate in the resident's eyes what services we deliver to the community from the services a county council deliver. If we cannot achieve this, we will only be as good as the least best service provider. This level of understanding is made more complicated for residents by the fact that we collect council tax on behalf of these other public services providers. The survey tells us that although 71% knew we collect this money on behalf of the other authorities, 29% did not.

One of the implications of this is that residents will often comment on the state of the local roads or pavements or on other factors when commenting on how well they feel we are delivering our local services. It is unlikely that we will be able to make this clear enough for everyone so perhaps a better approach would be to use our influence within these other authorities to demand better public services irrespective of which authority delivers them.

This question repeated from the in November survey. Overall 51% of residents agreed that we do offer value for money exactly the same figure as before; those that disagreed was significantly lower at 15% versus 29% before. It is encouraging that fewer people

disagreed with the statement, but frustrating that we still find it difficult to convince residents that we do offer value for money. A third of people said they were unsure.

This remains a challenge for us and consequently two further questions on this theme were included in the survey in order to help us explore this subject in further detail.

We asked residents to think about the services we provide, some of which were listed in the survey, and to tell us what factors might influence them to feel we offered value for money.

What residents are telling us is that they want to know *how well we deliver the services we provide* in other words, are we delivering these to a high enough standard and *more information about the cost of delivering these services*. This could include some benchmarking information. Some people then feel that only then could they make a value judgement on whether this represents value for money or not.

The full results to this question were:

Factor influencing value for money	% Agreeing
The standard of services we provide	61
Knowing that our services are delivered cost effectively	48
The range of services we provide	40
Information available about our services	27
The number of people using our services	12
Other	4

The survey also asked what factors may have influenced whether we were delivering value for money or not. Two thirds of residents said this was based on their own experience of dealing with us with the next most important being what they read/hear in local newspapers and radio.

4.5 Our Values (Q.37)

The next question was based on some of our corporate values, others of which we have explored in previous surveys in order to tell us to what extent they feel we work to these values. In each case, a pair of statements was given in the questionnaire with the right hand statement on the scale representing our corporate value and the left hand statement the opposite viewpoint. The grid below shows the scores for:

- the Aylesbury Vale district as a whole in black
- Aylesbury postcodes in blue
- Buckingham postcodes in green
- Other parishes in red

We asked residents to tick the box on the scale according to how strongly their view agreed between the two statements either side of the grid.

	←	←	-	→	→	
AVDC make it hard for us to understand what services they provide that I might need	4% 6% 5% 3%	10% 9% 9% 10%	36% 34% 40% 32%	32% 28% 28% 38%	18% 23% 18% 17%	AVDC make it easy for us to contact them and get the services we need
AVDC take major decisions that affect us and the local district without taking into account the views of people like me	16% 18% 20% 11%	19% 17% 22% 19%	33% 27% 29% 39%	24% 25% 22% 25%	7% 13% 6% 6%	AVDC involve local communities in major decisions that affect us and the future of the district
AVDC change services with little consideration to the impact on quality, benefits and cost	11% 11% 14% 6%	15% 18% 13% 15%	43% 36% 44% 45%	27% 27% 23% 29%	5% 8% 5% 5%	AVDC are continually improving by providing higher quality, faster and cheaper services

The pattern of results are consistent across the district for each pair of statements. It is apparent from the second and to a lesser extent the third statement that some residents cannot reconcile what we say we do with our actions. We are not seen as being inclusive enough in seeking out resident’s views when making the bigger decisions that affect local people.

Some residents also find it difficult to understand the reasons why we make changes to some of our services and cannot easily identify the benefits these changes deliver. This could be an issue with our communication when changes take place or in a lack of detail. This is also likely to be connected with whether someone feels we deliver value for money or not.

The positive message to take from these results is that we, as an organisation are accessible and make it relatively easy for anyone wanting to use one of our services or find out whether there are ways we can help them or not.

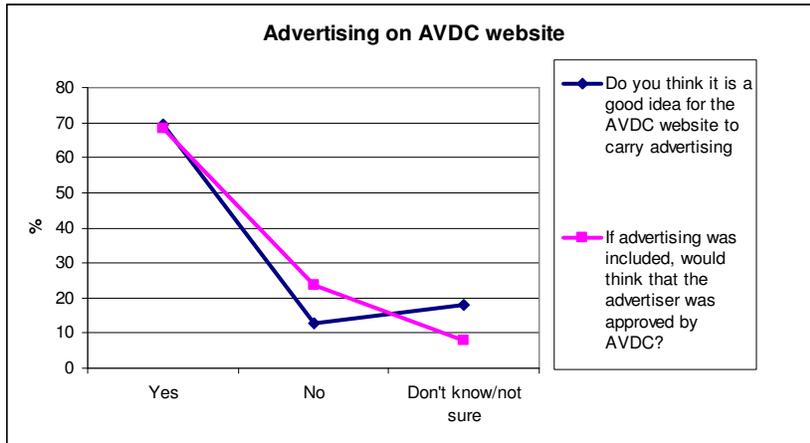
4.6 AVDC website (Q.9 to Q.13)

This series of questions started asking about website usage and aimed to find out how residents would react to the proposal of us carrying advertisements on our website.

Currently, 51% of residents say they regularly or occasionally look at our website, 8% saying they look at it regularly. Amongst the online respondents, this figure as you might expect is higher at 18%. Of those who don’t look at the website, 37% do not have internet access.

Of those with internet access, 55% said they were ‘too busy’ to browse our website; 34% commented that they felt there was nothing on the website relevant to them, and a further

19% said they were not interested in council work or news. The younger age groups were far more likely to say they were too busy. Other responses to this question suggest that some people are simply not in the habit or mindset of looking at our website.



Overall, in principle 69% thought it was a good idea for our website to carry advertising as a means of generating income for the council; 13% disagreed. 80% it would make no difference as to whether they were more or less likely to use our website; 8% thought they would be more likely to use the website, but 12% said they thought they would be less likely.

Residents will need to be reassured about the nature of the relationship any advertisers have with AVDC. Almost 25% thought that any advertiser included on the website would definitely be approved by us and a further 44% thought they possibly would be approved by us. The combined figure rose to 74% amongst those that said they look at our website. *Findings from this survey have been compiled into a separate report together with our own web based survey on this issue. This will be reported to Corporate Board shortly.*

4.7 District Link (Q.14 to Q.17)

This series of questions will be repeated at some future interval to see how the results have changed following the change to a joint council news magazine with BCC – Aylesbury Vale & County Times.

96% of residents recall receiving copies of District Link. In terms of the depth of readership, almost three quarters 74%, say they read either ‘all’ or ‘most of it.’ Only 5% admitted they read ‘none’ of each issue of District Link.

The survey asked people to tell us how informative they find the magazine along with their overall rating of the content and the way it looks. The results below are based on all residents that usually read at least some of each issue of District Link.

Informative rating	%	Overall rating	%
Very informative	23) 89% informative	Very good	23) 88% good
Fairly informative	66)	Fairly good	65)
Not very informative	10) 10	Not very good	9) 10
Not at all informative	-)	Not at all good	1)
Don't know/Not sure	6	Don't know/Not sure	3

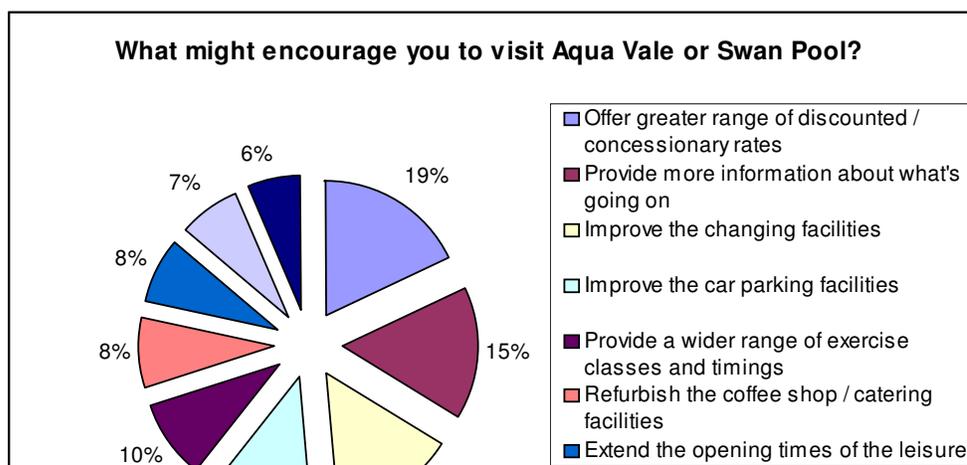
89% of residents say they find District Link to be informative.

Any differences in responses are marginal, but the most notable suggest that those living in the 'other parishes' find the magazine less informative than anyone else (Other parishes 13% v Aylesbury 9%). This pattern of results is repeated for the overall content score. Some people have told us in the past they feel there is an Aylesbury bias within the magazine.

We shall be using this information as a benchmark to compare residents views of the new joint council magazine, the first issue is which is due in June.

4.8 Leisure Services (Q.18 to Q.21)

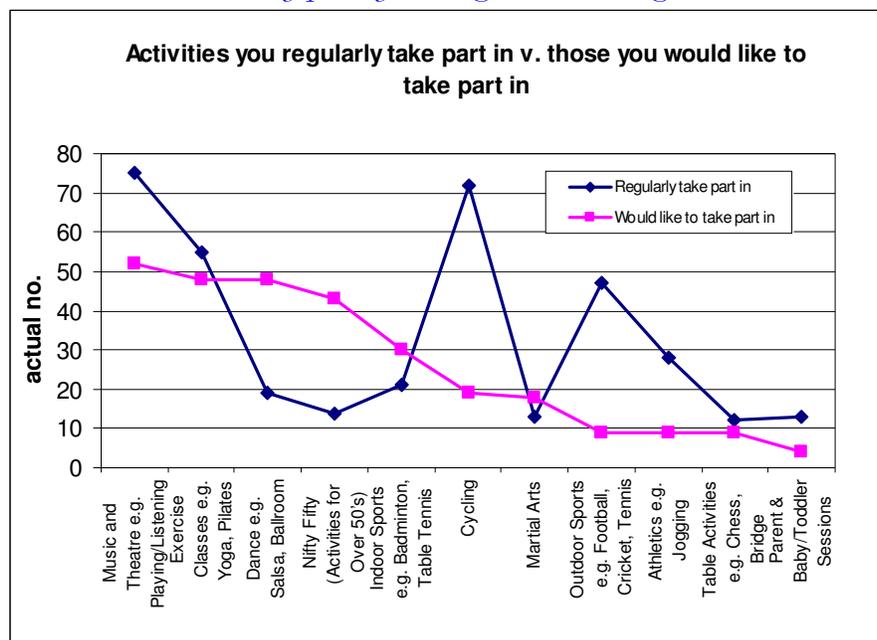
42% of residents regularly or occasionally use either Aqua Vale and/or Swan Pool. The survey asked what activities or services, not currently provided, might encourage people to visit these facilities. A list of possible options was provided. The top four suggestions were:



Women in particular, wanted to see improvements being made to the changing facilities. Those aged 18-50 would like to see changes being made to the car parking provision. 38% commented that there was nothing that would encourage them to use these leisure facilities.

Other comments received focused on improving the cleanliness of Swan Pools/Aqua Vale, reducing the charges for entrance and car parking and providing facilities for a wider range of sports.

Cleanliness remains a key priority and regular monitoring has demonstrated general improvements.



The previous chart shows what other activities people would like to take part in, that perhaps are offered elsewhere in the community. The responses show differences between provision and aspiration

Other activities mentioned included walking (numerous mentions), tai chi, pool and bowls. *Acting on these results we are taking the following measures:*

- *Information on all pricing packages at Aqua Vale and Swan Pool are to be improved, and AVCT newsletters have now been introduced.*

- *Improvements to changing facilities and car parking are planned into the major development proposals for Aqua Vale, and a pay and display car park is currently under consideration for the Swan Pool. Aylesbury Waterside Theatre is due to open in October 2010 and we expect to meet music and theatre production expectations. Our Community Development team run dance, exercise and Nifty Fifty activities.*

4.9 Council Tax leaflet (Q.22 to Q.25)

This series of questions focused on the new shape and format of the combined leaflet to test out if it is seen by residents as a better product than our own previous versions.

The older the resident, the more likely they are to read the leaflet. 83% said it would make no difference to them reading the leaflet if local advertising was included in the leaflet. 5% said the addition of advertising might make them more likely to read it whilst 9% said less likely.

We asked what people do when they receive their council tax bill and leaflet:

Rating	%
Read the leaflet, and then throw it away	29) 68
Read the leaflet and keep it for future reference	39)
Glance at the leaflet, and then throw it away	24
Throw away the leaflet without reading it	7

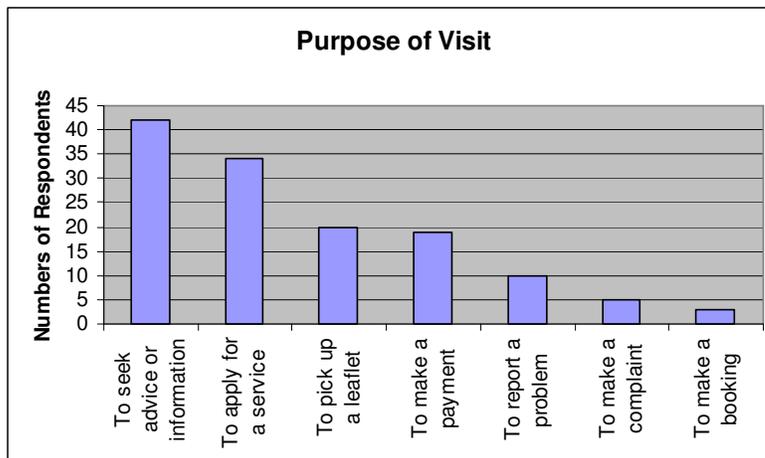
Asking whether there was anything

else residents would like to see included in the leaflet, a small number of other suggestions were made. These included adding benchmarking information with comparisons with other authorities, details of Councillors expenses, and information relating to council salaries and pensions.

Findings have been passed to our partner authorities in Bucks for their views too. It is hoped that the recent format of leaflet is continued. Whilst space is at a premium for any new content, consideration will be given to residents views but would have to be generally approved by all partners.

4.10 Customer Services (Q.25 to Q.32)

A third of residents said they had visited at least one of our Customer Service Centres in the last year.



The numbers visiting each centre were:

- Aylesbury 55
- Buckingham 51, and
- Winslow 23

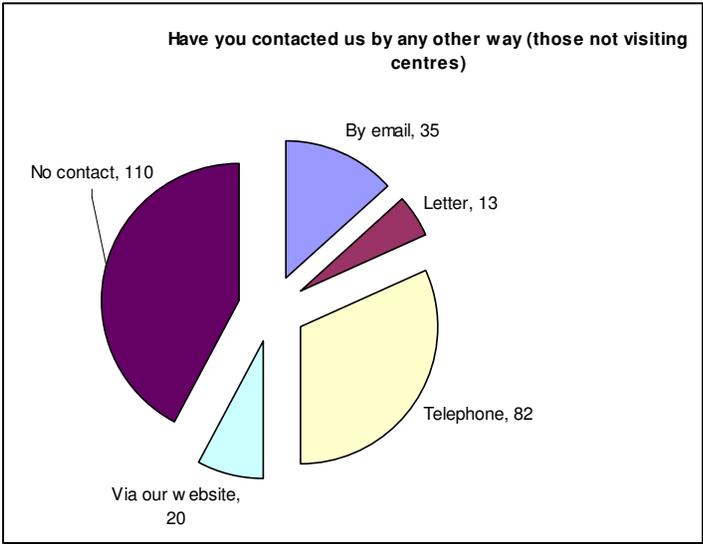
The highest frequency of visitors was to the Buckingham Centre where a quarter said they generally visit at least once a month. This centre also scored very highly in terms of customer experience, as the table below shows.

In terms of waiting times, 44% of visitors said they were seen straight away with a further 37% reporting that the amount of time they had waited was acceptable. 8% said their wait had been too long. This figure for Aylesbury was longest at 15%.

We asked residents whether they thought our customer service advisors were helpful and knowledgeable. The results were by centre were:

	% friendly & helpful	% knowledgeable
Overall	89	87
Aylesbury	85	88
Buckingham	100	96
Winslow	74	64

Overall, 85% of visitors said their enquiry was resolved on their first visit. This figure was very consistent across all three centres. Visitors to these centres were also asked about how the service we provide there could be improved. A comment repeated several times included extending the opening hours in places such as Winslow and Buckingham.



Findings will be discussed within the service team before actions agreed and in due course we aim to display the survey results in the Customer Service Centres.