AYLESBURY VALE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Residents' survey

Changing how you contact us

April 2011
Report on findings

July 2011

1. Background & Methodology

This report summarises the results of a joint communications survey with Bucks CC, looking at ways residents contact us, find out information and how they'd prefer to in the future. The survey fieldwork took place during March /April 2011.

The questionnaire was distributed to:
- residents who've joined our own panel
- panellists currently on the Bucks CC Residents' Panel living in Aylesbury Vale
- posted on AVDC and Bucks CC websites, and
- mailed to a random sample of households throughout the district.

All were encouraged to complete the survey online of which a growing number did, up 20% from last survey, to over half.

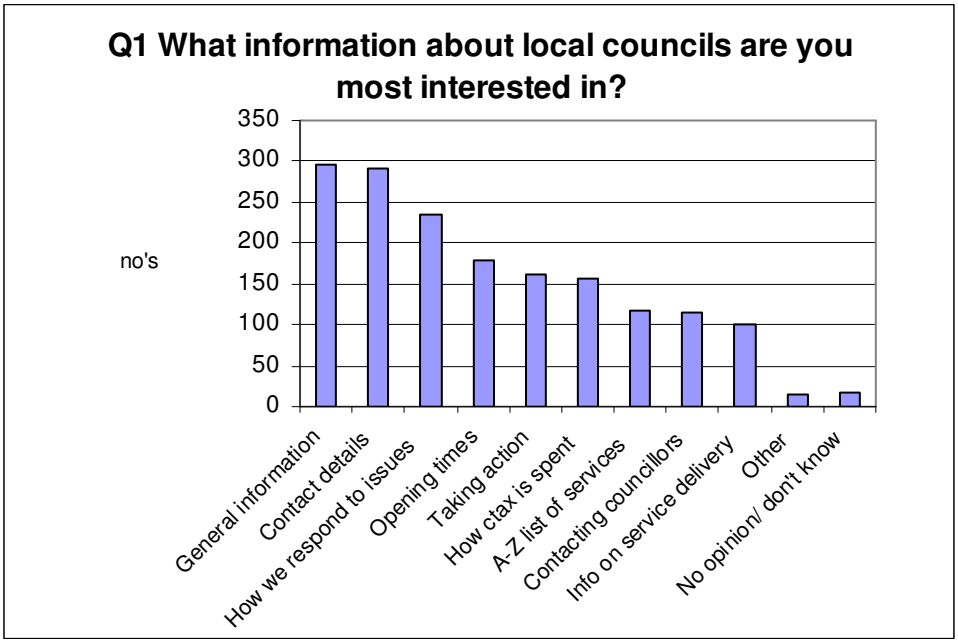
Overall, there were 486 responses to the survey, giving a combined response rate of 21%, 6% from the BCC panel; 56% from our panel and 16% from the random sample.

As both authorities were intending to run consultations on a similar theme at the same time, the resulting joint questionnaire included merged questions, as well as questions from each council. At AVDC, this included specific communications questions about refuse and recycling information, our corporate leaflet stands and web usage.

Key findings are reported, in actual numbers or in percentages, depending on the question asked. Where percentage values do not add up to 100% this is due to computer rounding.

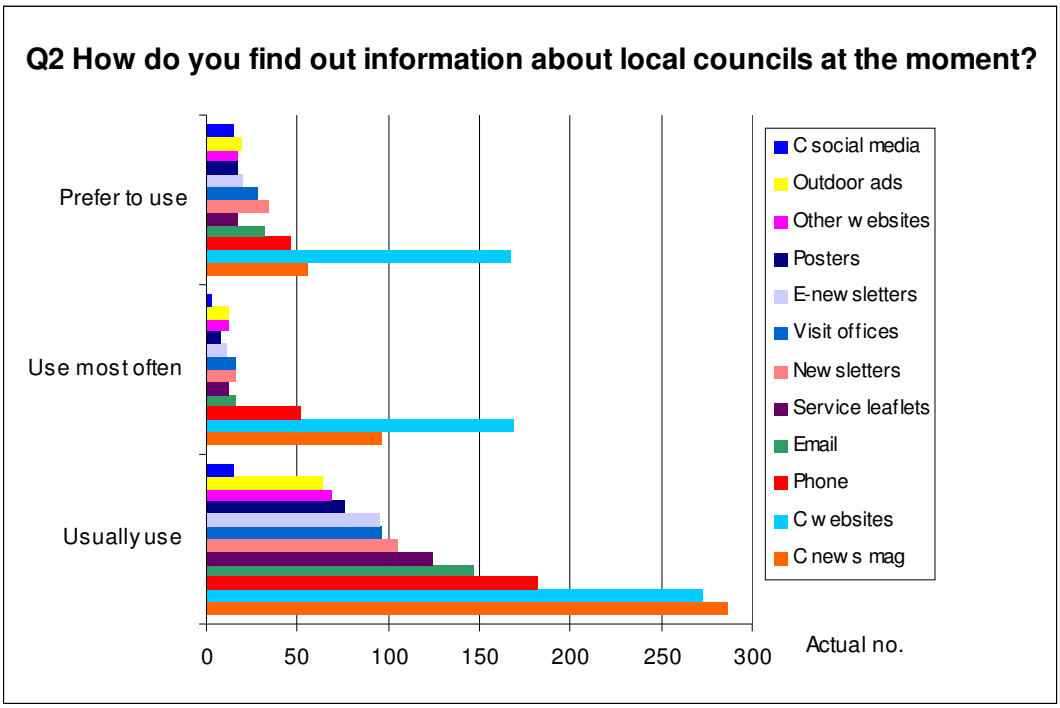
2. Key findings

2.1 Information – what residents want and how they find it



Many things that people most commonly asked for was listed and respondents could answer as many as applied. Most frequently mentioned were:

- general information, 297
- service contact details 292, and
- how we are responding to issues that affect your local council, 234.



Note: In this question, people were only allowed one choice in the 'prefer to use' or 'use most often' options; whilst for the 'usually use' option people could include as many ways as applied.

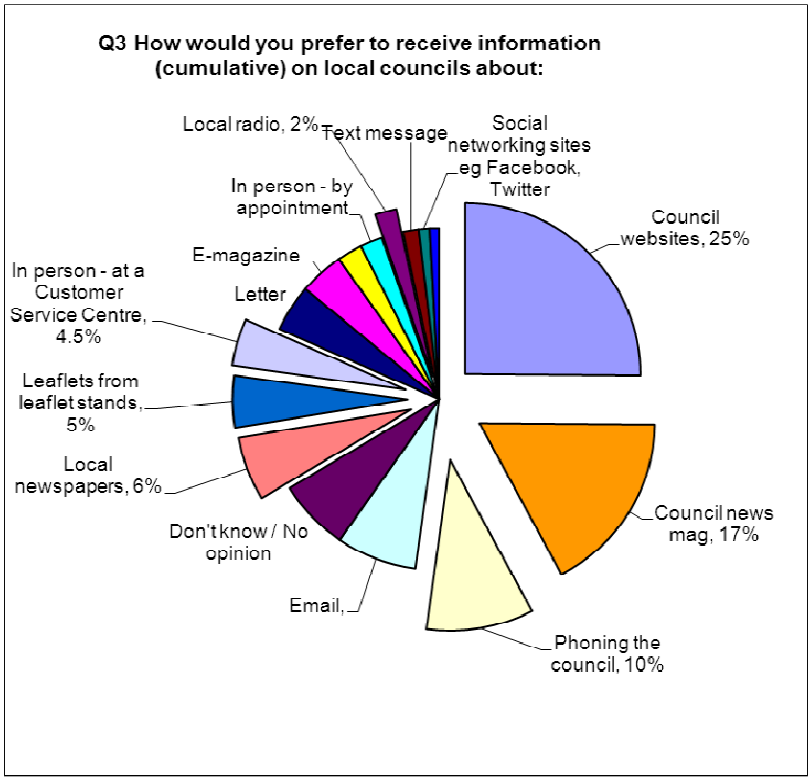
- Council websites are 'usually used' by almost 60%; 'used most often' by 40% and significantly 'most preferred' by 36% of respondents to find out information about their local council. (Most recent comparison in 2009, showed that 32% said they used our website to contact us).
- Council news magazines and the phone were next popular.
- When asked what ways you would ***never use***, council social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter were not popular, with 71% saying they'd never use them. Other websites not run by AVDC or BCC scored next lowest at 53%.

Q3 People were also asked by what method they'd **prefer to receive information about local councils,** for different reasons, such as information about service delivery or to resolve a query.

Council websites and the council news magazine are consistently preferred. However, the results show that people still prefer to speak to someone to resolve a query, particularly on the phone, 20%. Visiting our offices was also rated higher for this situation, up 24% on the average 'visit' score.

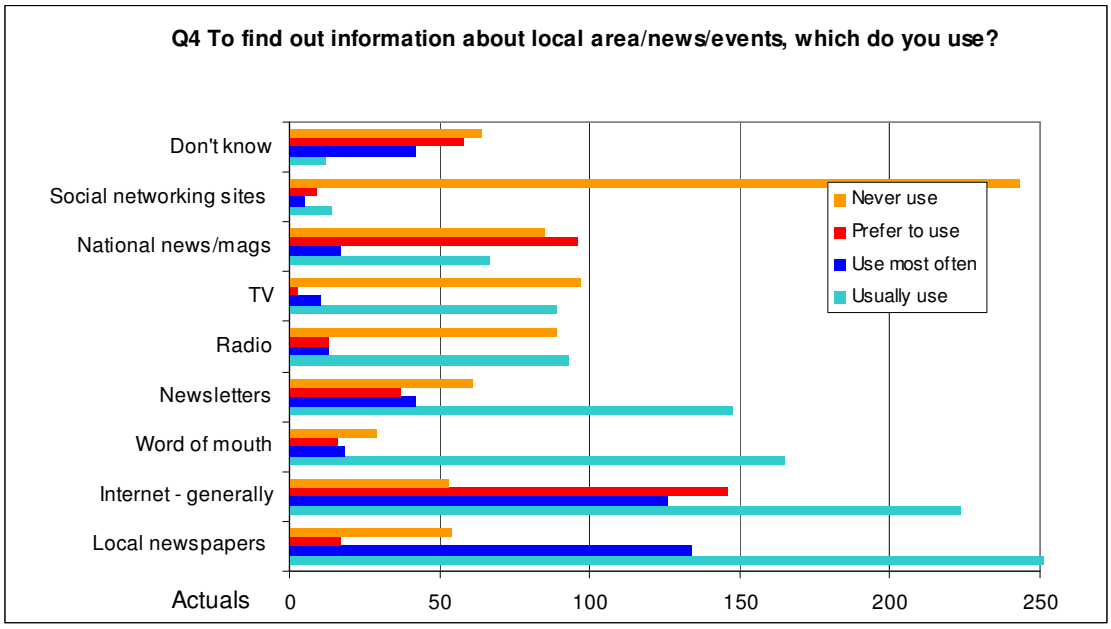
In this question people were asked to give two preferences to each situation. The highest eight scoring ways are included in the following table (actual numbers), and the following pie chart shows the cumulative totals

Q3 How would you prefer to receive information on local councils about:	General info	Info about services	Service delivery	Resolve a query	Info to encourage action
Council websites	254	218	188	141	154
Council news magazine	160	159	115	56	161
Phoning the council	82	53	69	141	32
Email	49	51	46	72	65
Local newspapers	53	52	44	16	65
Leaflets from leaflet stands	41	50	30	18	48
In person at a CSC	29	23	27	57	33
Letter	28	35	36	41	29



Q4 Local newspapers and the internet were 'usually used' and 'most often' used by more people **to get information about the local area, events and news,** as shown on page 5. The red bars shows the way people would 'prefer' to get this information, favouring the internet generally. National newspapers and magazines were also rated highly (this may be as they are already used by residents for national news and they'd like to see more local events being publicised in them).

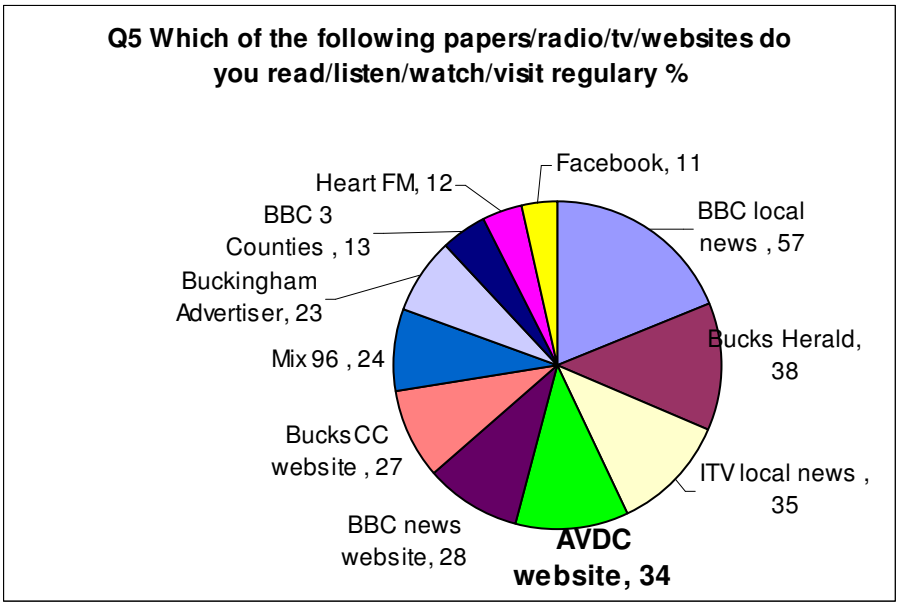
Again social networking sites did not score well, but as with any new form of technology, this trend will no doubt change over time and it would be useful to track changes to this over the coming 18 months. Currently, 345 people said they never use social networking sites but we know from national data that this is rapidly changing.



Looking generally at **what media people listen, read or view regularly**, the below pie chart shows local TV news channels, both BBC and ITV are most popular, with 57% and 35% of respondents

saying they use this way, respectively. (People could tick as many of the choices given as applied) Generally speaking, most residents will watch one channel or another thus emphasising the importance of continuing to circulate press releases and news stories to local TV stations which we do, and actively building relationships with the local media.

The main Aylesbury weekly newspaper, the Bucks Herald was mentioned by 38% and our website at AVDC by 34%.



2.2 Internet usage
Q's 6 – 11

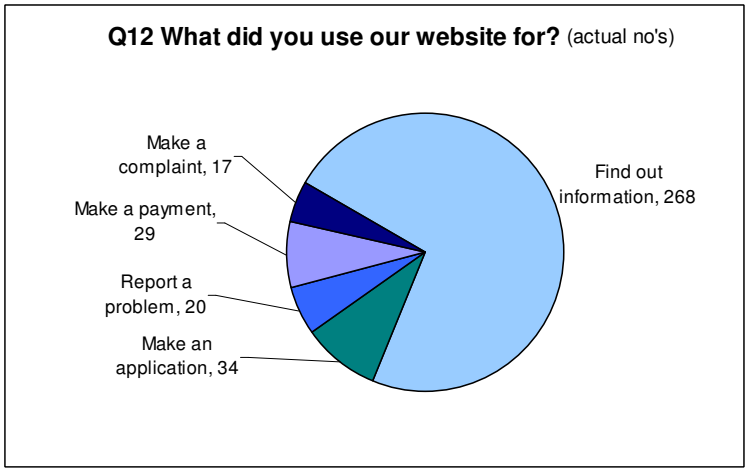
- 91% said they have a mobile phone
- 82% said they have access to the internet; of those
- 84% say their main way is on a laptop or PC at home, and
- 87% say they are on-line at least once a day
- 76% who are online say they have visited AVDC's website,

The main activities online are:

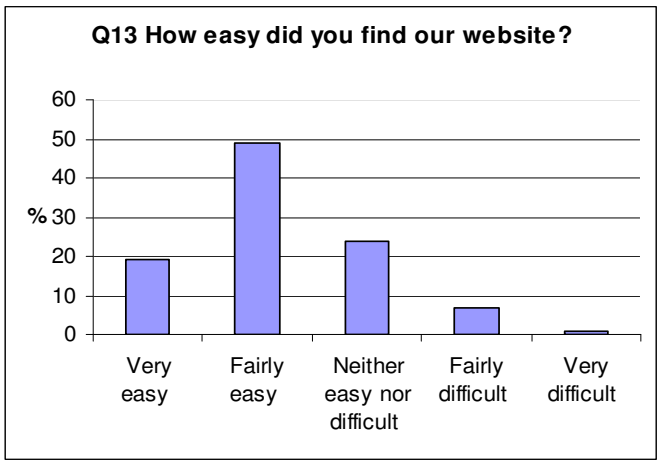
- 92% looking at information
- 68% purchase items
- 64% monitoring bills, bank account etc

Whilst 19% said they communicate on social networking sites

Q12 When asking if they would consider using our website for various activities, 98.5% of users said they'd use AVDC's website to find out information about the council.

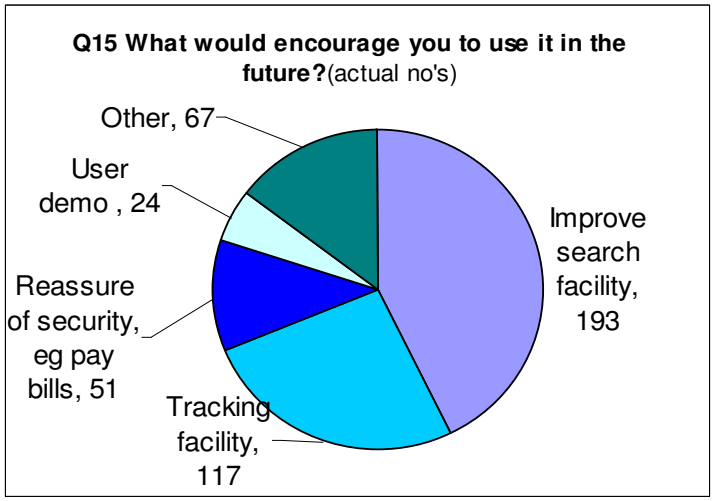


Q13 Asking how easy they found our website to use, 68% answered 'very or fairly easy', with only 3 people saying it was 'very' difficult. Respondents were asked to leave comments if they found it difficult to use and 48 comments were made. Analysis of these is underway to help identify key areas of improvement.



Q15 Looking at **what could encourage people to use the website in the future,** 'improving the search facility' and 'offering a tracking service' were the most commonly mentioned improvements.

Respondents were asked to leave comments if there were any other improvements they'd like to see made, and 77 comments were left (this included comments for BCC too). Analysis of these is underway to help identify key areas of improvement.



We are currently undertaking further on-line consultation with residents about a potential redesign of our homepage. The responses will shape any redesign for our developers to implement. (This design is based on people using the site for transactions as well as finding information).

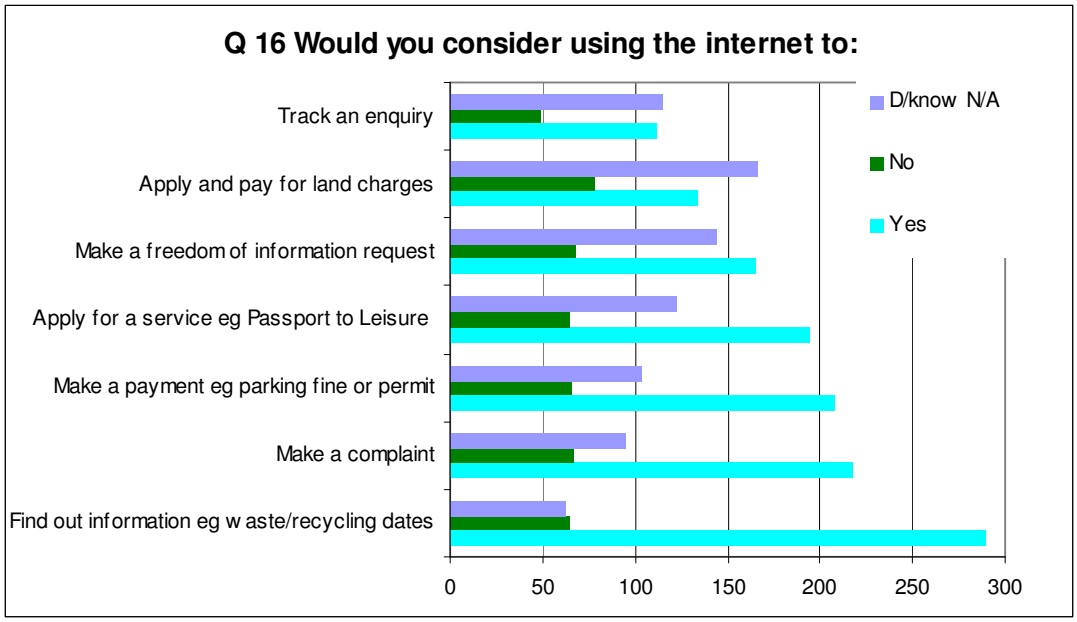
As part of the redesign we are introducing a 'you last visited' option, which links the customer to the page they last viewed, and a 'you may also like' service - these will be based on what other customers viewing the site chose. In order to make navigation simpler, we are reviewing all pages with a view to deleting those that are not viewed, and are considering moving away from the Local Government Navigation List - which our navigation is based on at present, to introduce something that makes pages easier to find.

To minimise errors on the site, we will also delete any out of date content and check that all links work. Next year, we'll review whether we can do site demonstrations to the public to improve uptake.

Q16 Looking ahead to **using our website in the future**, residents were asked if they would consider using the website if they knew certain things were on it. This question was asked of all respondents, not just those who currently use the internet. Again improving the search facility scored higher, with 71% people saying this would encourage them to use it in the future.

The following table illustrates that 81% said they would use our website to 'find out information', as opposed to transactions, showing clearly that it is a very popular way for councils to provide information to the public. Websites are seen increasingly as a reliable source of information as they can be updated instantaneously, whereas printed materials can't.

61% (217 people) said they would **consider making a complaint** via our website, whilst in a further question identified that the phone is the 'most preferred' method to make a complaint.



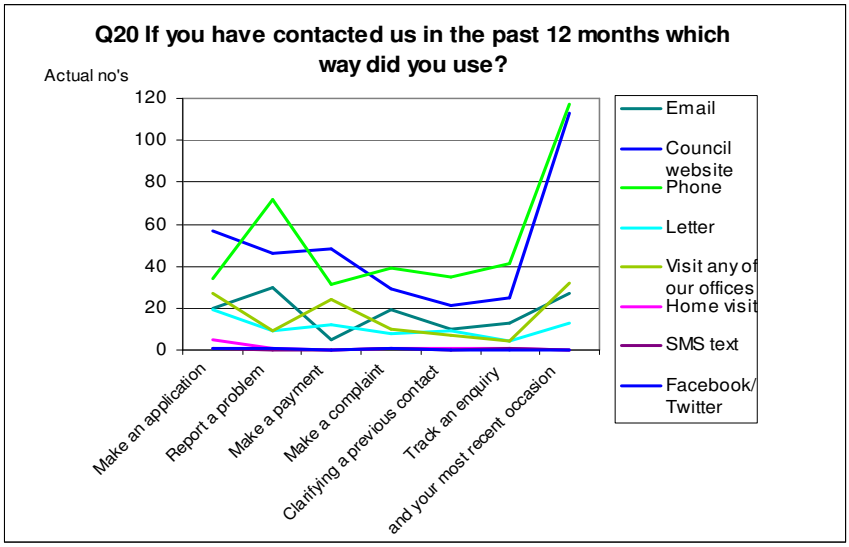
Asking why people hadn't used our website, the most common (24%) reply was, 'I would rather deal with a person from the council' whether face-to-face or on the phone. This demonstrates that we will need to work hard to persuade people that self-service is a better and more convenient option for them.

We are looking at improving the website search, introducing key words and key phrases on metadata (this facility was introduced recently) to aid searches. We plan to make the web links bolder and more prominent in the residents' magazine and in any other literature we produce, as part of a wider ongoing promotion plan.

A number of people have said they would like to track information, eg my account - which would require a link to a customer relationship management tool. We don't have at present but it is being looked into.

2.3 Contacting us

Those who'd contacted us in the past 12 months were asked which way did they used. The actual numbers are below, showing that the website was clearly favoured for finding out information, and more often used than any other method, except for 'reporting a problem' where the phone. was preferred

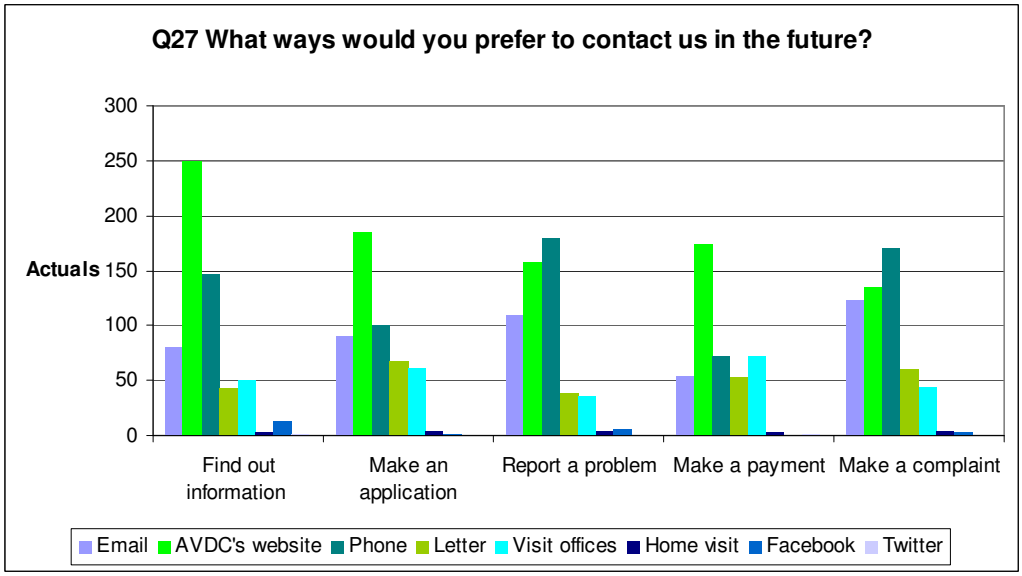


However, in the follow up question, where we asked and 'on the last occasion which method did you use' the phone was slightly more popular that the website, see previous chart.

Almost half of respondents hadn't contacted us in the last year however, this does not mean to say they haven't been on our website looking for information.

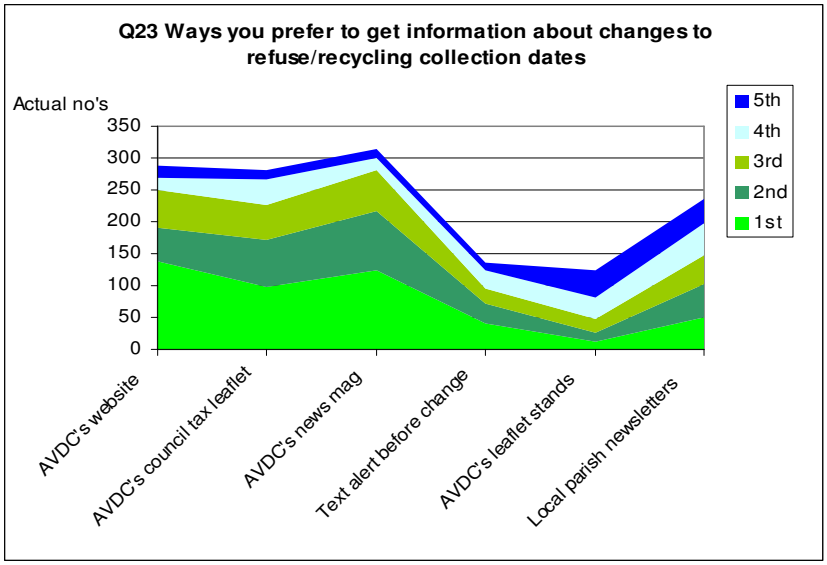
People who answered 'visited any of our offices' were invited to let us know 'why' they visit our offices rather than using other ways. 63 comments were left (this included comments for Bucks CC too). Analysis of these is underway to help identify key areas of improvement.

Finally, residents were asked to identify what ways they'd prefer to contact us in the future and the following chart shows that the phone is still preferred to make a complaint or report a problem.



2.4 Refuse & recycling information

As part of an efficiency drive, AVDC did not produce bin hangers to notify residents of changes to collection dates this year as we approached bank holidays in April and May. This year the revised collection dates were publicised in both the council news magazine, the council tax leaflet, displayed on posters in our car parks and posted on our website.



We asked people to rank which ways they'd prefer to find this information instead of bin hangers in the future. The most popular including first and second preferences combined was via

- **our council news magazine, 28%**
- on our website, 26%; and
- our council tax leaflet, 22%.

Leaflets in our leaflet stands faired least well scoring 3% of combined 1st and 2nd preferences.

2.5 AVDC Leaflet stands
Currently AVDC has over 50 small leaflet stands throughout the district, located in post offices libraries, shops and doctors surgeries.

People were asked if they'd picked up a leaflet from them in the past 12 months, 18% said 'yes' they seen them, mainly near where they worked. The most popular mentions were at Aylesbury and Buckingham libraries.

65% said they hadn't seen any at all and 17% said they couldn't remember. 68% of those how hadn't picked up a leaflet from the stands said they hadn't seem them near their work place or home, and 23% answered that they'd prefer to get information in other ways.

As part of the budget proposals for 2012-2013 we are proposing to withdraw the information stands. However, we wanted to better understand what impact this would have.

3. Next Stage

This survey was produced to support the Aspire programme and web development. Findings will be used to further assist our customer access.