

Annual Scrutiny Councillor Satisfaction Survey 2018

Introduction:

All councillors and co-opted members were invited to take part in this survey. A total of **49 surveys** have been completed which results in an overall **62.8% response rate**. – Of which 81.6% (40) are Councillors non-executive members, 8.12% (4) are Cabinet members and 10.2% are Co-opted members (5)

Participation report:

Councillors Non-Executive members:	65.6% of all non-executive members completed the survey
Cabinet Members:	36.4% of all Cabinet members completed the survey
Co-opted Members:	83.3% of all Co-opted members completed the survey

Categorisation of respondents:

The survey was divided into sections to ensure that all respondents were asked relevant questions in relation to their role within the Council and their involvement with Scrutiny.

The categories are:

- **Cabinet Members**
- Non-Executive Members – Involved with Scrutiny – referred to in this report as '**Scrutiny Councillors**' **
- **Non-executive Members – Not involved with Scrutiny** **
- **Co-opted Members**

****All Non-Executive Councillors were asked: Have you attended a Scrutiny meeting this municipal year?**

- **36** Non-Executive Members have attended a scrutiny meeting this municipal year (Scrutiny Councillors)
- **4** Non-Executive Members have not attended a scrutiny meeting this municipal year.

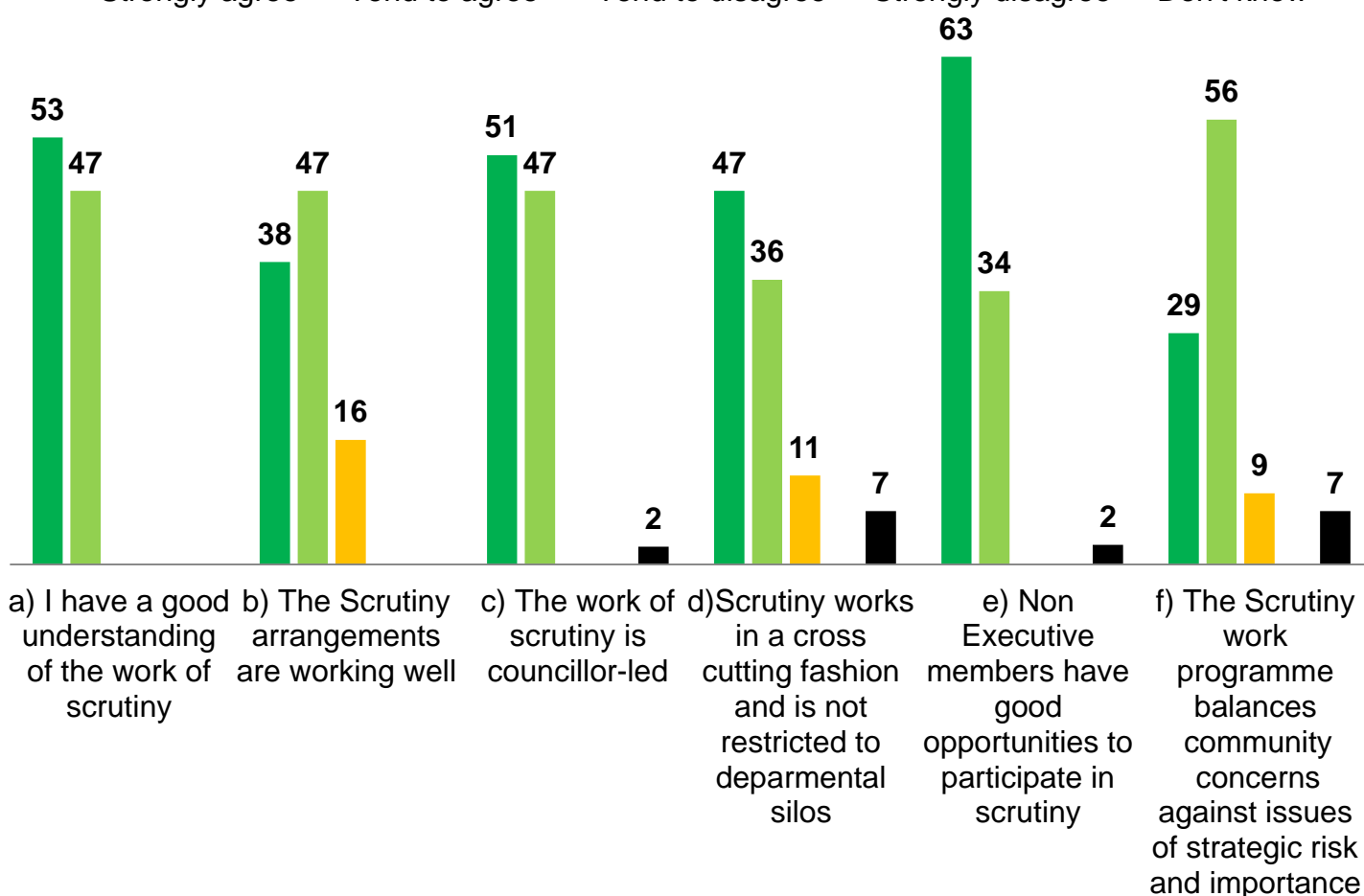
Question 1: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Scrutiny Councillors, Cabinet Members & Co-opted Members numerical responses:

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
a) I have a good understanding of the work of scrutiny	24	21	0	0	0
b) The scrutiny arrangements are working well	17	21	7	0	0
c) The work of scrutiny is councillor-led	23	21	0	0	1
d) Scrutiny works in a cross cutting fashion and is not restricted to departmental silos	21	16	5	0	3
e) Non-executive members have good opportunities to participate in scrutiny (Cabinet Members NOT asked this question)	26	14	0	0	1
f) The Scrutiny Work Programme balances community concerns against issues of strategic risk and importance	13	25	4	0	3

Scrutiny Councillors, Cabinet Members & Co-opted members responses in percentage terms (%)

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Tend to agree
 ■ Tend to disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree
 ■ Don't know

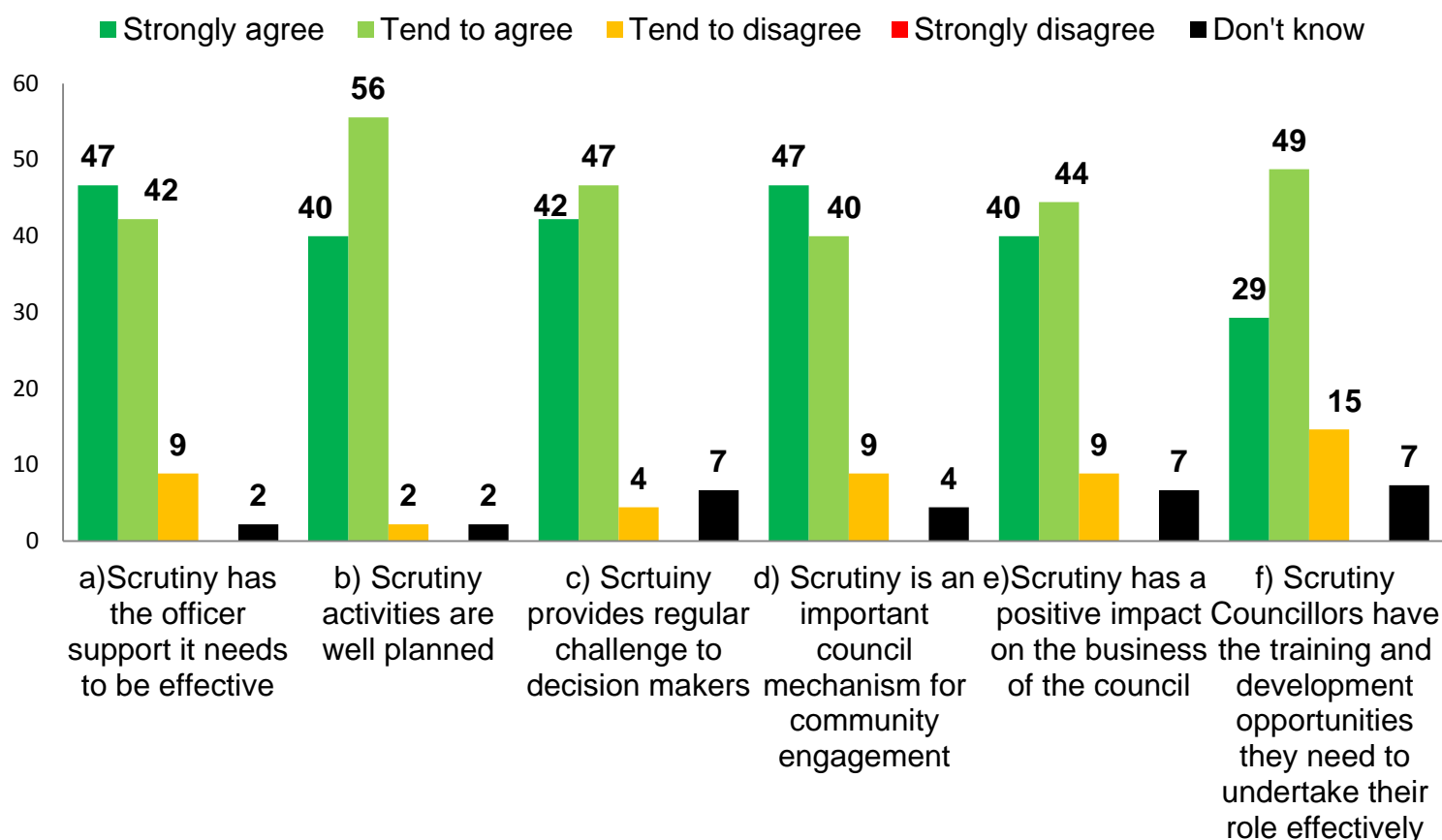


Question 2: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Scrutiny Councillors, Cabinet Members & Co-opted Members numerical responses:

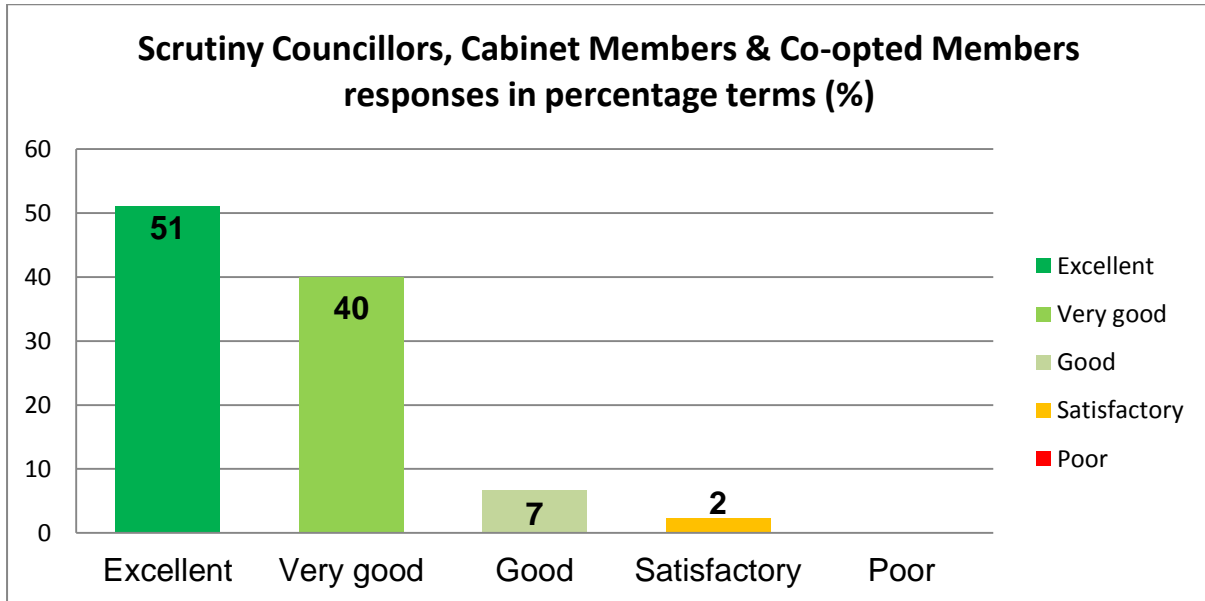
	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
a) Scrutiny has the officer support it needs to be effective	21	19	4	0	1
b) Scrutiny activities are well planned	18	25	1	0	1
c) Scrutiny provides regular challenge to decision makers	19	21	2	0	3
d) Scrutiny is an important council mechanism for community engagement	21	18	4	0	2
e) Scrutiny has a positive impact on the business of the council	18	20	4	0	3
f) Scrutiny Councillors have the training and development opportunities they need to undertake their role effectively (Cabinet members were NOT asked this question)	12	20	6	0	3

Scrutiny Councillors, Cabinet Members & Co-opted members responses in percentage terms (%)



Question 3: How would you rate the level of support you receive from the scrutiny team?

Scrutiny Councillors, Cabinet Members & Co-opted Members numerical responses				
Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
23	18	3	1	0

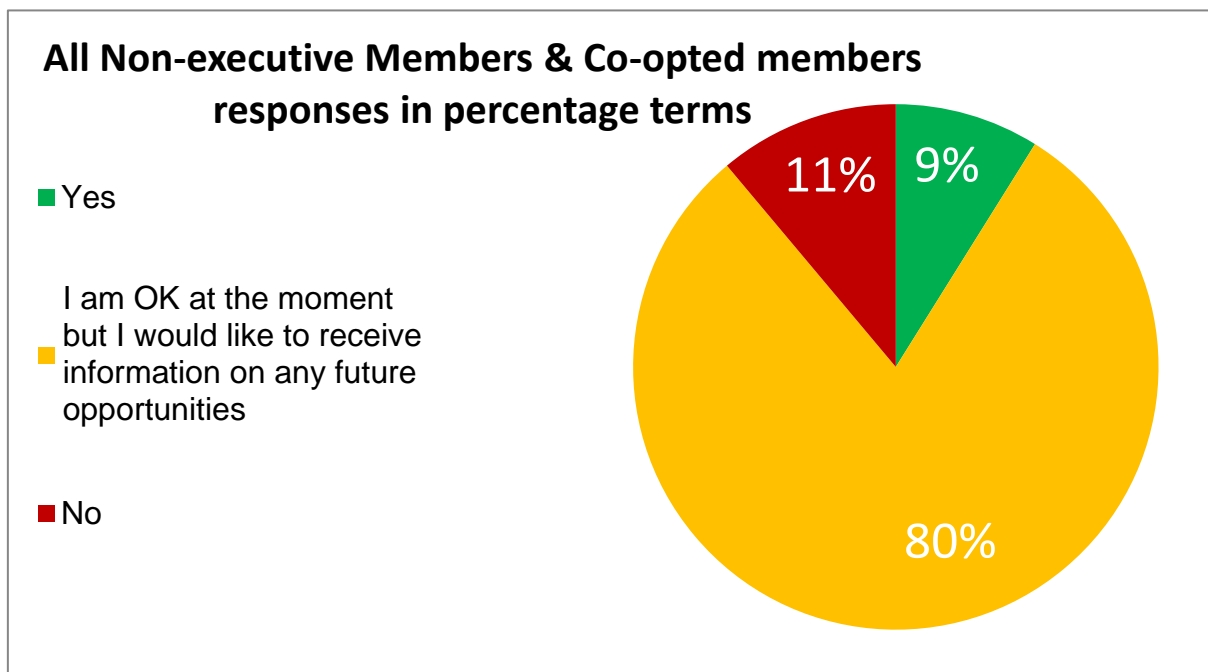


Question 3b: How could the scrutiny support be improved? (Only asked to those who rated scrutiny support as: good, satisfactory or poor)

NOTE - Comments received related to scrutiny practice / process rather than the support provided by the Scrutiny Team, and are included in comments reported later in this paper.

Question 4: Do you have any training and development needs that would assist you in your role within scrutiny / that would enable you to take part in Scrutiny?

All Non-Executive Members & Co-opted members numerical responses		
Yes	I am OK at the moment but I would like to receive information on any future opportunities	No
4	36	5



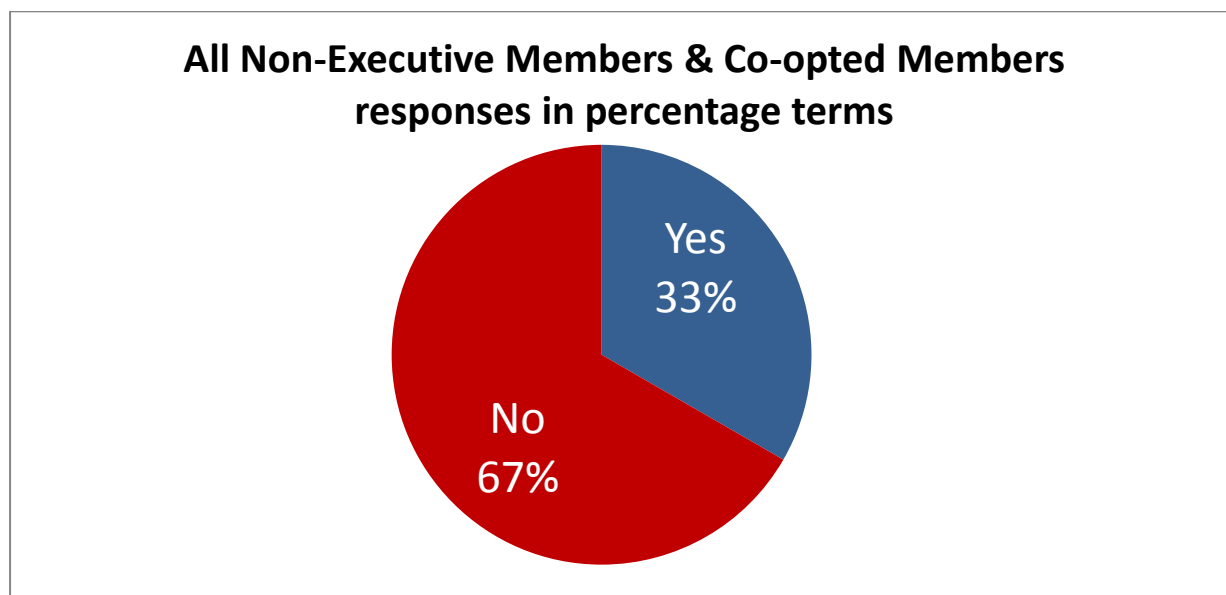
Question 4b: What training and development needs do you have?

The comments received were analysed and the following themes emerged:

- Information / briefings about departmental / officer structure / functions
- Information on any future training opportunities
- Information on how other local authorities carry out the scrutiny function and secure community participation.
- Training / workshops on the scrutiny process including work planning.

Question 5: Do you have any suggestions of topics for in-depth inquiry?

All Non-Executive Members & Co-opted Members numerical responses	
Yes	No
15	30



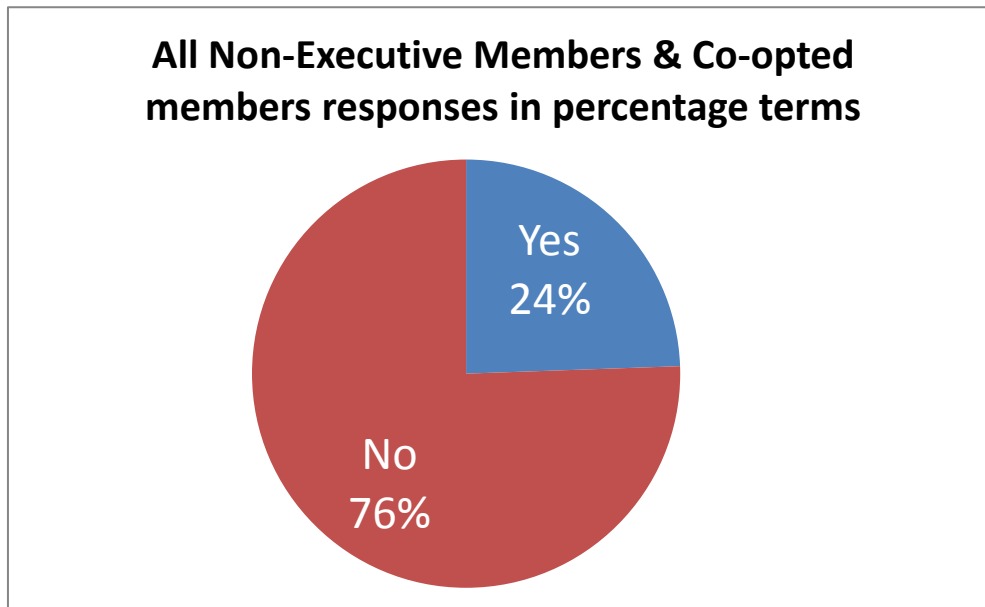
The following suggestions can be identified:

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Budget Setting
- Home to School Transport
- Homelessness (2)
- Equalities
- Community Cohesion
- Employee Health and Well being
- Economic Development - how the priorities and strategies for economic development investment are informed? How and by whom is the impact of this investment measured?
- Food Waste
- Asset Management – Council / departmental ‘ownership’ of areas of land is not easily understood by the public
- Procurement
- Corporate Building Services
- Resilience Planning – level of priority for this cross-cutting work e.g. there has been criticism of impact recent snow / freezing weather had on Council business
- Educational Standards - impact of budget
- Degradation of Council Assets, including highways
- Careers Advice in Schools

- Community Regeneration Initiatives – e.g. impact and lessons learned (e.g in Pendery and Townhill), and current approaches to community development

Question 6: Do you have any suggestions of areas for in-depth performance / finance monitoring?

All Non-Executive Members & Co-opted Members numerical responses	
Yes	No
11	34

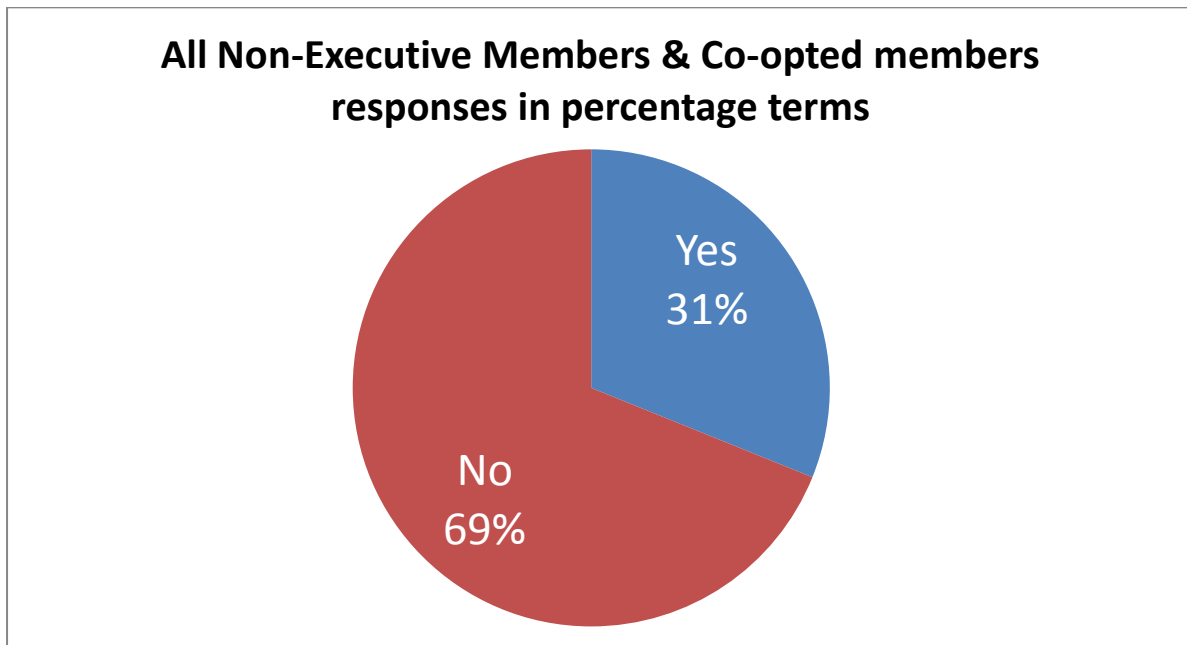


The following suggestions can be identified:

- Equalities
- Financial Monitoring
- Audit Trails
- Housing Stock Improvement
- Community budgeting - understanding how much money we could save if we managed to reduce demand on extremely overburdened services
- Adult Day Services
- Developing Tourism
- Council's Financial Investments
- Western Bay
- Impact of decision to instruct officers to only engage in cost recovery work
- Funding / Grants to Voluntary/Community Groups – effectiveness / value for money.
- Grand Theatre and similar venues

Question 7: Do you have any suggestions of topics for one-off scrutiny meetings / working groups?

All Non-Executive Members & Co-opted Members numerical responses	
Yes	No
14	31



The following suggestions can be identified:

- School Crossing Patrols
- Waste Incineration
- Weed Control - use of Glyphosphate for weed control.
- Archive Service
- Procurement
- By-laws on caravan parking
- Food Waste
- Housing
- Parking (holistic review)
- The Management of Cemeteries
- Enforcement
- Dog Fouling
- Community Policing
- Council Management to deal with Inclement Weather
- Housing Waiting List - process for allocating points
- Carers and Young Carers

Topic suggestions from Cabinet Members:

- Effectiveness of pupil development grant & Underperformance of boys, especially free school meals (FSM) boys starting with early years and foundation phase

Question 8: What if anything, do you particularly like about Scrutiny in Swansea?

Scrutiny Councillors & Co-opted members

The comments received were analysed and the following themes emerged (numbers in brackets denote multiple responses on the same issue):

The Role Itself:

- The opportunity to discuss and challenge e.g. making decision-makers accountable for their decisions, and looking deeper into matters that affect the public (4)
- Cross cutting, good opportunity for in depth work

Member-led Process:

- Councillor led, interesting and varied. Councillors are at liberty to explore matters with both Cabinet members and officers - and to require responses. Ability to include requests from councillors and public quicker (4)

Cross Party Working:

- The All-In-It together for the benefit of Swansea attitude. Good cross party involvement / collaboration. Inclusive. Gives every councillor a voice (6)

Opportunities to Learn & Develop Knowledge

- The Performance panels are effective because we can build up in-depth knowledge and focus on specific subject areas
- Helps me know more about a topic e.g. tethered horses
- Quality of information

Officer Support:

- Very good well-established officer support, well managed and supportive processes, excellent communication and very approachable (6)

Involving the public:

- Open and welcoming to all - an opportunity for the taxpayers of Swansea to get involved.
- Able to include requests from public quicker

Question 9: What if anything, do you think could be improved about Scrutiny in Swansea?

Scrutiny Councillors & Co-opted members

The comments received were analysed and the following themes emerged (numbers in brackets denote multiple responses on the same issue):

Scrutiny / Governance Arrangements:

- More in-depth subject based permanent scrutiny committees that can pick up the work of working groups and subject cabinet members and officers to effective and regular scrutiny
- Concerns about the lack of clarity in the role of scrutiny vis a vis Policy Development & Delivery Committees

Councillor Involvement:

- More councillor involvement / greater representation as some do not get involved (4)
- Still not sure that all those on a panel / working group are involved enough in the initial scoping

Resources:

- More scrutiny staff (2)
- More resource

Timing of Meetings

- Timings of some meetings could be better but this is more of a member issue (2)

Cabinet Member Q & A Sessions:

- More time allocated to Cabinet Q & As.

Response to scrutiny:

- Listen to the advice of the scrutiny & act on it
- More notice taken of what scrutiny recommends
- Act upon the reports instead of shelving them
- Perhaps more follow up on letters from Cabinet Members
- Push for better results

Visibility of impact:

- Results, chase up
- Revisit work after a year to review impact

- Clearer information as to how scrutiny recommendations have affected decisions, policy etc.

Public Engagement:

- Better engagement with wider community/ public involvement and attendance
- We have a lot of meetings with very poor community participation. If that is a key element of the scrutiny process then perhaps we need to rethink our approach
- We should have much greater public engagement. Communications Team could help?

Question 10: What if anything, have you found difficult in your experience of Scrutiny?

Scrutiny Councillors & Co-opted members

The comments received were analysed and the following themes emerged (numbers in brackets denote multiple responses on the same issue):

Cabinet Engagement / Response:

- Some hostility from Executive at perception of criticism.
- Unwillingness on occasions to accept constructive questioning by some
- Worry that the document is discarded and not acted upon at the end of the piece of work.
- The process for effecting change is very slow and often cabinet members can decide not to take action following recommendations; there is very little that can be done then and it feels like a waste of significant time and effort.

Officer Engagement:

- Resistance to change from officers.

Ability to Participate:

- Time needed to travel to and sit in meetings.
- 4pm meetings difficult to attend if you work outside of Swansea.
- Clash with other councillor or other commitments.
- Difficult to commit if you are a working councillor and work requirements crop up last minute (3)
- Lack of flexibility in meeting times.
- Sometimes getting my point across.
- Challenging fellow Councillors as a 'critical friend', particularly if same party.

Balance of Work with Available Resources:

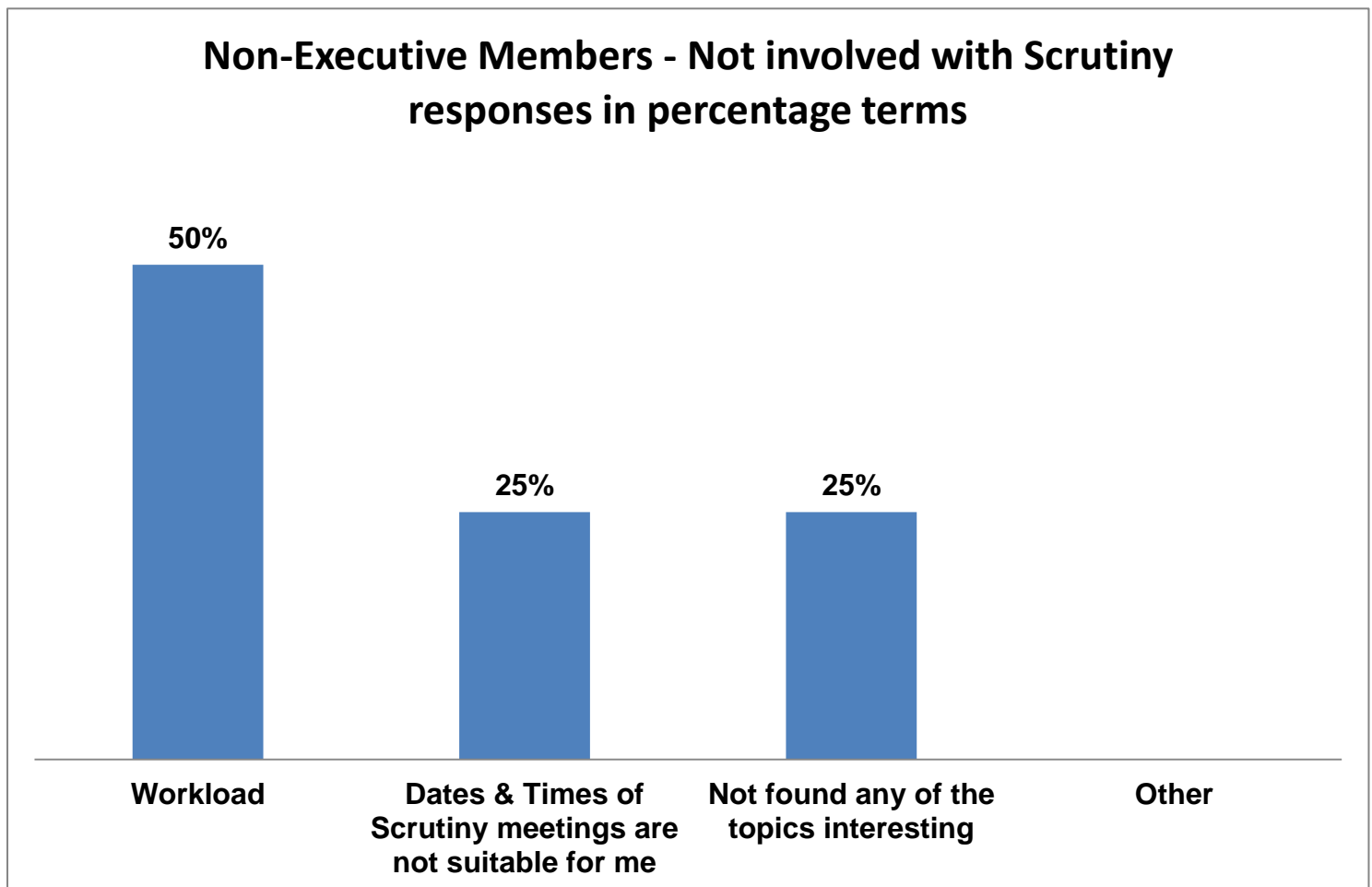
- Trying to do too much with too few resources, not enough scrutiny support and research staff and without an effective committee structure.
- The pace of work for some topics seems slow because of the frequency of scrutiny meetings.

Reports to Scrutiny:

- Sometimes overloaded with reports up front, not only can be overwhelming but can also risk the scrutiny being led by it, rather than helping to inform it
- The constant use of acronyms. Trying to avoid asking daft questions, so staying silent, only to hear someone else ask the question

Question 11: Why have you not been involved with scrutiny? – **Only asked to non-executive councillors who have not been involved with Scrutiny in the last municipal year.**

Non – Executive Members – Not involved with Scrutiny numerical responses			
Workload	Dates & Times of Scrutiny meetings are not suitable for me	Not found any of the topics interesting	Other
2	1	1	0



Question 12: Do you have any further comments you wish to make about Scrutiny in Swansea?

The comments received were analysed and the following themes emerged (some responses to this question here have been included in other parts of this paper where more relevant):

The work of the Committee / Panel / Working Groups:

- Purpose of the Scrutiny Programme Committee unclear.
- Child and Family Services scrutiny very valuable and worthwhile.
- The Schools scrutiny could be more innovative
- A clear focus / explanation of aims at the beginning would be good
- Start with a blank sheet, whole panel or working group then agrees a limited number of relevant questions, which may require accessing existing reports to help provide additional information

Scrutiny Team:

- Congratulations to the scrutiny officers on the work they do in the background - it is very thorough, professional and appreciated.
- The Scrutiny Team in Swansea do a first class job in providing evidence gathering, quality and standards of the agenda's / minutes and the whole scrutiny team are very helpful and professional in carrying out their duties / roles of work
- The reduction in the number of scrutiny officers seems to be having an impact on their capacity to take on additional workloads, so this always has to be a factor in the scrutiny process.

General:

- I have always supported scrutiny and will continue to do so
- Papers take valuable officer time and effort to prepare – frustrating if appear not to have been read.
- Fewer topics, better attendance and read / use the papers requested.