

Notice of Meeting

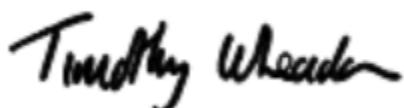
Council – Advisory Meeting

Councillor Ms Merry (Mayor) Councillor Gbadebo (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors Allen, Angell, Atkinson, Bhandari, Dr Barnard,
Bettison OBE, Bidwell, D Birch, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brown, Brunel-
Walker, Dudley, Finch, Ms Gaw, Mrs L Gibson, MJ Gibson, Green,
Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Ms Hayes, Heydon,
Mrs Ingham, Kennedy, Kirke, Leake, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-
Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Neil, Parker, Porter, Skinner,
Temperton, Turrell, Virgo and Wade



Wednesday 12 January 2022, 7.30 - 9.00 pm

Online only - via Teams

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy Wheaton".

Timothy Wheaton
Chief Executive

Agenda

Recommendations arising from this meeting will be considered in accordance with the delegations approved by Council on 28 April 2021.

Item	Description	Page
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The meeting will be opened with prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain

1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting	5 - 12
	To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24 November 2021.	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
	<p>Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or affected interests in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.</p> <p>Any Member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter should withdraw from the meeting when the matter is under consideration and should notify the Democratic Services Officer in attendance that they are withdrawing as they have such an interest. If the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is not entered on the register of Members interests the Monitoring Officer must be notified of the interest within 28 days.</p> <p>Any Member with an affected Interest in a matter must disclose the interest to the meeting. There is no requirement to withdraw from the meeting when the interest is only an affected interest, but the Monitoring Officer should be notified of the interest, if not previously notified of it, within 28 days of the meeting.</p>	

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4.	Mayor's Announcements	
5.	Executive Report	13 - 52
	<p>To receive the Leader's report on the work of the Executive since the Council meeting held on 24 November 2021.</p> <p>Council is asked to resolve a recommendation in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations of the Members' Equalities Working Group 	
6.	Proportionality and membership	53 - 58
	<p>To consider the position regarding the overall allocation of seats on committees as a result of the by-election held on 9 December 2021.</p>	
7.	Questions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10	
	<p>(i) <u>Councillor Temperton to Councillor Bettison OBE, Leader of the Council</u> Can we have an update on what the Council is doing to welcome and support our refugees to Bracknell Forest?</p> <p>(ii) <u>Councillor Bidwell to Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance</u> Energy prices are increasing adding to a steady increase in inflation, currently 5.1%. Commentators suggest that family costs are going to increase by £1200 per annum and that the lowest income families will once again suffer: What is the Strategy for supporting those that are most vulnerable? Is there sufficient money in any existing hardship fund to support those in need and if not, can more be added to this year's budget?</p>	
8.	Motions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 11	
	<p>Motion 06/2021 moved by Councillor Merry seconded by Councillor Temperton This Council adopts a Mayor's Charter as set out below:</p> <p>BFC Mayor's Charter</p> <p>Statement of minimum standards of behaviour expected from all Councillors at all times. The Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles) - selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership -have long been the basis for ensuring high standards in public life. These are the basis for the behaviours this Council and all its Councillors will adopt. Our Councillors will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage and foster constructive democratic debate and 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• tolerance of other points of view• promote and defend the dignity of others, treating all with courtesy and respect• not engage in bullying, harassment, or victimisation, nor unlawfully discriminate against another member or group• challenge unacceptable behaviour whenever it occurs. <p>Any behaviour that falls short of that included in the above statement will be dealt with under the Council's Standards and Code of Conduct processes. If any breach appears to break the criminal law, it will be referred to the police.</p>	
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Published: 4 January 2022

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COUNCIL – ADVISORY MEETING 24 NOVEMBER 2021 7.30 - 9.00 PM

Present:

Councillors Ms Merry (Mayor), Gbadebo (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Angell, Atkinson, Bhandari, Dr Barnard, Bettison OBE, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Brown, Brunel-Walker, Finch, Ms Gaw, Mrs L Gibson, MJ Gibson, Green, Mrs Hamilton, Harrison, Mrs Hayes MBE, Ms Hayes, Heydon, Kennedy, Kirke, Leake, Mrs McKenzie, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean, Mrs Mattick, Mossom, Neil, Porter, Temperton, Turrell, Virgo and Wade

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors D Birch, Dudley, Mrs Ingham, Parker and Skinner

25. Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 15 September 2021 be approved, and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

26. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Harrison declared an affected interest in Item 11, Motions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 11, and in particular Motion 5 – 2021, by virtue of being a shareholder in sustainable aviation fuel.

27. Mayor's Announcements

Welcome to new Chaplain

The Mayor welcomed her new chaplain Father Malcolm Chalmers of Holy Trinity Church who had stepped into the role. Father Malcolm's first engagement had been to officiate at the civic service on Sunday 24 October at The Parish Church of St Michael & St Mary Magdalene, Easthampstead. The Mayor reflected that they had been honoured to be joined by the Deputy Lieutenant Mrs Lindsay Beard JP DL and dignitaries from neighbouring boroughs.

Older People's Day Events

The Mayor thanked Councillor Ms Gaw, Older People's Champion, for organising the bingo session hosted by Shopmobility and Councillor Temperton for arranging the silver week tea party with a quiz provided by Easthampstead Park School.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Events

The Mayor had attended the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Celebration event on 2 October which recognised new and existing fire fighters and their support teams for their hard work during the pandemic. Crowthorne Community Fire station was officially reopened on 15 October which offered a shared location for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Thames Valley Police and South Central Ambulance Service.

Honouring the Armed Forces

The Mayor had visited the poppy pod which was set up in the Lexicon allowing online donations to be made to support the Poppy Appeal. Remembrance Sunday events were held across the borough with wreaths laid by councillors in their wards. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor attended services in Bracknell and the Leader of the Council attended the service in Sandhurst. Sandhurst and Bracknell Town Councils were thanked for organising the parades.

Open Learning Centre

Joining Councillor Dr Barnard, the Mayor had observed the work being carried out to support community learning by taking part in a water colour class for beginners and meeting students of all ages at the English language café.

Tribute to James Finnie

On 30 October 2021 a memorial service was held for ex-Councillor Jim Finnie, Freeman of the Borough and former Crowthorne ward councillor. After the service a small ceremony was held to formally name the square outside of Crowthorne Library as Jim Finnie Square – a tribute to someone who had dedicated so much of his life to the Borough. The Mayor thanked Immediate Past Mayor, Councillor Mrs McKenzie for attending on her behalf.

Other highlights

The Mayor highlighted a number of other events she had attended including the opening of the Lexicon's Christmas Market, the talent at the Crowthorne and Sandhurst Art Exhibition, the Involve and Homestart Annual General meetings, the weekly online Citizenship Ceremonies, the Presentation ceremony for the Queens Award for Voluntary Service as well as the opening of the Crown Court at the start of the Judicial Year. The Mayor concluded by reporting that all 26 of the borough's iconic poppies were safely stored.

Improvements to Lily Hill Park

Councillor Angell was pleased to report that significant improvements were being made at Lily Hill Park in the Bullbrook ward. £13.5k of Section 106 open space/recreation funding had been agreed. 23 new spires would be erected containing photos and information on the park's history, including text in braille for those visually impaired.

28. Executive Report

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bettison OBE, presented his report on the work of the Executive since that reported at the Council meeting on 15 September 2021. The Executive had met three times on 21 September, 19 October and 16 November 2021.

The Leader highlighted the following matters that had been considered:

- The Residents Survey on Covid 19 Impact included many insights:
 - 67% of residents questioned were satisfied with the way the Council was supporting the community during pandemic which was an increase from 56% in July 2020

- 86% of residents who volunteered intended to keep volunteering in the community
- 83% residents believed the pandemic had a positive impact on appreciation of local wildlife and environment
- 54% believed the pandemic had had a negative impact on children's education
- The top priorities for Council identified by the survey respondents were:
 - Helping local business and economy rescue (20%)
 - Supporting vulnerable and affected people to recover (16%)
 - Reopening facilities and services (15%)
- The surplus land at the Depot Site had been offered to the Cambian Partnership with a site development plan required by October 2022
- Due to market conditions it was agreed to defer the development decision about Market Street – Block D until 2024
- Revised Local Development Scheme 2021 – 2024 had been agreed reflecting the latest timing for Local Plan submission before Christmas and the Joint Minerals & Waste Disposal Plan.
- The Bracknell Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016 – 2036 "made" following the positive vote in favour of the Plan on 9 September 2021.
- The Public Protection Partnership Business Plan 2022/23 local priorities were agreed including animal Welfare, fly tipping, licencing and air quality linked to climate change. The approach to Wokingham Borough Council leaving the Partnership was agreed.
- The Community Hubs at Bucklers Park and Binfield were nearing completion. The preferred approach was for Parish Councils to operate and there was recognition of cost pressures so possible support package to be agreed. Alternative procurement approaches were also agreed.
- The Equality Scheme 2022-25 was agreed, actions from the Scheme would be reflected in 2022/23 Service Plans and were based on five objectives:
 - Inclusive in all we do
 - Accessible for all
 - Accountable and Fair
 - Diverse and inclusive workforce
 - Recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic
- The Education Capital Strategy 2022-26 was agreed to address surplus capacity at primary stage and discuss with Headteachers and Governors the future use of school estate with the potential to enhance the local special needs offer.
- The Strategic procurement plan for All Age Advocacy Tender was agreed.
- The distribution and procurement approach agreed for supermarket vouchers to meet March 2022 distribution deadline for the Household Support Grant
- A proposal to acquire six properties via S106 and borrowing was discussed to address the shortage of one bedroom accommodation for temporary placements of homeless households.

- The Overview and Scrutiny review of Food Waste in Flats and HMO's examined options for extending successful food waste collection scheme. Recommendations agreed included:
 - Progressive roll out to up to 1800 properties in Spring 2022
 - All new HMO licences and renewals to contain condition regarding waste storage and disposal
- The Overview and Scrutiny review of Blue Badges was prompted by BBC research covering approximately 30% of local authorities. The review had recommended a review of refusal letters to ensure sufficient clarity and development of local guidelines on approach to assessing applications.

The supplementary report contained recommendations that the Council was asked to resolve in respect of the following matter:

- **Funding for shortage of one bedroom accommodation for temporary placements of homeless households**

Councillor Temperton asked whether it could be confirmed when the keep fit classes, which had been run across community centres pre Covid for older residents, would be restarted and if this was not planned then an explanation provided. Councillor Bettison OBE committed to responding.

Councillor Temperton reiterated that at the Council meeting on 24 February 2021 the Leader had agreed that the Climate Change Strategy would be more prominent on the Council's home page on the website but this did not appear to have been actioned. Councillor Bettison OBE replied that he was aware of this and was looking into how to rectify this. Councillor Brunel-Walker, Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration confirmed he would discuss this with the Head of Communications and Marketing as he was aware that how residents searched, and accessed information was tracked and was not typically through the Council's home page anymore.

In response to Councillor Brown's question as to whether new guidelines on Blue Badge application process would be available on the Council's website the Leader agreed that the priority was supporting residents to be better informed, more fairly dealt with and accessibility improved information was part of this.

On the proposition of Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning, seconded by Councillor Bettison OBE it was

RECOMMENDED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE that:

- i) the total capital spend of up to £1,177,200 commencing in the 2021-22 financial year, be approved, in order to purchase six properties to ensure that Council has suitable temporary emergency affordable housing; and
- ii) £450,000 (£75,000 per property) of this total, be approved, to be funded through S106 affordable housing commuted funds, which will not incur borrowing costs and that borrowing be approved to fund the remaining balance of £727,200. The cost of borrowing and MRP (minimum revenue provision) will be met by net rental income so will be cost neutral.

29. Adoption of Statement of Licensing Policy Principles under S.349 of the Gambling Act 2005

Council considered the report containing the responses received during the consultation period and sought adoption of the Statement of Licensing Policy Principles under the Gambling Act 2005.

On the proposition of Councillor Porter, Chair of Licensing and Safety Committee, seconded by Councillor Harrison it was

RECOMMENDED that

- i) the Statement and the consultation responses be received;
- ii) the Public Protection Partnership Manager, in consultation with the Chairman of the Licensing and Safety Committee Chairman, be delegated authority to make any minor corrections to the report prior to publication and
- iii) the Statement for adoption and publication by the 31st January 2022 be approved.

As the decision was reserved for Council and could not be delegated to the Chief Executive, a quorate Council meeting would be arranged to confirm adoption.

30. Bracknell Forest Community Governance Review

Council considered the report which sought agreement to commence a full community governance review of the Bracknell Forest borough area.

On the proposition of Councillor Allen, Chair of Governance and Audit Committee, seconded by Councillor Mrs Birch it was

RECOMMENDED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE that

- i) the commencement of the formal process to undertake a full community governance review of the Bracknell Forest borough area as set out in section 5 of the report be agreed; and
- ii) authority to agree the review Terms of Reference be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Boundary Review Group.

31. Meetings Arrangements

Council considered the report which sought approval to the proposed governance arrangements for councillor decision-making meetings when the current arrangements expired on 31 December 2021.

On the proposition of Councillor Bettison OBE, Leader of the Council, seconded by Councillor Brossard it was

RECOMMENDED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE that

- i) the current arrangements for council, executive and committee meetings agreed at the 28 April 2021 council meeting remain in place for a further three months until 31 March 2022;
- ii) before the arrangements expired, the decision whether to extend them for a further three months until 30 June 2022 be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council;

- iii) in the limited circumstances where a decision was reserved in law to the council and could not be delegated a quorate in-person meeting of the council would be held;
- iv) all non-decision-making meetings to continue to take place remotely;
- v) the suspension of the six-month councillor attendance rule, set out in s85 of the Local Government Act 1972, be extended to the next Annual Council meeting currently scheduled for 18 May 2022. Should the interim meetings arrangements continue beyond that date a decision to extend the suspension further be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

32. **Schedule of meetings 2022-23**

Council considered the report which set out the proposed schedule of meetings for 2022-23.

On the proposition of Councillor Leake, Chair of Employment Committee, seconded by Councillor Allen it was

RECOMMENDED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE that the schedule of meetings 2022-23 as set out in the annex to the agenda report be approved.

33. **Questions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 10**

Councillor L Gibson asked Councillor Dr Barnard, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning the following published question:

Following up on the debate regarding provision for Children Looked After, at the last meeting of this full Council, can you please report back on your deliberations?

Councillor Dr Barnard responded that he had sought guidance from officers regarding the proposal to establish a children's home in order to keep children in the area and attending their local school. He stated that Bracknell Forest was not seeking to provide a Children's Home as discussed because of the resources required to commission such a facility, the unknown outcomes for children homed there and the diverse range of children requiring differing support. He reported that it may have a detrimental effect on the Council's ability to support individual children. He reiterated that the most important thing for children entering the Looked After system was the provision of a nurturing environment within a family home. He advised that recruitment of foster carers was the focus for the Council. He confirmed that the key requirement of providing education for any children that needed to move school place were able to attend a good or outstanding school within the borough. He reported that a residential joint project with Public Health was looking to provide a family setting for two young people with very specific yet significant needs who were currently placed outside of Bracknell Forest. He concluded that the Council was committed to a foster first approach and encouraged more foster carers to come forward to work with the Council.

Councillor Temperton asked Councillor Bettison OBE, Leader of the Council the following published question:

In order to achieve value for money for residents, how does the Council assess the quality of work delivered versus the cost of contractors and ensure it is in line with the expectations guaranteed throughout the tender process? How is the work evaluated and the contract reviewed following feedback from customers/residents?

Councillor Bettison OBE replied that the Council ensured value for money for its residents by inspecting specific items of work when delivered and, on longer term contracts, officers regularly monitored the results of work, met with contractors and took feedback from residents and councillors. He stated that the Council was conscious that whenever it commissioned work or a service it was being delivered on the council's behalf.

Councillor Temperton requested, as a supplementary question, that a statement explaining in detail the monitoring of contracts and standard of work be added to the website so that councillors could reassure their residents of the value for money provided and signpost residents to it. Councillor Bettison responded that feedback from customers was welcomed and anything that could be done to help them know how to provide it would be done. He expanded that what was required would vary between different services, but he concluded that he was confident that those responsible for the website content would be able to signpost residents as appropriate.

34. **Motions Submitted Under Council Procedure Rule 11**

Motion 04/2021 was moved and seconded by Councillors Temperton and Neil respectively as follows:

The Council asks the Executive to look into providing live streaming of public meetings once we return to face to face meetings.

An amendment to the motion was proposed and seconded by Councillors Bettison OBE and Leake respectively as follows:

- ‘asks’ to be replaced with ‘supports’
- ‘to look into’ to be replaced with ‘in’

Councillors Temperton and Neil accepted the proposed amendment and the substantive motion became:

The Council supports the Executive in providing live streaming of public meetings once we return to face to face meetings.

On being put to the vote the new substantive motion was carried.

Motion 05/2021 was moved and seconded by Councillors Turrell and Brunel-Walker respectively as follows:

Bracknell Forest Council fully supports the UK government’s commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The Council encourages the local aviation industry to contribute to this by adopting, at the earliest opportunity, new operational practices and innovative solutions such as Sustainable Aviation Fuels. The Council recognises that these changes have the potential to cut carbon emissions whilst delivering

new employment and economic benefits, nationally and locally, which is welcomed.

On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

CHAIRMAN

To: Council
12 January 2022

Executive Report to Council The Leader

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Since the Council meeting on 24 November 2021, the Executive has met once, on the 14 December 2021. The meeting was conducted remotely and as such it was acting in an advisory capacity, making recommendations to the individual executive members who are empowered to make the formal decisions. This approach was in line with the decisions taken by Council on 28 April 2021 to reduce, as far as possible the need for face-to-face meetings whilst the risk of COVID-19 infection remains a threat to the lives of members and officers.

- 1.2 Updated Forward Plans are published every Friday and can be viewed online at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk. Full details on the decisions taken by individual portfolio holders can also be accessed online through the Council's website.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **Council is asked to consider the recommendations set out at paragraph 5.6.6.**

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The reasons for recommendations are set out in the supporting information and in the reports considered by the Executive.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Alternative options are discussed in the relevant individual reports considered by the Executive.

5 Supporting Information

Finance & Transformation

5.1 Capital Programme 2022/23 - 2024/25 and Revenue Budget 2022/23

- 5.1.1 The Executive approved for consultation a draft capital programme based on total spending of £9.309m of which:
 - £7.037m of expenditure is to be externally funded.
 - £1.113m of expenditure is to be funded from S106.
 - £1m would be reserved for Invest-to-Save schemes.

- 5.1.2 The Executive also agreed its draft revenue budget proposals for 2022/23 as the basis for consultation. These proposals included the Treasury Management Strategy

and associated documents which the Executive requested that the Governance and Audit Committee review.

- 5.1.3 Both the draft revenue and capital programmes will now be considered by Overview & Scrutiny and their views along with any submitted by residents and local groups will be reported to the Executive and Full Council in February when the final budget proposals for 2022/23 will be agreed.
- 5.1.4 The Executive has also approved an increase in the budget for the existing Time Square Community Hub capital scheme of £0.140m for improvements to the Council Chamber in the current year. The funding will cover the cost of new technology to support the broadcasting of meetings as well as enabling hybrid meetings where people may participate whether in the Chamber or at a remote location. In addition to its use for a range of public meetings of the Council and its Committees, the technology would be suitable for local businesses and other organisations to run hybrid meetings such as conferences, training, seminars etc.

Planning & Transport

5.2 Community Infrastructure Levy Overview and Scrutiny Review

- 5.2.1 The Executive has accepted the following recommendations of the Education, Skills and Growth Overview & Scrutiny Panel arising from its review into the Community Infrastructure Levy.
 - 1 That a review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) rates be undertaken following the adoption of the Bracknell Forest Borough Council Local Plan.
 - 2 That the Community Infrastructure Levy Policy be updated to claw back unspent allocated CIL funding from Parish/Town Councils after five years unless funding has already been allocated to a large-scale joint project or the money is already committed for revenue or capital projects. Clawed back funding should be reallocated to infrastructure projects defined at borough level.
 - 3 That an 18-month grace period be given for clawing back devolved funding to enable Parish/Town Councils to spend CIL funding already allocated but unspent due to Covid-19 pressures, commencing on 19 July 2021 when all Covid-19 restrictions were lifted.
 - 4 That all Parish/Town Councils receive notification of liability notices and demand notices on a regular basis, at least twice a year, to align with the payment of the Parish Portion and a named lead officer be identified for all CIL enquiries for the Parish/Town Councils.
 - 5 That the Parish and Town Council Liaison Group allows time to discuss CIL funding twice a year to coincide with twice yearly CIL payments to the towns and parishes, to include time to discuss projects identified in the Council's proposed budget as well as identified projects by Parish/Town Councils.
 - 6 That Parish/Town Councils adhere to the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended 2019) by consulting residents about how CIL funding should be spent as part of their regular consultation with local residents and creating an annual report detailing their CIL balances and

- proposed spend annually, and ensuring their annual reports are publicly available.
- 7 That all Parish/Town Councils agree a local CIL Policy and commission joint training for Parish and Town Councillors regarding the purposes and potential usage of CIL funding.
- 5.2.2 The recommendations reflected the great emphasis this Council places on ensuring that sufficient infrastructure is in place in the right locations at the right time to support investment and growth. This could also be said of the six Parish and Town Councils in the borough. However, the review found they could all work better together to make best use of CIL funding to benefit their residents and that is why the recommendations have been made. It was apparent that there was a need for better information about what projects CIL funding could be used to support at a Parish/Town Council level. Due to the complexity of the topic better information and increased joint working between Bracknell Forest Council and the six Parish/Town Councils would enable more effective use of CIL funding.
- Adult Services, Health and Housing**
- 5.3 Housing Assistance Policy**
- 5.3.1 The Executive has approved an updated Housing Assistance Policy. The focus of this Policy is one of prevention and is to enable independent living, by supporting those whose independence may be at risk to access housing (including their current home), which meets their needs. The policy will offer wider financial support to older and disabled people to carry out adaptations and essential repairs to enable them to live independently at home for as long as possible.
- 5.3.2 The Policy will be reviewed at 5-yearly intervals, whilst the Executive has also delegated authority to the Executive Director: People in consultation with the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing to make minor amendments to the policy in the interim to comply with new legislation and guidance, suspend the approval of any discretionary housing assistance offered in the policy, introduce new assistance to help vulnerable, disabled and older residents should funding become available and set the annual level of funding to be made available for discretionary assistance offered under this policy, in the first year of implementation to be set at a maximum of 15% of the annual DFG budget.
- 5.4 Development of the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-2024**
- 5.4.1 The Executive has approved the publication of the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy 2021-2024 and the funding priorities set out in the strategy which will inform the commissioning of support services for domestic abuse.
- 5.4.2 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires local authorities to prepare a Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy, with the assistance of the domestic abuse Local Partnership Board. Locally, the Domestic Abuse Executive Group fulfils the role of the Local Partnership Board.
- 5.4.3 The Strategy was produced having regard to a local needs assessment, drawing on data from a range of sources and organisations. This was supplemented by a programme of engagement and structured interviews with victims of domestic abuse and interviews with professionals and front-line staff, as well as stakeholder engagement with key organisations and the Domestic Abuse Executive Group,

analysis of case files and records and mapping of support services available in the local area.

- 5.4.4 The findings have led to four broad priority areas being identified with recommendations and actions under each with appropriate funding, focusing on the issues identified. The priorities are:

- 1 To raise awareness and provide information on available services and support options.
- 2 To improve access and pathways to appropriate safe accommodation options.
- 3 To ensure effective, multi-agency working and specialist support to meet a wide variety of needs.
- 4 To continue to develop our understanding of needs through improved data collection and ensuring survivors have an effective voice.

5.5 Commissioning of Sensory Needs Services

- 5.5.1 The Executive has approved the strategic procurement plan for procuring a provider (or multiple providers) of the Council's Sensory Needs Services for Bracknell Forest residents. The Care Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to ensure that people with sensory impairments are supported by professionals with relevant skills and experience. Providing this support will meet the minimum requirements under the Act, and ensure that people with visual, hearing or dual sensory loss are afforded the opportunity to live as independently as possible and access their community safely. This is expected to reduce the risk of social isolation and the impact this can have on other acute services.
- 5.5.2 Demographically Bracknell Forest has an increasing, ageing population with increasingly complex needs. The number of Bracknell Forest residents predicted to have a vision and or hearing loss is expected to rise by 13% over the next five years.

Council Strategy and Community Cohesion

5.6 Recommendations of the Members' Equalities Working Group

- 5.6.1 The Executive has recommended to Council that it should adopt the recommendations of the Members' Equalities Working Group, including a Mayor's Charter, which are intended to ensure the highest standards of councillor behaviour and advance equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 5.6.2 The Members' Equalities Working Group was established in January 2021 to lead and champion member's contribution to advancing equalities and celebrating diversity within the community and within councillor's work in the Council. It commissioned a Members' and Member-Officer pulse survey to understand their perceptions of how well member's work together and to understand better the relationship between members and officers.
- 5.6.3 Although the survey generally demonstrated positive working relationships between members, and particularly between members and officers, there were examples of inappropriate and negative behaviour that were sometimes perceived as bullying and harassment amongst members and between members and officers. This was exhibited by a very small minority of individuals. Some of this behaviour could be described as simply 'the nature of politics' or being 'robust', however, it could also 'cross the line', be considered 'unprofessional and inappropriate' and move into

perceived ‘bullying’ between members. It could also sometimes spill over into inappropriate behaviour from members to officers. There was a perception that such behaviour was ‘not always or sufficiently addressed’, either through self-regulation, informally or formally by the council or members.

5.6.4 In response to the survey results, three ‘Inclusive Conversations’ workshops were held to help identify steps to create a political working environment with the very highest standards of behaviour. These together with the survey results have enabled the Working Group to develop recommendations including a Mayor’s Charter, setting out the minimum standards of behaviour expected from all councillors at all times. In addition to the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles), selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership, Bracknell Forest councillors will:

- encourage and foster constructive democratic debate and tolerance of other points of view
- promote and defend the dignity of others, treating all with courtesy and respect
- not engage in bullying, harassment, or victimisation, nor unlawfully discriminate against another member or group
- challenge unacceptable behaviour whenever it occurs.

5.6.5 Any behaviour that falls short of this will be dealt with under the Council’s Standards and Code of Conduct processes, or be referred to the police, if the breaks the criminal law.

5.6.6 Council is therefore RECOMMENDED to adopt the recommendations of the Members’ Equalities Working Group at Annex A including the Mayor’s Charter set out in Annex B.

5.7 Council Plan Overview Report

5.7.1 The Executive noted the performance of the council over the period from July-September 2021 highlighted in the Overview Report.

5.7.2 At the end of the quarter, 96 actions (90%) were rated as “green” (6 complete, 90 in progress) and 9 actions (9%) were “amber” (9 in progress). 1 action (1%) was red and in progress.

5.7.3 Progress against key performance indicators across the Council was also positive, with 21 (72%) “green”, 4 (14%) were “amber” and 4 (14%) were “red”. 25 further indicators had no set target or data was currently unavailable.

5.7.4 Overall, teams have delivered services to a high standard during the period, especially in response to Covid-19. Key points to note included:

- The “Bracknell Forest Giants” event which achieved national press coverage, saw increased spend and footfall in Bracknell town centre, and received great user feedback.
- The full allocation of £3.6m Additional Restrictions Grant from central government had been paid out to local businesses, attracting an additional £800k to help those small businesses most in need over the remainder of this financial year.

- The council was nominated in three categories, winning one and being commended in another, for the South East Energy Efficiency Awards reflecting the work of the Sustainable Energy Officer, Hazel Hill.
- Three film/TV productions had been filmed in the borough's green spaces.
- Progress on the A322 Sports Centre Roundabout improvement scheme had been slightly delayed, but design and planning work was well underway for a full refurbishment of the A322 Birch Hill junction traffic signals.
- The bounce back of the economy had created some issues with supply chain, labour and energy across the whole country, but local mitigation measures were being developed to address this emerging pressure, including in relation to sourcing IT equipment which had become a global problem.

6 Advice Received from Statutory and Other Officers

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The Borough Solicitor's comments have been addressed in the reports to the Executive.

Executive Director: Resources

- 6.2 The Executive Director: Resources' comments have been addressed in the reports to the Executive.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 Equalities issues, where appropriate, have been addressed in the reports to the Executive.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Any strategic risks have been identified in the reports to the Executive.

Background Papers

Executive Agenda – 14 December 2021

Contact for further information

Hannah Harding, Delivery - 01344 352308
Hannah.harding@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

**TO: EXECUTIVE
14TH DECEMBER 2021**

MEMBER'S EQUALITIES WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek agreement to adopt the recommendations and Mayor's Charter developed by the Member's Equalities Working Group to ensure the highest standards of councillor behaviour and advance equality, diversity and inclusion.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 **The Executive are asked to consider the recommendations of the Member's Equalities Working Group at Annex A and Mayor's Charter at Annex B for onward recommendation that they are adopted by the Council.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council's endorsement and support for the recommendations will enable the working group to implement, monitor and report the progress made in delivering the recommendations.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Councillors are committed to continuing to strive for the highest standards of behaviour therefore doing nothing is not an option that would be considered. The council has worked positively and proactively on a cross party basis to address the issues raised in the Member's Pulse Survey and develop recommendations to further enhance working relationships.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 5.1 The Member's Equalities Working Group was established in January 2021 to lead and champion member's contribution to advancing equalities and celebrating diversity within the community and within member's work in the Council.
- 5.2 The Member's Equalities Working Group commissioned Public Perspectives (the council's independent provider of consultation and engagement services) in March to run a Member's and Member-Officer pulse survey to understand their perceptions of how well member's work together and to understand the relationship between Members and Officers.
- 5.3 The survey has raised awareness and opened discussion with a view to developing and implementing actions to further strengthen Member and Member-Officer working relationships, leading to positive outcomes for the local area, residents, and businesses.

Survey results

- 5.4 Overall, 35 of the 42 councillors participated in the survey and 52 of the 55 officers invited participated. The survey covered topics including wellbeing, being treated fairly and communication and engagement. The results report is attached at Annex C.
- 5.5 The survey highlighted members and officers presenting mixed, differing and sometimes polarised views about the subject matter. In general, the survey demonstrated positive working relationships between members, and particularly between members and officers. However, there are examples of inappropriate and negative behaviour that is sometimes perceived as bullying and harassment amongst members and between members and officers. Although this is exhibited by a very small minority of individuals, it can sometimes be seen by other members and officers.
- 5.6 The survey report makes it clear that some of this behaviour could be described as simply '*the nature of politics*' or being '*robust*'. However, it can also '*cross the line*', be considered '*unprofessional and inappropriate*' and move into perceived '*bullying*' between members. It can also sometimes spill over into inappropriate behaviour from members to officers.
- 5.7 Whilst this is not necessarily systemic or widespread, it does have a notable impact on the wellbeing, ability to perform and morale of members and officers that experience or witness such behaviour. The survey suggests a perception amongst both members and officers that such behaviour is '*not always or sufficiently addressed*', either through self-regulation, informally or formally by the council or members.
- 5.8 Members and Officers said there are opportunities for further training, development and support to promote '*professional, respectful, effective, constructive and collaborative*' working relationships between members, and members and officers.

Acting on the survey results

- 5.9 To discuss the survey results and agree how to create a political working environment with the very highest standards of behaviour, three 'Inclusive Conversations' workshops were held and facilitated by an external independent Equality Diversity and Inclusion provider during July with excellent attendance levels.
- 5.10 The Member's Equalities Working Group have developed the recommendations at Annex A based on the key issues that the Working Group members have discussed over the past six months and the views of members expressed at the three Inclusive Conversations workshops. The workshops gave all member's the opportunity to reflect on how to ensure the highest standards of member behaviour and contribute to deciding what action should be taken and the development of the recommendations. The Executive are asked to consider the recommendations for onward recommendation that they are adopted by the Council.
- 5.11 The first recommendation in Annex A focusses on the development of a Mayor's Charter, the text of which is at Annex B. The Charter sets out the

standards of behaviour expected of all members it is proposed that the charter be adopted through a motion at full council.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 The Borough Solicitor in his capacity as the Council's Monitoring Officer supports the recommendations set out in this report. High Standards of behaviour amongst elected officials is a cornerstone of good governance. Whilst historically the Council has benefitted from relatively low levels of complaints there remains a need to improve compliance with its Code of Conduct. An educative approach to standards based on a Mayor's charter will supplement the deterrent aspects of the Code. With regard to recommendation 6, the Code of Conduct Working Group will be convened in the coming weeks to review the Council's existing Code of Conduct and consider whether any amendments should be made to more closely reflect the provisions of the LGA Model Code which was published in December 2020 for consideration by Local Authorities. It is proposed that compliance with the Human Rights Act and Public Interest Disclosure Act are incorporated into that review with input from the Borough Solicitor and Deputy Leader. Any recommendations will subsequently be included in a wider review of the constitution (including the Member-Officer protocol) which will be reported to Councillors later this year.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no immediate financial implications arising from the contents of the report. The costs of implementing the recommendations will be met from within existing budgets.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The recommendations support the council's equalities objectives and Public Sector Equalities Duty obligations. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken where appropriate in developing the individual recommendations.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 There are risks that one or more of the recommendations not being developed or fully implemented. The members working group will closely monitor and manage the implementation of the recommendations.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.5 The recommendations above are expected to have no adverse impact on emissions of CO₂. The reasons the Council believes that this will have no impact on emissions are that council's objectives seek to reduce inequalities and advance equality of opportunity.

Background documents

Member's 'Pulse' Survey 2021 – Public Perspectives

Supporting officers

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Chief Executive's Office
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Email: abby.thomas@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Kevin Gibbs
Executive Director: Delivery
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Annex A, Member's Equalities Working Group Recommendations

Recommendation 1
A BFC Mayor's charter is developed, and a motion is taken to full Council for its adoption. The charter will be based on the text contained within the joint statement on conduct of political party members , published by the Jo Cox Foundation
Recommendation 2
Executive Members, committee chairs and vice chairs should be trained on the contents of the charter and how to apply them in their role. Executive Members, committee chairs and vice chairs should also receive mandatory EDI training as a condition of selection.
Recommendation 3
Trained Committee chairs and vice chairs should represent a confidential cadre of first point of contact for councillors to discuss issues of concern, reflecting the ethos of restorative justice.
Recommendation 4
All agendas should commence with a statement reminding all attendees of the requirement for respectful behaviour.
Recommendation 5
The "Speak Up" model of intervention, that seeks to challenge inappropriate behaviour at source should be reinforced, with councillors encouraged to use this style of communication, thus developing a culture where challenging unacceptable behaviour is accepted and expected.
Recommendation 6
The existing councillor complaints procedure should be reviewed by the Deputy Leader & Borough Solicitor to ensure that it is compliant with the following statutory provisions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Human Rights Act 1998 (decision making process)</i> • <i>Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (protecting Whistle-blowers)</i>
The outcome of this review should inform the Code of Conduct Working Group's review of the Council's Code of Conduct following the publication of the LGA Model Code of Conduct for Councillors. The Member-Officer protocol should also be reviewed as part of this work.

Annex B - BFC Mayor's Charter

Statement of minimum standards of behaviour expected from all Councillors at all times.

The Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles) - selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership - have long been the basis for ensuring high standards in public life. These are the basis for the behaviours this Council and all its Councillors will adopt.

Our Councillors will:

- encourage and foster constructive democratic debate and tolerance of other points of view
- promote and defend the dignity of others, treating all with courtesy and respect
- not engage in bullying, harassment, or victimisation, nor unlawfully discriminate against another member or group
- challenge unacceptable behaviour whenever it occurs.

Any behaviour that falls short of that included in the above statement will be dealt with under the Council's Standards and Code of Conduct processes. If any breach appears to break the criminal law, it will be referred to the police.

Bracknell Forest Council: Member and Member-Officer Survey

April 2021



www.publicperspectives.co.uk



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perspectives P

Executive Summary



Introduction

- Bracknell Forest Council commissioned Public Perspectives, its independent research and consultation provider, **to administer a survey of Members and Senior Officers, and Officers that have notable contact with Members.**
- The survey is sponsored by a Member-led advisory group on equalities, **with the aim of promoting positive, constructive and effective working relationships amongst Members and between Officers and Members.**
- The survey was conducted from **w/s 22nd March through to w/e 16th April 2021.**
- **The survey involved two related questionnaires – one with Members and one with Officers.** The questionnaires and the process were designed by Council Officers and the Member-led advisory group. **The questionnaires were scripted and administered on-line by Public Perspectives, with follow-up telephone interviews.** An initial e-mail and three reminders were sent to **maximise response. Non-respondents** were also contacted by phone to encourage response and offer to conduct the survey over the phone. In addition, Members and Officers were asked to indicate if they would like to discuss their points in greater detail confidentially over the phone, and consequently a series of in-depth telephone interviews were conducted.

Introduction (contd)

- **Overall, 35 of the 42 Members participated in the process and 52 of the 55 Officers invited participated.** The Members that decided not to participate, and whom we were able to speak with, explained this was due to other priorities or being too busy. Whilst these are good response levels, we do not know what Members that did not respond think about the subject matter.
- This report aims to **present the key points and findings from the process in a balanced, independent and constructive way, reflecting the views and voices of those that participated.** The report is structured consistent with that of the questionnaires.
- **The results are presented for Members and Officers side-by-side and have been analysed by different demographics and backgrounds of respondents,** although only very clear and meaningful differences are presented, especially given the small numbers involved requiring notable differences to stand-out.²
- The questionnaire and process included capturing open-ended comments and discussing points, confidentially, in more depth. **Key points from this element of the process have been carefully presented and summarised to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of those that participated.**
- **Results are presented as percentages for clarity,** but please note that the number of respondents is relatively small and this can exaggerate differences when presented as a percentage.
- Note: Text in italics represents direct quotes from participants.

Summary of key findings (1 of 5)

Wellbeing

Most **Members** agree their morale is good (69%), their current workload is manageable (79%) and the council provides adequate support for Members (74%), with half agreeing that Members are supported in their development to treat colleagues fairly and respectfully and just over half (54%) saying their job is not stressful.

Most **Officers** agree their morale is good (75%), their current workload is manageable (59%), the council provides adequate support for Officers (77%), they are supported in their development to treat colleagues fairly and respectfully (89%), with just over half (51%) saying their job is not stressful.

Being treated fairly



Most **Members** agree Members and Officers work well together (68%) and that Officers work well together (58% with no one in disagreement), while views about Members working well together are more polarised with 35% agreeing, 26% disagreeing and 39% in the middle.

Most **Officers** agree Members and Officers work well together (58%) and that Officers work well together (96%), while views about Members working well together are more negative than positive with 27% agreeing, 39% disagreeing and 35% in the middle.

Two-fifths (41%) of **Members** that responded to the survey said bullying frequently takes place between Members, half (52%) said it sometimes takes place and 7% said it never takes place.

Almost three-quarters (72%) of **Officers** said bullying sometimes takes place between Members and Officers, 15% said it frequently takes place and 13% said it never takes place.

Summary of key findings (2 of 5)

Being treated fairly (contd)

Over half of **Members** (55%) said they have not been subjected to or observed anyone being harassed by a Council Member, while 34% said they have.

Over half of **Officers** (55%) said they have not been subjected to or observed anyone being harassed by a Council Member or vice versa, while 31% said they have.

Most **Members** have not experienced an incident of unfair treatment or discrimination by another Member, although some mentioned gender (mainly women), age, religion, disability, pregnancy and race discrimination – and overall about a third of Members that responded to this survey mentioned at least one form of unfair treatment or discrimination.

Similarly, most **Officers** have not experienced an incident of unfair treatment or discrimination by a Member, although some mentioned gender (mainly women), age, pregnancy, religion, race, sexual orientation and marital status – and overall about a third of Officers that responded to this survey mentioned at least one form of unfair treatment or discrimination.

Communication and engagement

Most **Members** agree, or at least do not disagree, that the council provides adequate opportunities for Members to be engaged (50% agree / 35% disagree), considers Members' views (56% agree), are well informed and able to make decisions (54% agree), feel listened to (54% agree) and believe they do not get too much information (53% agree), although with each of these indicators there are some Members that feel there are opportunities for improvement.

About a third (34%) of **Officers** feel the council has prepared them at least quite well for their role interacting with Members and just over a quarter (26%) said they have not been prepared well, although 79% are at least quite confident managing relationships with council Members and just 8% not that confident (all of these did not feel they have been prepared well).

Summary of key findings (3 of 5)

Points for consideration

The following points for consideration are drawn from the findings and comments of Members and Officers that participated in the survey:

This is a nuanced, complex and sensitive subject, which a survey and report such as this cannot unpack or explore all the issues. This said, there is reasonable similarity in the views of Members and Officers surveyed, reinforcing and validating the findings from this survey. It is hoped that the survey and this report will serve to **raise awareness and open up discussion with a view to developing and implementing actions and change to help strengthen Member and Member-Officer working relationships, leading to positive outcomes for the local area, residents and businesses.**

The survey has engaged with Members and Officers presenting mixed, differing and sometimes polarised views about the subject matter. **In general, there are positive working relationships between Members, and Members and Officers. This said, there are examples and evidence of inappropriate and negative behaviour that sometimes becomes bullying and harassment amongst Members and between Members and Officers, exhibited by a minority of Members but experienced by several Members and Officers.**

Some of this could be described as simply '*the nature of politics*' or being '*robust*', but which can also '*cross the line*', be considered '*unprofessional and inappropriate*' and move into perceived '*bullying*' between Members. It can also sometimes spill over into inappropriate behaviour from Members to Officers, with Officers '*caught in the 'crossfire' of disagreements between Members*' and the '*frustrations that some Members may have about influencing decision-making or issues being resolved to their satisfaction.*'

Whilst this is not necessarily systemic or widespread nor critical to the performance of the council, it does have a notable impact on the wellbeing, ability to perform and morale of Members and Officers that experience or witness such behaviour, and can detract from the effective management of the council.

Summary of key findings (4 of 5)

Points for consideration (contd)

There is a perception amongst both Members and Officers that negative, inappropriate or bullying behaviour is '*not always or sufficiently addressed*', either through self-regulation, informally or formally by the council or Members.

This is partly due to the weakness of the national Member and Member-Officer standards and protocols. This reduces the capacity to address inappropriate behaviour and does not encourage Officers or Members to raise formal complaints due to a lack of confidence that it will result in a positive outcome and only serve to undermine working relationships and potentially be career limiting for Officers.

³⁸ Members and Officers said there are opportunities for further training, development and support to promote '**professional, respectful, effective, constructive and collaborative**' working relationships between Members, and Members and Officers.

Some Members and Officers suggested there could be opportunities for **greater representation and involvement of women, younger age groups and minority populations within the Member body to reflect the local area and population demography**, which in turn '*may help change and challenge*' some of the aforementioned behaviours, some of which are grounded in wider equality and inclusivity issues.

Summary of key findings (5 of 5)

Points for consideration (contd)

Overall, some Members and Officers indicated there may be an **opportunity for a ‘re-set’ by co-creating amongst Members and Officers a new and local standard and protocol for Member and Member-Officer working relationships** that all Members and Officers are signed-up to, and is accompanied by an appropriate mechanism to address issues.

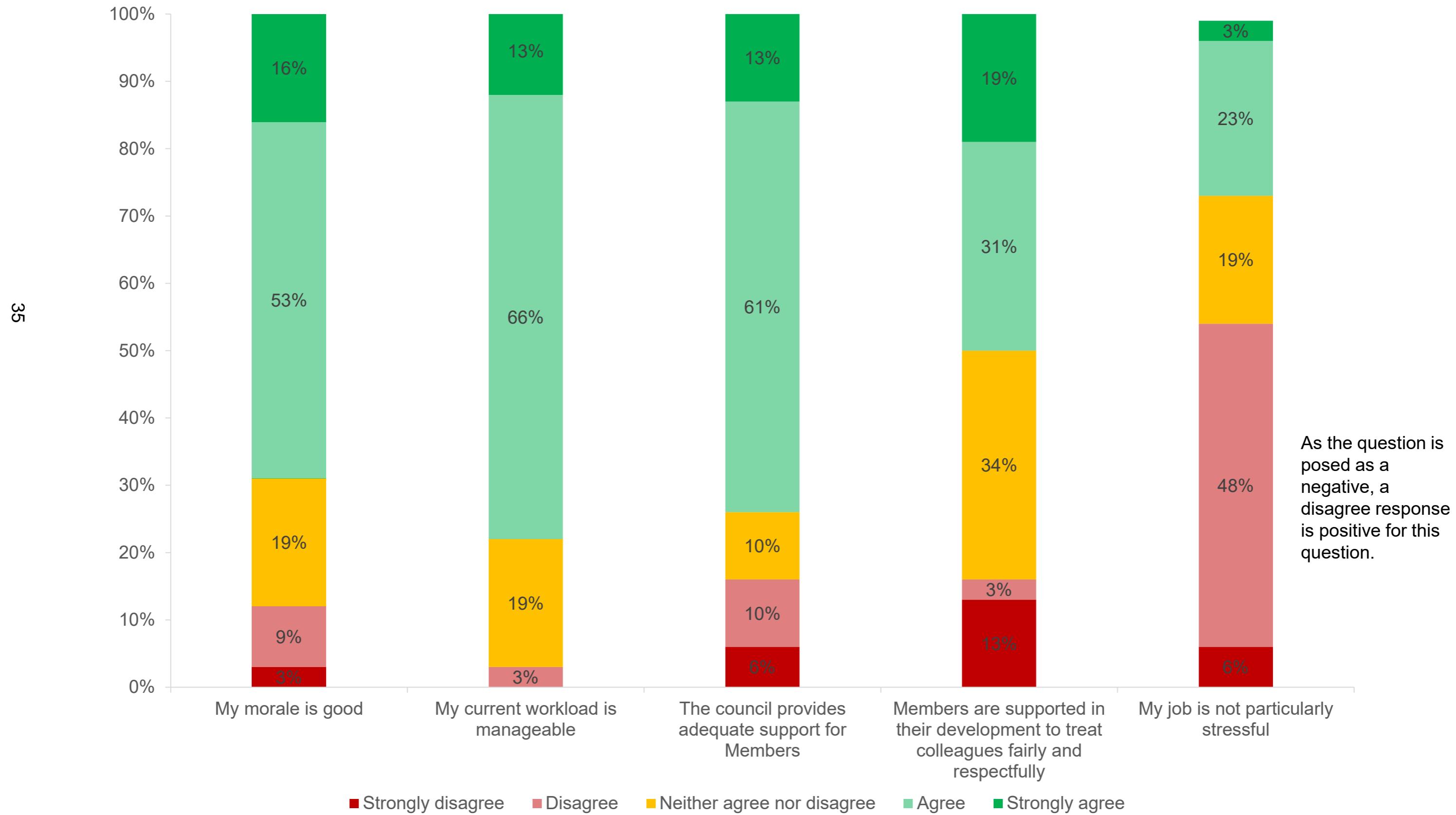
This local standard and protocol could focus on: roles and responsibilities; behaviour; the balance between operational and strategic decision-making; understanding of Governance arrangements and decision-making processes; expectations around the level of information received to inform decision-making and perform duties as Members; and the consequences of not working within the standards and protocols, ensuring there is consistent application of the standards and protocols and their consequences regardless of position or seniority of the Member or Officer.

The aim of the local standards and protocols would be to strengthen Member and Member-Officer working relationships and help address inappropriate behaviour through self-regulation, informal approaches to address or improve behaviour, or having recourse to more formal procedures where required. This said, **the local standards and protocols should not undermine, and instead promote, ‘the crucial role of elected representatives to advocate on behalf of their constituents and appropriately question, challenge or scrutinise information and decision-making’**. The intention is that local standards and protocols will promote professional, respectful, effective, constructive and collaborative working relationships between Members, and Members and Officers, with the **‘common aim of achieving positive outcomes for local residents and businesses, and making a difference to the local area.’**

Wellbeing



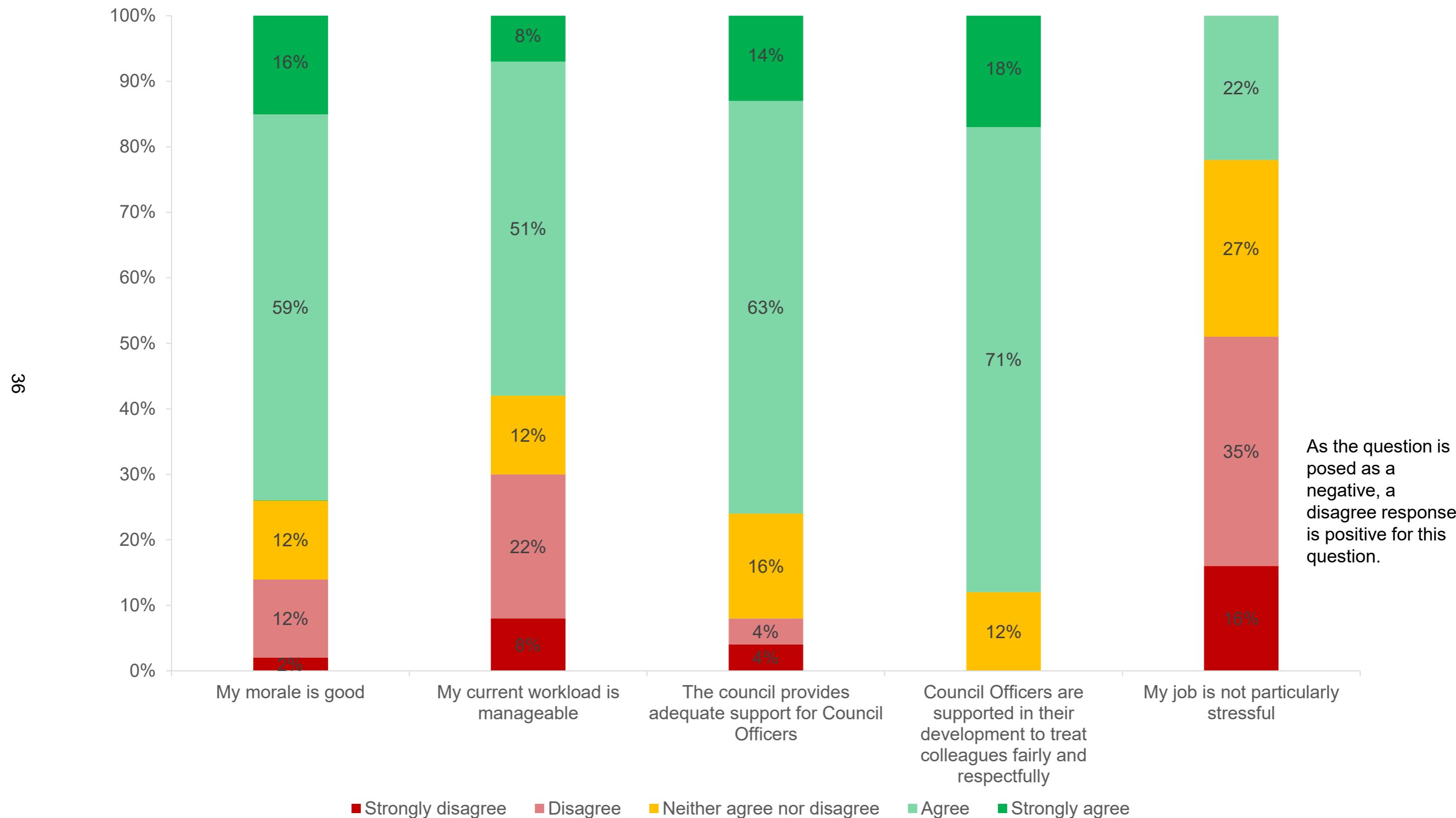
Most Members agree their morale is good (69%), their current workload is manageable (79%) and the council provides adequate support for Members (74%), with half agreeing that Members are supported in their development to treat colleagues fairly and respectfully and just over half (54%) saying their job is not stressful



Question asked: Thinking about your role as a Council Member, how strongly do you agree with the following statements?

Number of respondents: 35.

Most Officers agree their morale is good (75%), their current workload is manageable (59%), the council provides adequate support for Officers (77%), they are supported in their development to treat colleagues fairly and respectfully (89%), with just over half (51%) saying their job is not stressful



Question asked: How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

Number of respondents: 52.

Examples and points for consideration

The following examples and points are based on comments raised in the questionnaires and telephone interviews, and are the views and voices of those that participated in the survey:

Members:

- **Being a Member is both a privilege and a demanding, stressful role**, with high workloads and challenging issues on behalf of residents and helping manage the council.
- **The pandemic has placed increasing pressure on Members**, having to deal with its impact (both personally and professionally), supporting residents and businesses, and working virtually. Virtual meetings have placed a spotlight on some negative behaviours.
- **There are opportunities to further Member training and development, for both new and longer-standing Members and non-Executive and Executive Members.** This includes around Member-Officer protocols, understanding roles and responsibilities, striking a balance between operational and strategic decision making, and working within the Council's Governance system.
- **Members are generally supported in their development to treat colleagues fairly and respectfully, although in practice where inappropriate behaviour may occur, there is not always follow-up and redress**, either through self-regulation amongst Members themselves, informally or formally through the complaints process.
- Alongside council-led training and support, **the responsibility for Member development, behaviour and morale also resides with Members themselves and the party groups.**

Officers:

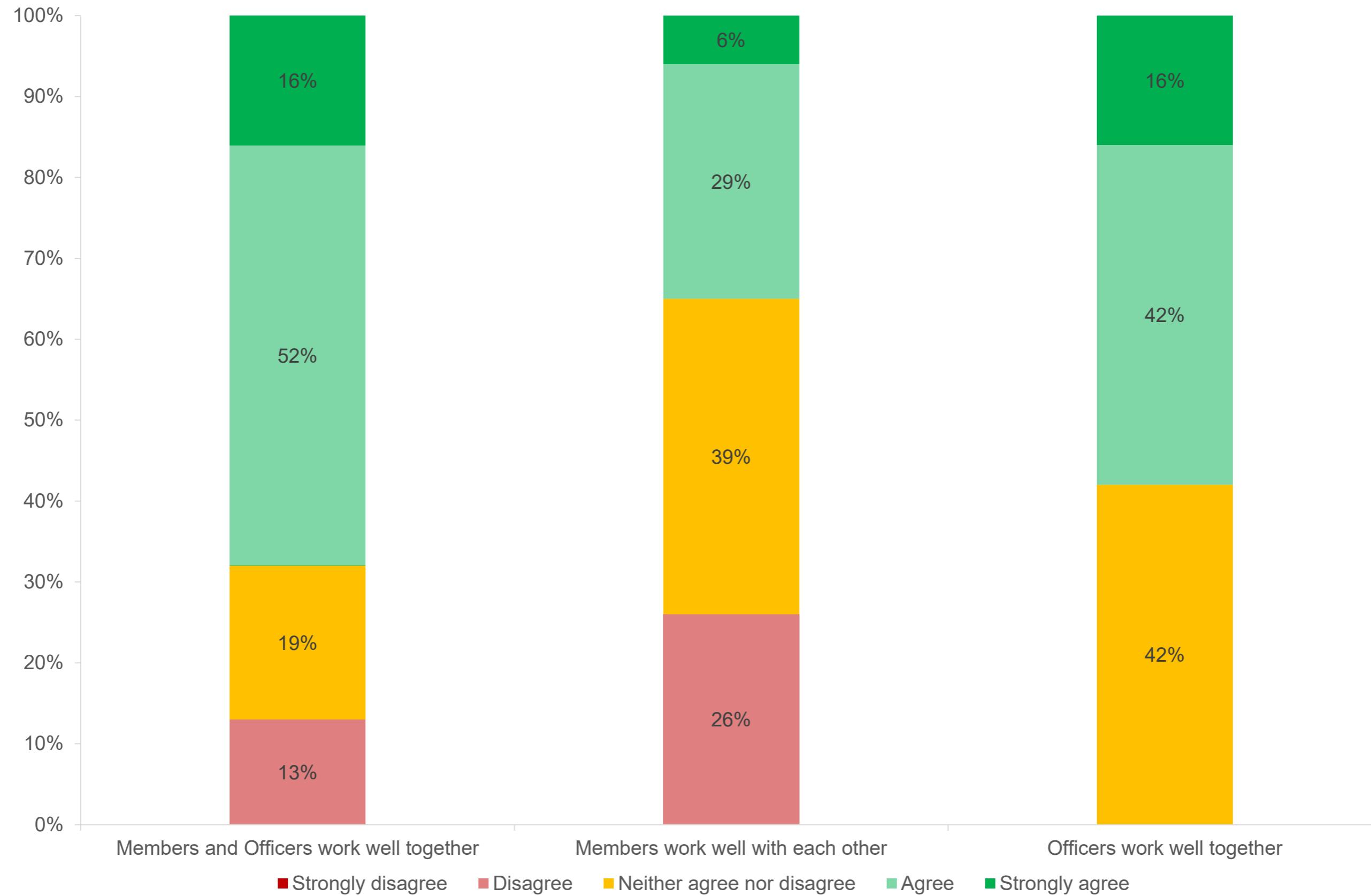
- **Officers have demanding workloads, exacerbated by the pandemic and remote working, placing pressure on wellbeing and morale.** They feel there is increasing support to help manage these challenges and promote wellbeing.
- Whilst Officers tend to feel they are supported to be fair and respectful with each other and Members, some **suggested there may be opportunities for further support and training to work effectively with Members and vice versa.**

Being treated fairly



Most Members agree Members and Officers work well together (68%) and that Officers work well together (58% with no one in disagreement), while views about Members working well together are more polarised with 35% agreeing, 26% disagreeing and 39% in the middle

63

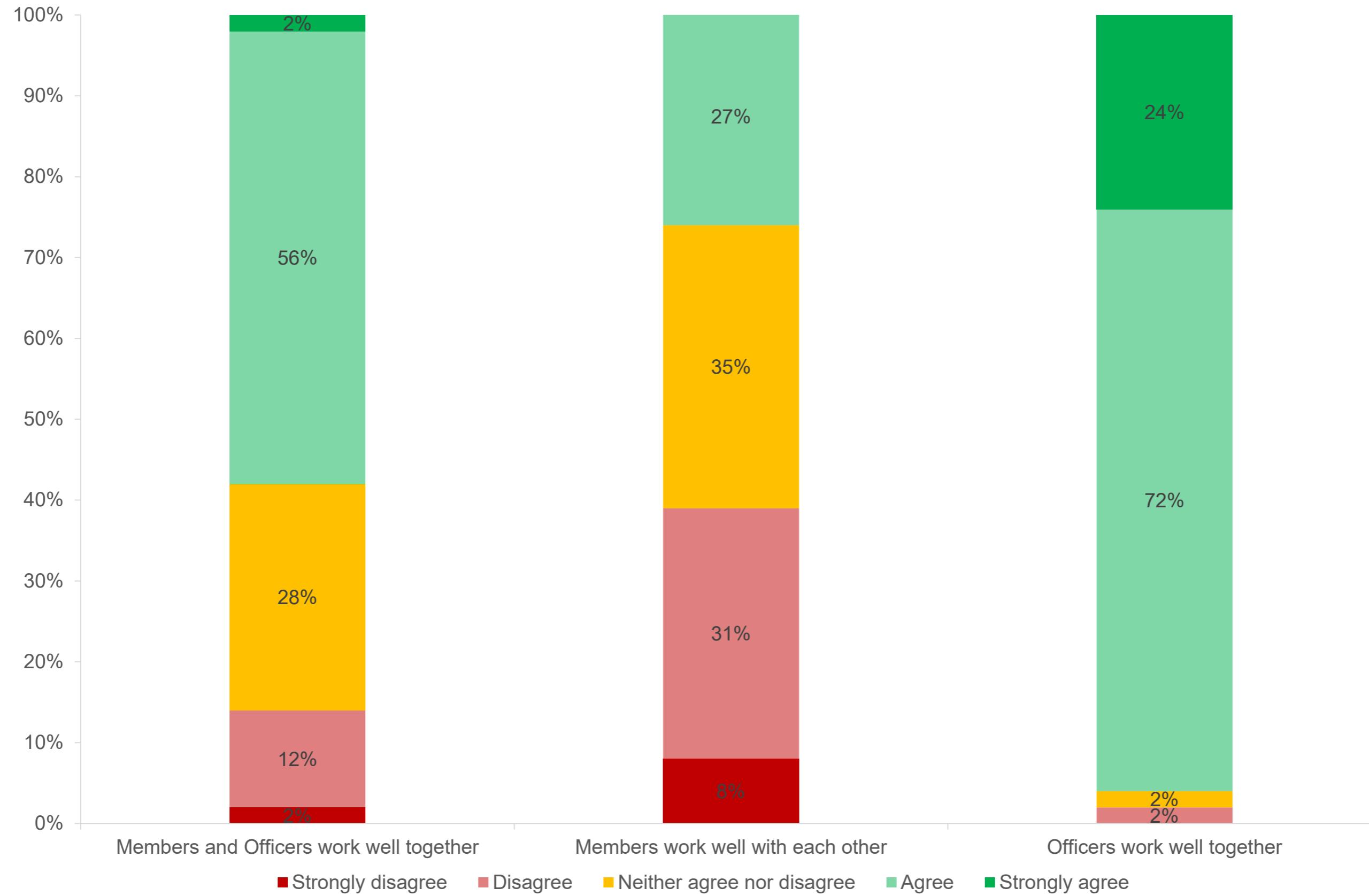


Question asked: How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

Number of respondents: 33.

Most Officers agree Members and Officers work well together (58%) and that Officers work well together (96%), while views about Members working well together are more negative than positive with 27% agreeing, 39% disagreeing and 35% in the middle

4

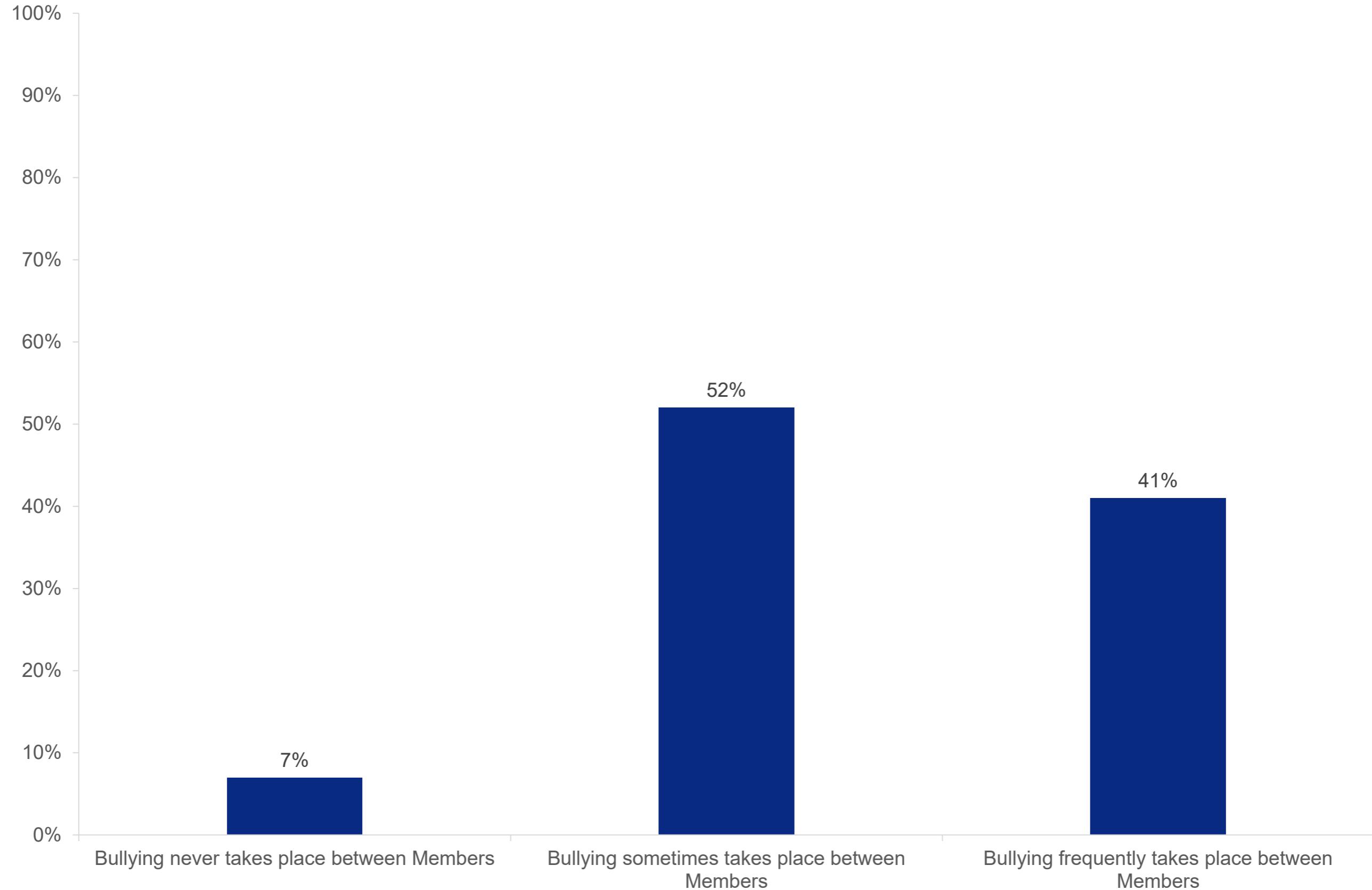


Question asked: How strongly do you agree with the following statements?

Number of respondents: 50.

Two-fifths (41%) of Members that responded to the survey said bullying frequently takes place between Members, half (52%) said it sometimes takes place and 7% said it never takes place

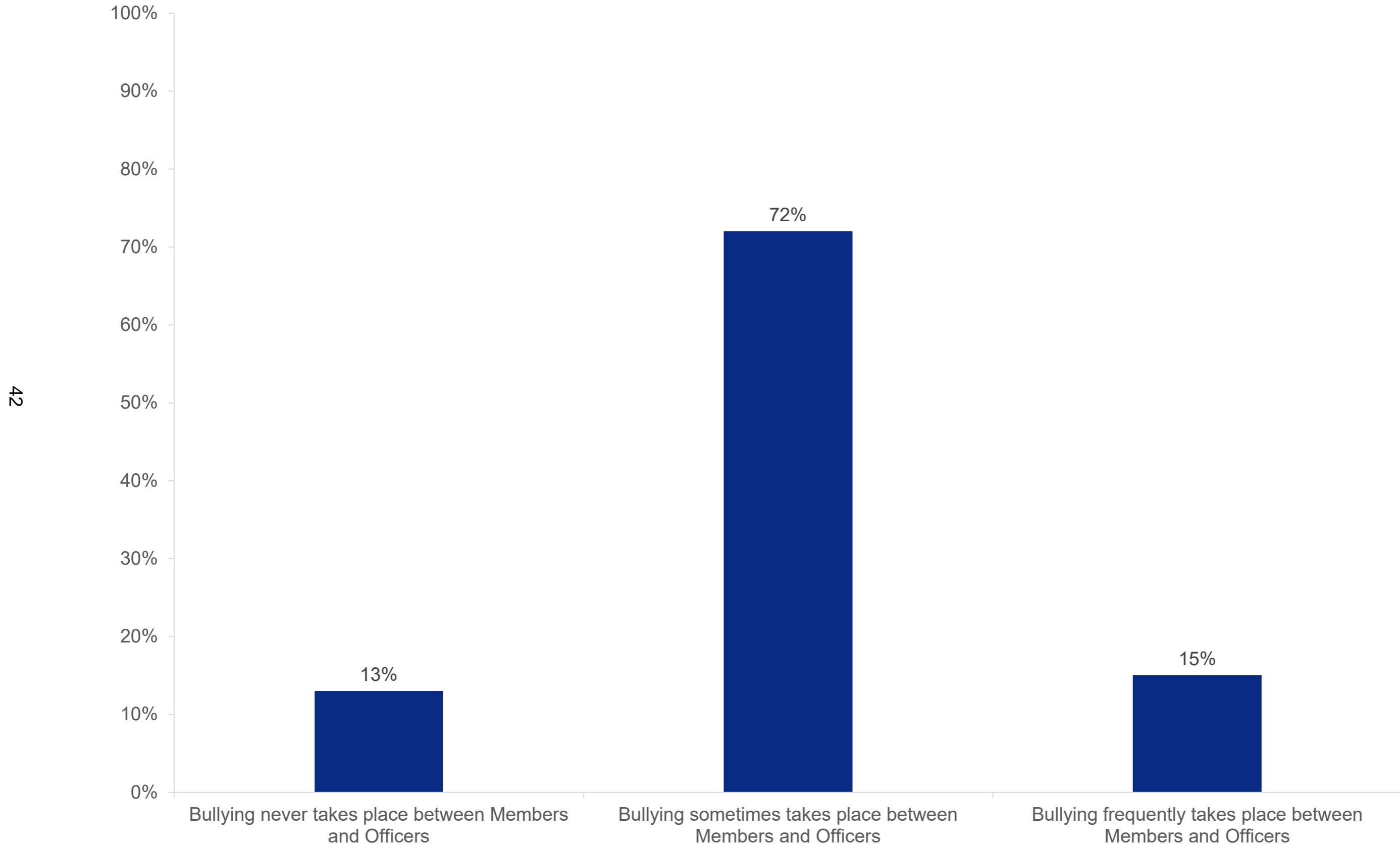
14



Question asked: Based on this definition (ACAS), which of the following best describes your views about bullying between Council Members?

Number of respondents: 31.

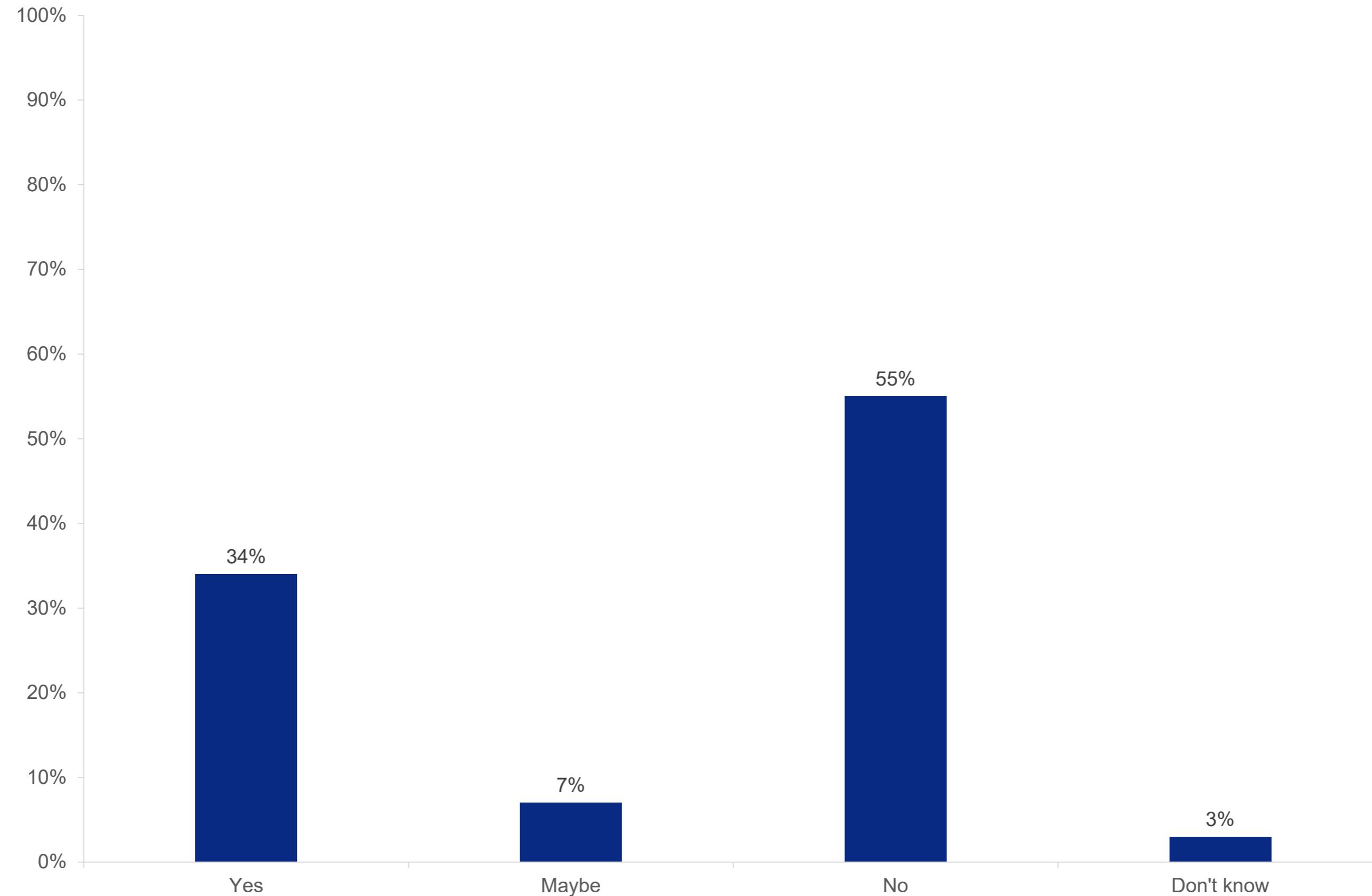
Almost three-quarters (72%) of Officers said bullying sometimes takes place between Members and Officers, 15% said it frequently takes place and 13% said it never takes place



Question asked: Based on this definition (ACAS), which of the following best describes your views about bullying between Council Members and Officers?

Number of respondents: 48.

Over half of Members (55%) said they have not been subjected to or observed anyone being harassed by a Council Member, while 34% said they have

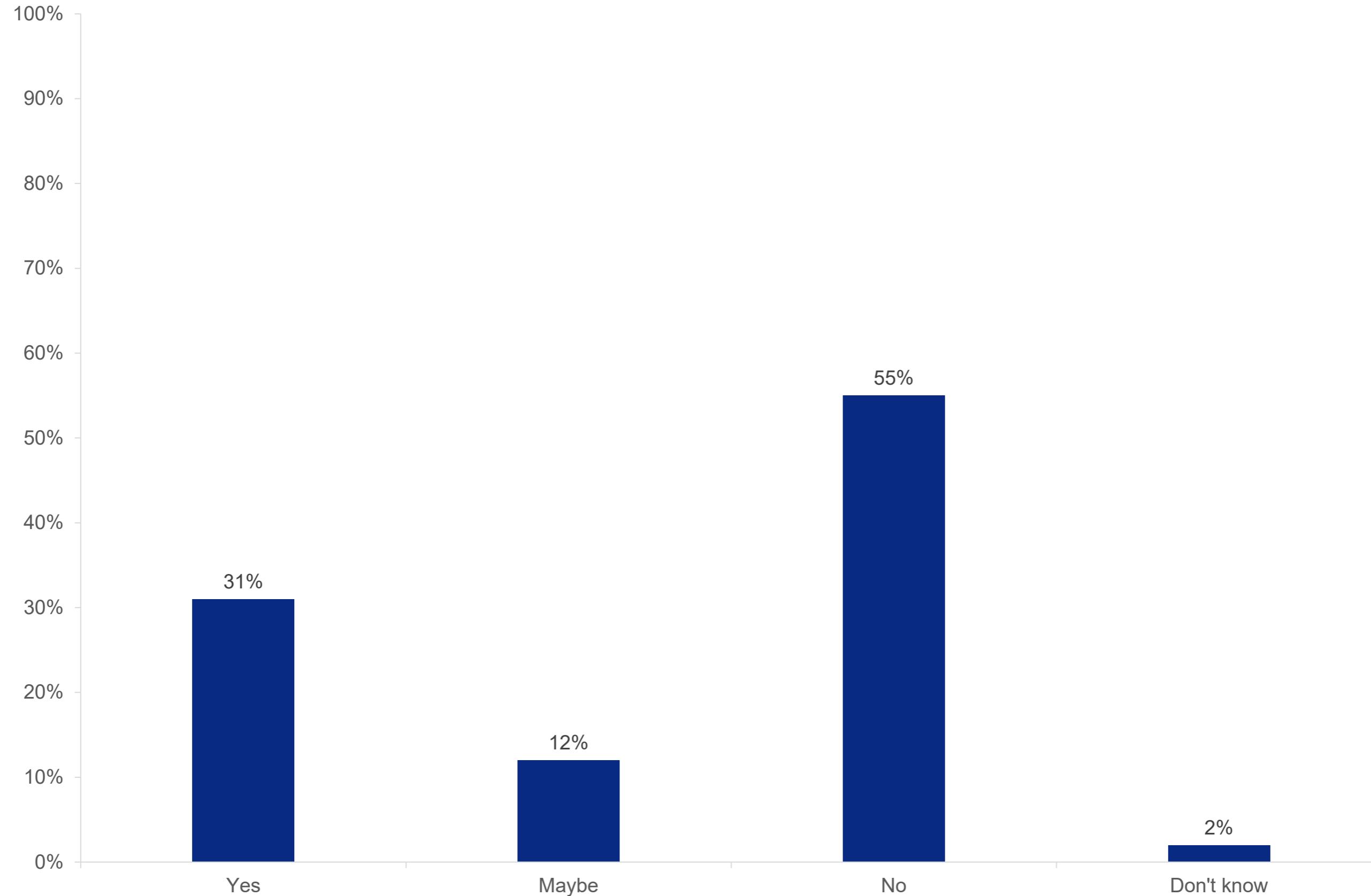


Question asked: Have you been subjected to harassment or have you observed anyone else being harassed by a Council Member?

Number of respondents: 31.

Over half of Officers (55%) said they have not been subjected to or observed anyone being harassed by a Council Member or vice versa, while 31% said they have

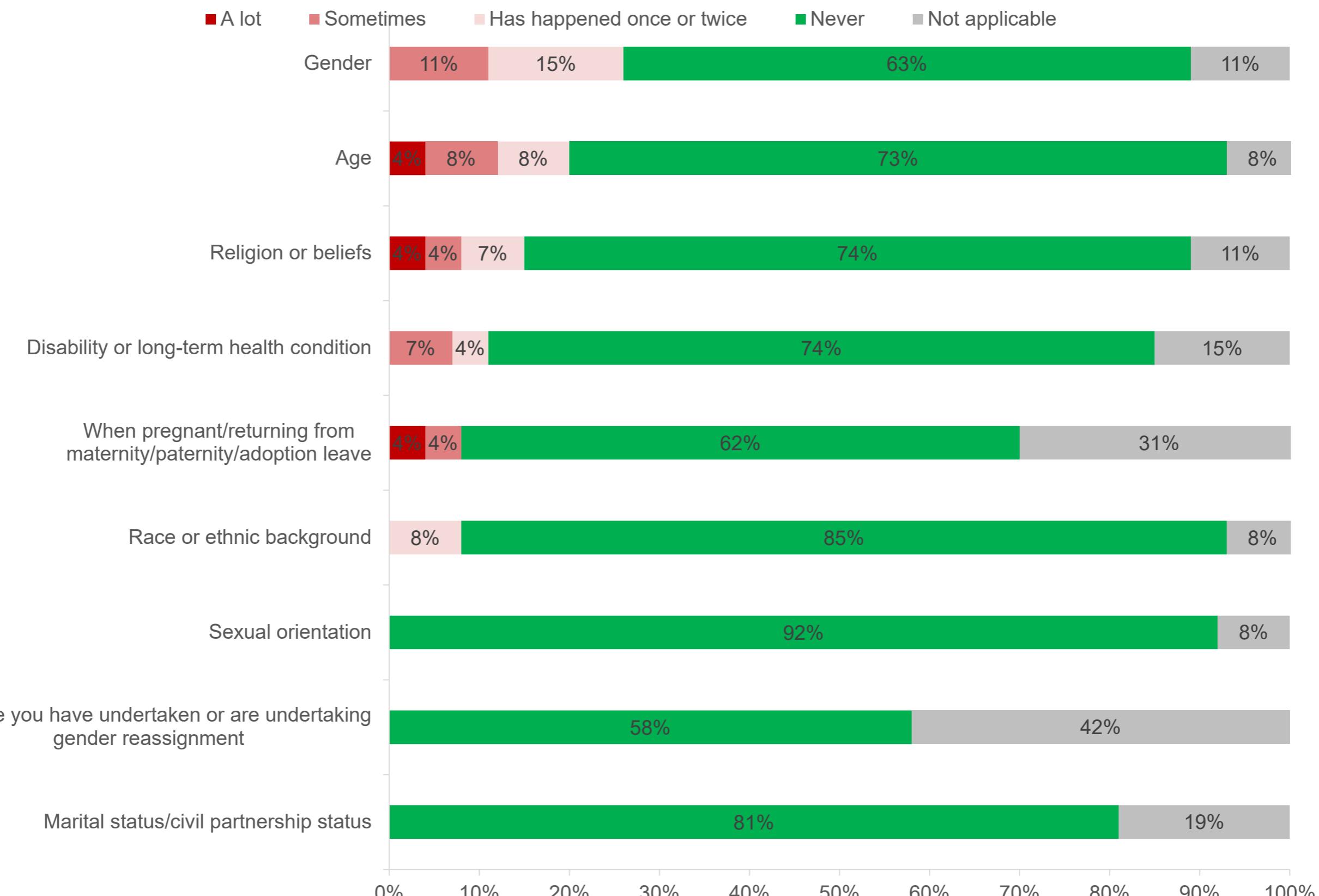
#4



Question asked: Have you been subjected to harassment or have you observed anyone else being harassed by a Council Member or vice versa?

Number of respondents: 49.

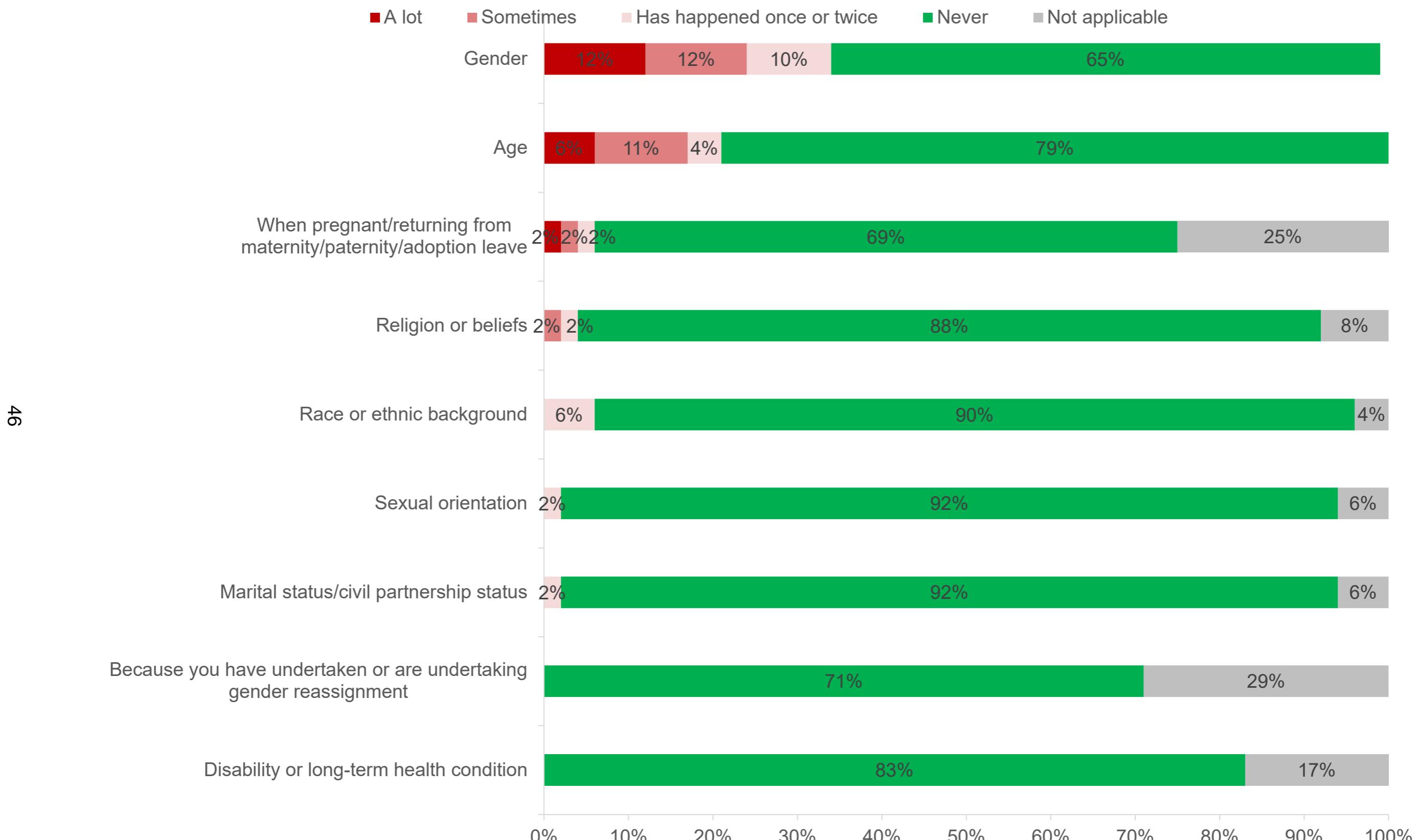
Most Members have not experienced an incident of unfair treatment or discrimination by another Member, although some mentioned gender (mainly women), age, religion, disability, pregnancy and race discrimination – and overall about a third of Members that responded to this survey mentioned at least one form of unfair treatment or discrimination



Question asked: Since you have been an elected Member, how frequently (if at all) do you feel you have personally experienced an incident of unfair treatment or discrimination by a Bracknell Forest Council Member because of the following?

Number of respondents: 31.

Most Officers have not experienced an incident of unfair treatment or discrimination by a Member, although some mentioned gender (mainly women), age, pregnancy, religion, race, sexual orientation and marital status – and overall about a third of Officers that responded to this survey mentioned at least one form of unfair treatment or discrimination



Question asked: How frequently (if at all) do you feel you have personally experienced an incident of unfair treatment or discrimination by a Bracknell Forest Council Member because of the following?

Number of respondents: 49.

Examples and points for consideration

The following examples and points are based on comments raised in the questionnaires and telephone interviews, and are the views and voices of those that participated in the survey:

Members:

- Members generally work well together on a day-to-day and practical basis, including on task and finish working groups.
- However, there are examples of inappropriate behaviour, exhibited by a minority of Members, which can have a notable impact on the experience of some Members, their wellbeing and their ability to perform their role effectively.
- There are ‘groups within the Group’, resulting in an ‘us and them’ situation. Some of this manifests itself in inappropriate behaviour – some of which could be described as simply ‘*the nature of politics*’ or being ‘robust’, but which can also ‘cross the line’, be considered ‘unprofessional and inappropriate’ and move into perceived ‘bullying’ between Members (and sometimes spill over into inappropriate behaviour from Members to Officers, with Officers caught in the ‘crossfire’ of disagreements between Members). This can vary from shouting down or undermining Members during meetings, inappropriate language including swearing or non-inclusive language (often towards women), or more targeted and personal behaviours against particular Members – either in council, public or private settings.
- There may be opportunities for greater challenge and redress of inappropriate behaviours – either via self-regulation amongst the Members themselves, informal approaches to address or improve behaviour, or formal procedures.
- There may be opportunities for greater representation and involvement of women, younger age groups and minority populations within the Member body to reflect the local area and population demography, which in turn ‘may help change and challenge’ some of the aforementioned issues.

Examples and points for consideration (contd)

Officers:

- Member-Officer relationships are generally positive and strong, although there are opportunities to strengthen relationships and work more collaboratively, especially between non-Executive Members and Officers, and ensure there is awareness of respective roles and responsibilities and dealings are professional, respectful and civil.
- There are examples of a minority of Members adopting negative or inappropriate behaviours with Officers that are perceived as bullying or harassment, and which can place unnecessary pressure on Officers, affecting wellbeing, morale and performance. This can include: excessive questioning and/or time demands on Officers that undermines their abilities and leads to them questioning themselves; disregarding professional advice; inappropriate language or unprofessional or overly aggressive behaviour; occasional misogynistic or non-inclusive language and behaviour towards women (sometimes dismissed as 'banter'); sometimes less respectful to younger staff or women including referring to male Officers over female Officers for advice/opinion; or undermining or briefing against Officers in private or public settings.
Some Officers said that these behaviours, when raised or witnessed, are not always adequately addressed, or addressed at all, either by the council or Members.
- There is acknowledgement that this behaviour can stem from '**frustration** of Members feeling like they are not able to influence decisions or resolve issues to their satisfaction', '**crossing the line** from being representatives and advocates into rude and bullying behaviour', and also that Officers can sometimes '**get caught in the 'crossfire'** between Member disagreements'.
- At the same time, some Officers also suggested there could be opportunities for '**Officers to be more respectful to Members, understanding of their roles and promote collaborative and effective working relationships**'.

Communication and Engagement

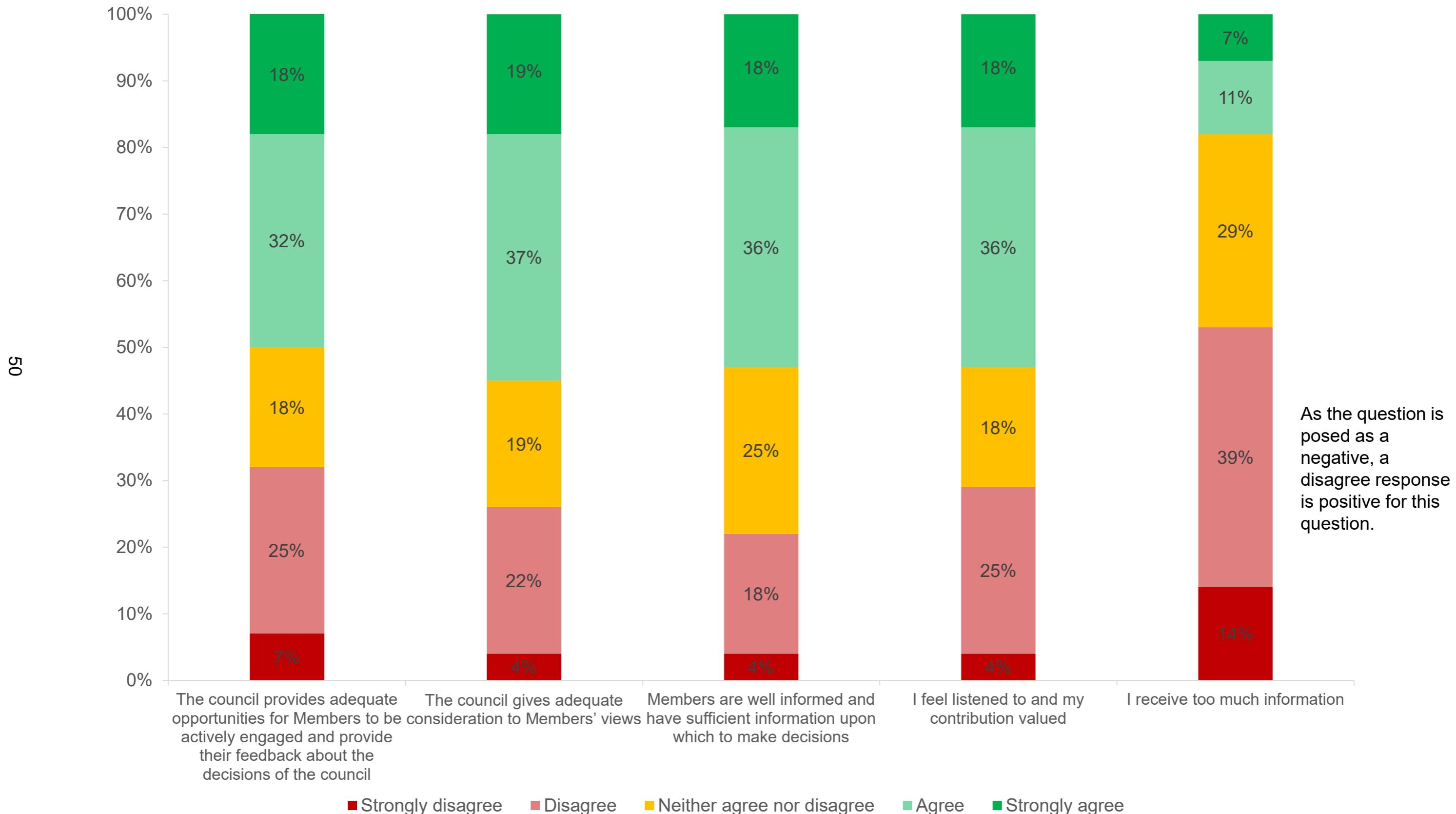
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Research
Evaluation
Community Engagement
Strategy Development

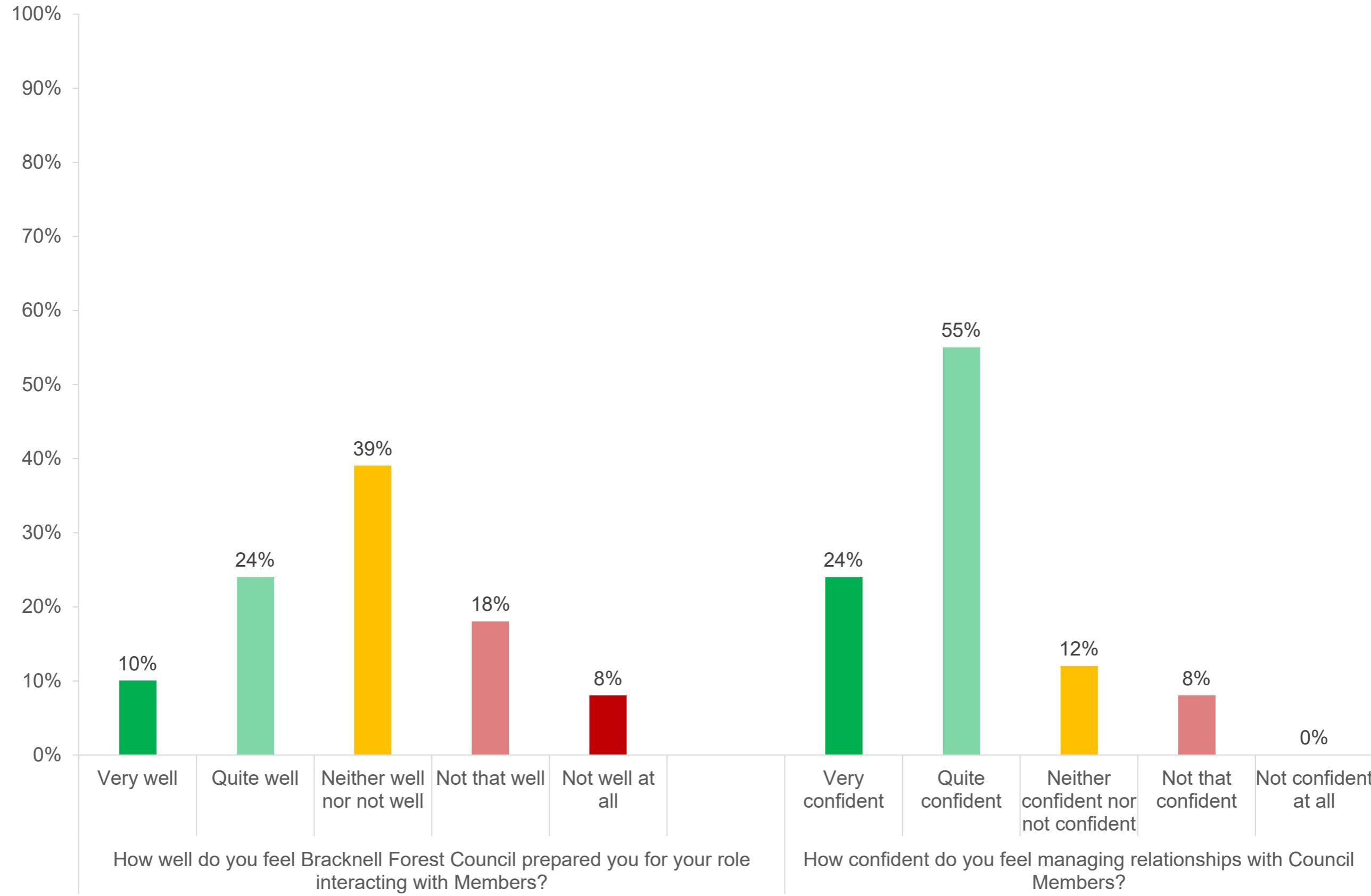
Most Members agree, or at least do not disagree, that the council provides adequate opportunities for Members to be engaged (50% agree), considers Members' views (56%), are well informed and able to make decisions (54%), feel listened to (54%) and believe they do not get too much information (53%), although with each of these indicators there are some Members that feel there are opportunities for improvement



Number of respondents: 31.

About a third (34%) of Officers feel the council has prepared them at least quite well for their role interacting with Members and just over a quarter (26%) said they have not been prepared well, although 79% are at least quite confident managing relationships with council Members and just 8% not that confident (all of these did not feel they have been prepared well)

15



Number of respondents: 49.

Examples and points for consideration

The following examples and points are based on comments raised in the questionnaires and telephone interviews, and are the views and voices of those that participated in the survey:

Members:

- **Members generally feel that they are engaged, informed, listened to and able to contribute to decision-making, although there are opportunities for improvement**, including encouraging more debate and discussions in Council Meetings and other settings to influence policy and practice, and involve non-Executive, new and less engaged Members to get involved.
- There can sometimes be frustration when Members are not able to access the information they feel they require or have asked for, or able to influence decisions or resolve issues to their satisfaction – **this frustration can sometimes spill over into inappropriate behaviour with other Members or Officers**.
- **There may be opportunities to improve Member-Officer protocols around engagement, information and decision-making**, including roles, responsibilities and behaviour; taking on professional Officer opinion; the balance between operational⁵ and strategic decision-making; expectations around access to information and influencing decision-making, whilst appreciating the role of Members as elected representatives.

Officers:

- **There may be opportunities for further training, development and support for Officers** to promote more confident, effective and collaborative working relationships with Members.
- Whilst there is often support for Officers in working with Members from amongst their team and managers, **where issues do exist they are not always addressed or challenged at a council/corporate level**.

To: Council
12 January 2022

**Revised proportionality calculations and membership
Executive Director of Delivery - Democratic & Registration Services**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out the position regarding the overall allocation of seats on committees as a result of the by-election held on 9 December 2021 following the resignation of Malcolm Tullett.
- 2 Recommendations to the Chief Executive from Council, meeting informally in accordance with the process agreed by Council on 28 April 2021:**
- 2.1 That the revised proportionality calculations are agreed;
- 2.2 That changes to the membership of overview and scrutiny, committees and other groups tabled at the meeting are agreed, in accordance with political group wishes; and
- 2.3 That any changes to the Leader's appointments tabled at the meeting are noted.

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Council is required to review the representation of political groups as soon as practicable after any change occurs, and to appoint to vacant seats in accordance with the wishes of the political groups.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 This report reflects the majority group's proposals for the allocation of seats on committees which have been discussed with the Labour Group and the independent councillor.

5 Supporting Information

Background

- 5.1 Malcolm Tullett resigned from Bracknell Forest Council on 22 October 2021 and the resulting by-election in the Old Bracknell Ward altered the political balance of the Council. This change triggered the requirement for the Council to review the representation of political groups and to determine any changes to the allocation of seats on committees, as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and its associated regulations.

- 5.2 The composition of the Council is now as follows:

	Number of councillors	Proportionality
--	------------------------------	------------------------

Conservative Group	37	88.10%
Labour Group	4	9.52%
Liberal Democrat	1	2.38%
	42	100%

- 5.4 Councillor Parker is not currently a member of a political group and therefore has no right to nominate which committees he should be appointed to.

Political balance requirements

- 5.5 At the Annual Council Meeting on 28 April 2021 the Council established committees and allocated seats in line with the relevant provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, following the principles set out below:
- (a) that not all seats on the committee are allocated to the same political group;
 - (b) that the majority of seats on each Committee should be allocated to a particular political group if the number of members of the group is a majority of the Authority's membership;
 - (c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the total number of all seats allocated to each political group on ordinary committees should reflect the political balance of the Council; and
 - (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of seats on each Committee allocated to each political group should reflect the political balance of the Council.

- 5.6 Principles (a), (b) and (d) apply to all appointments to the authority's own committees and sub-committees and to certain outside bodies. However, principle (c) only relates to appointments to the 'ordinary' committees of the Council.

Allocation of seats on ordinary committees

- 5.7 The table below sets out the Conservative Group's proposed allocation of seats on ordinary committees. This satisfies three of the four principles set out in paragraph 5.5 above, (a) (b) and (c) but not (d). It is not possible for political balance to be achieved in both the total number of all seats allocated to each political group and across the total number of seats on each committee. There are no alternative options which satisfy all the principles or are a closer match.
- 5.8 In order to achieve this the Labour Group is required to relinquish a seat. The Group has decided not to take up the seat on the Governance and Audit Committee which is reflected in the table below. This results in two of the three committees achieving political balance. This means that Councillor Parker will gain the seat on the Governance and Audit Committee.

Committee	Number of seats	Conservative Group	Labour Group	Liberal Democrat
Employment Committee	9	8	1	0

Governance and Audit Committee	8	7	0	1
Planning Committee	18	16	2	0
Total allocation of places	35	31	3	1
Overall political balance	35	31	3	1
No adjustments required to achieve overall political balance				

Allocation of seats on other committees/sub-committees

- 5.9 There are a further 15 seats on the Licensing and Safety Committee and 12 seats on the Overview and scrutiny Commission. These committees have not been included in the table above which shows the overall allocation of seats on ordinary committees as neither of these committees are 'ordinary' committees for the purposes of the provisions within the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. They must be politically proportionate however principle (d) does not apply. Committees are also required to observe political proportionality when setting the membership of sub-committees.
- 5.10 The proposed allocation of seats on these committees/sub-committee is set out below. To achieve political balance on the Licensing & Safety Committee the Labour Group have gained a second seat. The allocation of seats on the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and the Education Employment Sub-Committee are unaffected.

Proposed allocation of seats on committees/sub-committees				
Committee	Number of seats	Conservative Group	Labour Group	Liberal Democrat
Licensing and Safety Committee	15	13	2	0
Overview & Scrutiny Commission	12	11	1	0
Education Employment Sub-Committee	7	6	1	0

Membership of advisory groups

- 5.11 Appendix A also includes an appointment made by the Leader and in light of the resignation of the independent councillor, the Leader will notify Council of any changes.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 The recommendations in this report reflect the requirement for political balance in the allocation of seats on committees as set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no additional revenue implications arising from the above recommendations.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 These have been incorporated in the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Not relevant to this report.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 Not relevant to this report.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO₂. The reason the Council believes that this will have no impact on emissions is that there will be no change to the number of appointments.

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

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Appendix A – Changes to committees and other Groups

	Appointed by	Nomination
Non-Executive Decision-Making Committees		
Governance and Audit Committee	Council	Councillor Parker
		Note: currently vacant therefore no change required to other membership
Licensing and Safety Committee	Council	Councillor Bidwell
		Note: currently vacant therefore no change required to other membership
Planning Committee	Council	Councillor Bidwell
		Note: Councillor Parker to come off from this membership
Other Bodies		
Climate Change Advisory Panel	Leader	To be tabled at meeting
		Note: Currently vacant
Substitutions		
All committees which allow substitutes	Council	Councillor Bidwell

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