# CONSULTATION RESULTS ANALYSIS

Objective 1: Climate Emergency

1.   We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the first objective for the climate emergency. Nine local organisations answered this question and eight agreed strongly with the objective and one agreed. It should be noted that organisations did not have to comment on all objectives if they felt it was not relevant to their organisation or they had nothing to add.

2.   For residents, 51% strongly agreed and 33% agreed, giving us a total of 84% of residents and visitors (the public) agreeing that the Council should have an objective on climate emergency. Only 13% of public respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The chart and table below refer only to the responses from the public.


Climate Emergency: residents agree/disagree
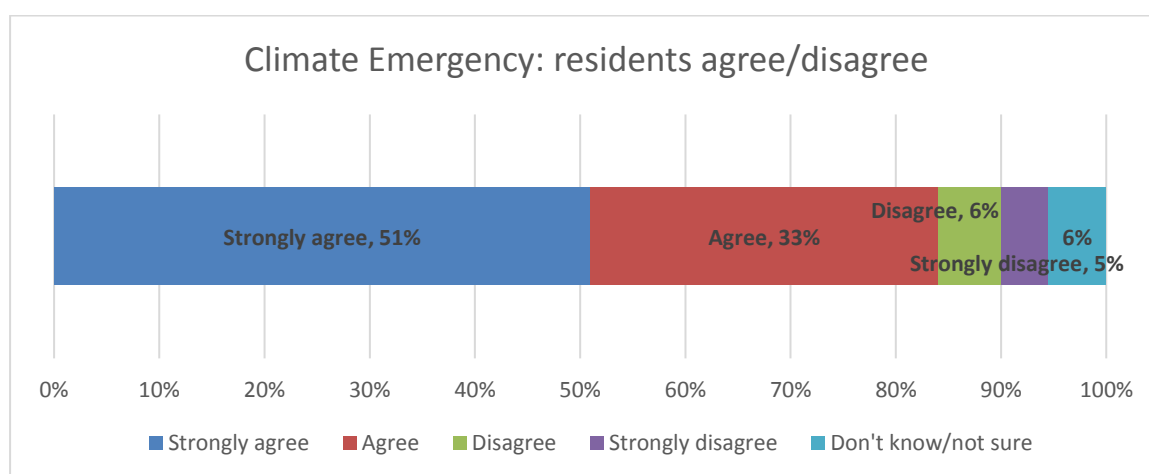
Answer	% of respondents
Strongly agree	51%
Agree	33%
Disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	5%
Don't know/not sure	6%
Total number of responses	110

3.   We can breakdown this information into some groups but due to the small sample they are limited and are only reported where there is a significant statistical difference, as follows.

   a) Women were more likely to strongly agree, 61%, and total agreement was from 92% of women respondents.
   b) Bexhill residents were a little less likely to strongly agree (compared to all responses) at 45% of Bexhill respondents. However, Bexhill residents were more likely to select agree at 38% so overall responses are similar to all responses.

Action plan for the climate emergency objective

4.   We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed that each of the actions or projects in the draft action plan would help deliver the climate emergency objective.

5.   Local organisations said:

a) **New Local Plan** has higher biodiversity requirements: Three organisations strongly agreed and seven agreed that this action would help tackle the climate emergency.
b) **Rother Community Grants and CIL** going to carbon reduction projects: Five local organisations strongly agreed and seven agreed that this action would help.
c) **Recycling increased to 53% of household waste**: Five local organisations strongly agreed, three agreed and one organisation disagreed that this action would help.
d) **Managing green assets for carbon reduction**: Five local organisations agreed strongly and five agreed that this action would help. RDC's own Parks Development service commented:
e) **Electric vehicle charging points in council car parks**: Six local organisations strongly agree and four agreed that this action would help.
f) **RDC assets all carbon neutral**: Five local organisations strongly agree and four agree that this action would help.
g) **Incentivising town and parish councils to have climate emergency policies:** Six local organisations strongly agreed and three agreed that this action would help.

6.   Residents said:

a) **New Local Plan** has higher biodiversity requirements: 72% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help tackle the climate emergency.
b) **Rother Community Grants and CIL** going to carbon reduction projects: 78% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help.
c) **Recycling increased to 53% of household waste**: 90% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help.
d) **Managing green assets for carbon reduction**: 90% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help.
e) **Electric vehicle charging points in council car parks**: 88% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help.
f) **RDC assets all carbon neutral**: 86% of residents either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. Women were a bit more likely to support this action at 93% of women respondents. Working age (18-64) respondents were slightly less likely to support this action at 80%, although still a high majority agreement that this action will deliver. Bexhill residents were slightly less likely to agree/strongly agree at 80%, which is still a strong majority agreement.
g) **Incentivising town and parish councils to have climate emergency policies:** 82% agree or strongly agree that this action would help. Women were more likely to agree with this action at 90%.

7.   The chart and table below refer to the responses by the general public and show the distribution of agreement. Areas where residents were least sure and said they didn't know if it would help were the higher requirement

biodiversity policies in the Local Plan and making part of community grants and CIL funding for infrastructure carbon reduction projects. The most popular actions were electric vehicle charging points in council car parks and managing green assets for carbon reduction.
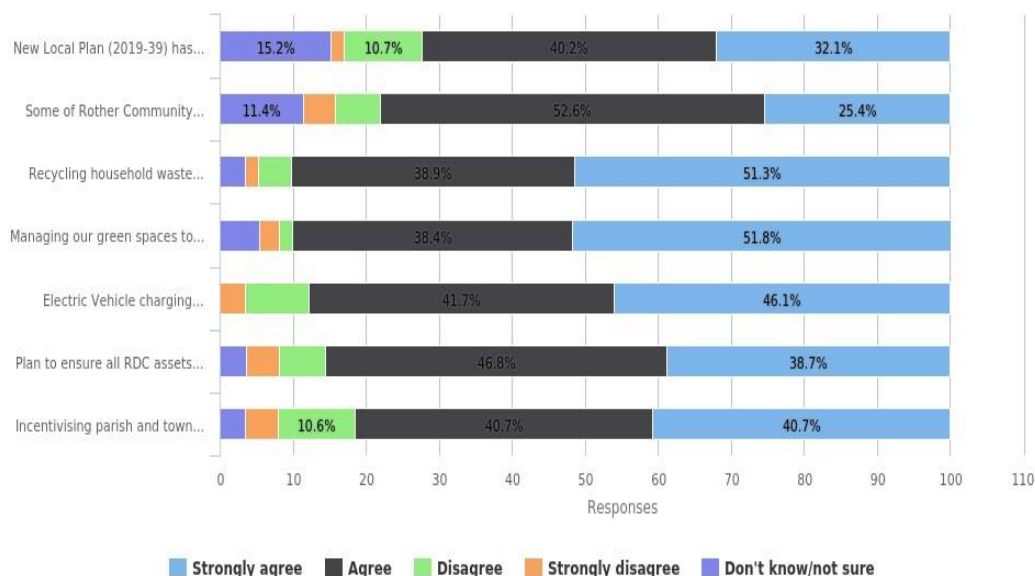
Answer	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/not sure	Total
New Local Plan (2019-39) has higher bio-diversity policies	32%	40%	11%	2%	15%	**112 100%**
Rother Community Grants and Community Infrastructure Levy	25%	53%	6%	4%	11%	**114 100%**
Recycling household waste increased to 53%	51%	39%	4%	2%	4%	**113 100%**
Green spaces maximise carbon reduction effectiveness	52%	38%	2%	3%	5%	**112 100%**
Electric Vehicle charging points in car parks	46%	42%	9%	4%	0%	**115 100%**
RDC assets are carbon neutral or offsets	39%	47%	6%	5%	4%	**111 100%**
Incentivising parish and town councils to adopt climate emergency policies	41%	41%	11%	4%	4%	**113 100%**

Other matters to take into account for climate emergency

8. We asked if there was anything else the council should take into account for this objective or the action plan. Organisations said:

   a) **Environment Strategy Manager (RDC) – a full copy of the letter is available to Members:** I welcome that one of the priority objectives is specified as Climate Emergency; although the term Climate and Nature Emergency is more apt.

Bearing in mind that aim to ensure the Rother District Council (Council) is carbon neutral by 2030 and other environmental objectives are already articulated within the Rother Environment Strategy; as well as any future asset management strategy or a plan for the Council's entire estate. The Corporate Plan, as an overarching strategic document, is to set out and support the notion that environmental matters permeate all activities of the Council and the wider Rother district; not merely duplicating wording found in other Council's strategic documents.

Subsequently, within the Corporate Plan, Climate and Nature Emergency is not a single standalone objective; but a cross-cutting objective that permeates activities of all the other objectives e.g.: Housing (ensuring it meets not only quantity but also quality of housing in terms of energy and water efficiency and access to green spaces provision etc.); A Fairer Society (ensuring that deprived areas have equal access to quality of green spaces which can be accessed using sustainable/ active travel etc.): and Development of the Rother's economy (which is already articulated as green economy within the Rother District Economic Recovery Action Plan, The East Sussex Economy Recovery Plan as well as in the Rother Environment Strategy).

Such unique encompassing and lateral characteristic of the Climate and Nature Emergency objective must be recognised and expressed within the Corporate Plan document accordingly, if the Council is to meet its Climate and Nature Emergency commitments. This understanding of horizontal and boundless nature of the environmental issues is critical for setting out clearly and embedding a Climate and Nature Emergency centric approach to decision making across the whole organisation and all its functions.

Subsequently, another critical role of the Council to be articulated within the Corporate Plan is as an Environmental Steward committed to responsible use of natural resources, protection of ecosystems, and, where applicable, ensuring a baseline of compliance with environmental requirements.

The Environmental Steward role is about taking a full and balanced account of the interests of society, future generations, and the natural environment while accepting significant answerability to society for these actions. This is in recognition that we must take care not to degrade the natural resources that we do use, and whenever possible, restore and rehabilitate resources to their natural conditions.

The Bexhill i-tree study and a tree planting strategy, initiated last month under the Rother Environment Strategy, is an example of the environmental stewardship approach the Council is undertaking: it will calculate the value of these green assets and the annual benefits they provide; as well as a baseline for measuring how well we are doing in the future, caring for the Bexhill treescape.

In summary, the Council can be an exemplar local authority and its inspiring vision and leadership articulated within a corporate plan are to reflect this. Incorporating observations outlined in this letter into the draft Corporate Plan will cement the position of the Council as forward leading on both local communities and Climate and Nature Emergency fronts.

b) **Parks Developments Service (RDC):** The climate emergency is part of the government's Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill and it's not solely about carbon neutrality. It covers restoring and regenerating habitats by implementing measures to protect and enhance the variety, abundance and health of biodiversity in both rural and urban/human-modified ecosystems, but the word 'biodiversity' isn't mentioned in any of the corporate plan's proposed actions.

The action relating to actively managing our green spaces to maximise carbon reduction effectiveness should also include something about supporting and/or creating biodiversity in council-owned assets. Also, rather than working in isolation, this would be more effective if we were working collectively and taking a holistic approach with other land owners and organisations with environmental objectives.

Could the summary line under 'Climate Emergency' incorporate something about the responsible management of the built and natural environment.

c) **Active Rother:** Measures to encourage walking and cycling as part of an approach to develop greater travel choice are important to the health and wellbeing of local people. I would therefore support plans to encourage local people to be more active and use sustainable forms of transport.

RDC have put in place work from home arrangements for staff, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, there is learning from this approach, which can contribute to improved health and wellbeing for local people such as air quality improvements.

I would support the inclusion of action to protect, conserve and enhance outdoor spaces that promote positive physical and mental well-being for the public.

d) **Rye Conservation Society:** We support the Councils Green policies, particularly electric charging points in Rother car parks which we do think could encourage take up of electric vehicles and be useful for 'Green' tourists!

e) **Rother Greenways:** Rural areas such as Rother are very badly served by national policies such as the Government's Gear Change policy for walking and cycling and ESCC's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plans, both of which are geared almost exclusively towards urban areas. This means that the majority of residents will not be able to benefit from healthier, less polluting environments. Therefore, I am strongly in favour of RDC taking on board the conversion of many of our Bridleways into traffic-free Greenways for the enjoyment of walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and the disabled. In addition, RDC has the ability to set up a district-wide system to implement Quiet Lanes in rural villages which will encourage traffic to slow down and promote healthier Active Travel.

In addition to EV charging points in car parks, RDC should be looking at making space for bike shelters, bike lockers, e-bike sharing schemes and similar.

f) **Bexhill Heritage:** Making it a requirement that officers and members take a longer view of the impact of their decision-making.

If we are serious about responding to the climate emergency, we must consider the impact of decisions on the lives of future generations. Officers and members should adopt a 'legacy mindset' i.e. what are our grandchildren likely to think of the decisions they made in 2021?

As a start, members and officers may like to set aside a small sum for training local decision-makers in how to encourage such a 'legacy mindset' and promote 'intergenerational justice'.

g) **Battle Town Council:** Recycling should be increased by a greater percentage.

Recycling should be genuine reuse of these materials and not incinerated or landfilled.

Further education and improved technology to ensure greater compliance.

h) **1066 Cycle Club:** The District Council should use funds to provide walking and cycling infrastructure. Routes should be segregated.

Reducing speed limits (20mph zones) in towns, villages and other residential areas.

i) **Rother Environmental Group:** The first action should be subject also to no dramatic change in planning legislation or to CIL.

Show leadership within the local area, demonstrating that action to mitigate climate change is both necessary and urgent.

Couple initiatives with awareness raising to emphasise their reason and importance to local residents.

Also discuss adaptation measures, to prepare for unavoidable impacts of climate change - prioritising nature based solutions.

Initiatives need to be consistent and prioritise green jobs/businesses, with full consideration as to how to deliver a just transition, so that existing inequalities are addressed as part of the solution.

Each of the projects, should as far as possible have a positive effect on the environment. Some should exclusively benefit the environment.

The recycling target is very unambitious and by currently including garden waste gives the current rate appearing higher than it actually is.

Advocate with ESCC for a review of the incinerator's contract which is currently.

j) **East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group:** Measures to encourage walking and cycling as part of an approach to develop greater travel choice are important to the health and wellbeing of local people. We would

therefore support plans to encourage local people to be more active and use sustainable forms of transport. It would be helpful to take into account local NHS facilities such as GP practices, community health facilities and the local hospitals when considering these travel choice options and to work with the CCG, the rural Rother and Bexhill Primary Care Networks and East Sussex Hospital NHS Trust in their development.

We recognise that along with the CCG, RDC have put in place work from home arrangements for staff, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, there is learning from this approach, which can contribute to improved health and wellbeing for local people such as air quality improvements. We would welcome the opportunity to share our learning to inform our future plans.

We would support the inclusion of action to protect, conserve and enhance outdoor spaces that promote positive physical and mental wellbeing for the public.

k) **Hastings Transport Forum:** The main point I would want to make about the draft Rother Corporate Plan is the lack of references to transport and connectivity and to sustainable public transport services and active travel in terms of cycling & walking infrastructure.

Transport is a key issue for town and rural communities, where the situation is considerably more difficult and very relevant to environmental & health concerns and carbon reduction by reducing car usage.

The existence of the Hastings & Rother Transport Action Group, which is currently working on a strategic plan, should be mentioned as a good example of cross boundary work.

While East Sussex County Council is the local transport authority, Rother DC has a vital role to play in setting planning policy that should focus on building in sustainable & active travel infrastructure and options for all except the smallest development site planning applications and including, for example, walking & cycling route networks and other considerations into its Local Plan.

9.   Residents commented and most comments were suggested additions for the action plan.   A full list of all responses is available as an appendix.   A summary of main points is as follows:

a) **Add -** reduce council offices by working from home and hot desking, etc. habitat diversity and biodiversity, including improving or restoring habitats, green corridors, verge management.   Litter reduction.   Reducing water use. Incentivising residents to improve their homes, reduce their own carbon footprint: insulation schemes, home electric vehicle charging points, reduce use of certain fuels, including burning material. Incentivising use of public transport by staff.   Improvements to public transport and encouraging sustainable transport (electric vehicles, cycling, etc.).   Contractors and suppliers should meet carbon neutral standards. Not developing housing on green spaces.   An education programme.

b) Electric vehicle charging points – people shouldn't have to pay parking charges if there only to charge their vehicle. Add other provision at other

locations with recommended locations covering private car parks (e.g. supermarkets, schools) and various on-street locations.

c) **Recycling rates:** Add food waste collection. Recycling target should be higher (63%, 83%) and is not ambitious. More emphasis on repair and re-use instead of recycling.

d) Would like to see implementation costs.

e) Opposition to the inclusion of the objective, climate change, etc. because it is not a real issue, does not affect Rother, is up to central Government to address.

Objective 2: Financial Stability

10. We asked how much respondents agreed or disagreed with having the second objective for financial stability.

11. All responding organisations agreed with the Council having this objective. Four local organisations strongly agreed with this objective and four agreed with having this objective. The remaining responding organisations made no response on most of the internal facing or organisational objectives.

12. For residents, 87% either agreed strongly or agreed with the Council adopting an objective for financial stability. Only 5% of respondents disagreed. The chart and table below shows who the public responded to this question. Due to the small response rate we can only give a breakdown for Bexhill, where 89% of respondents agreed.
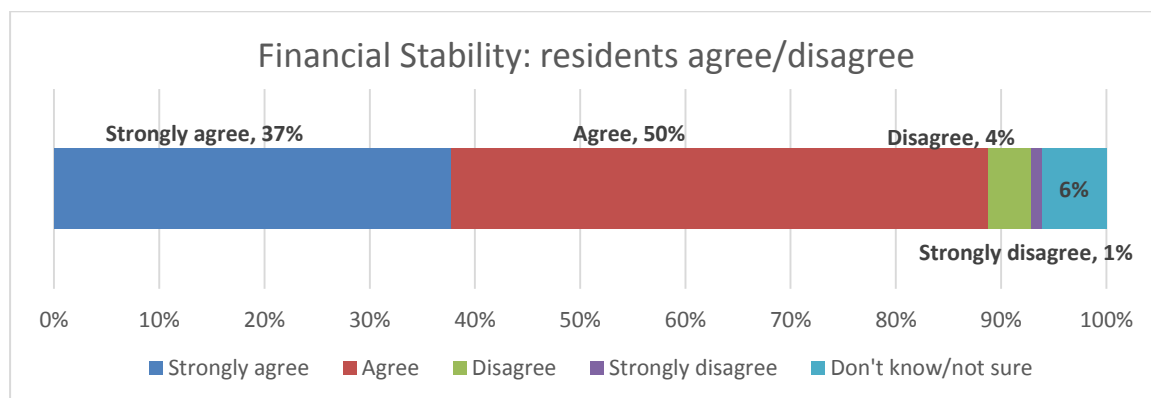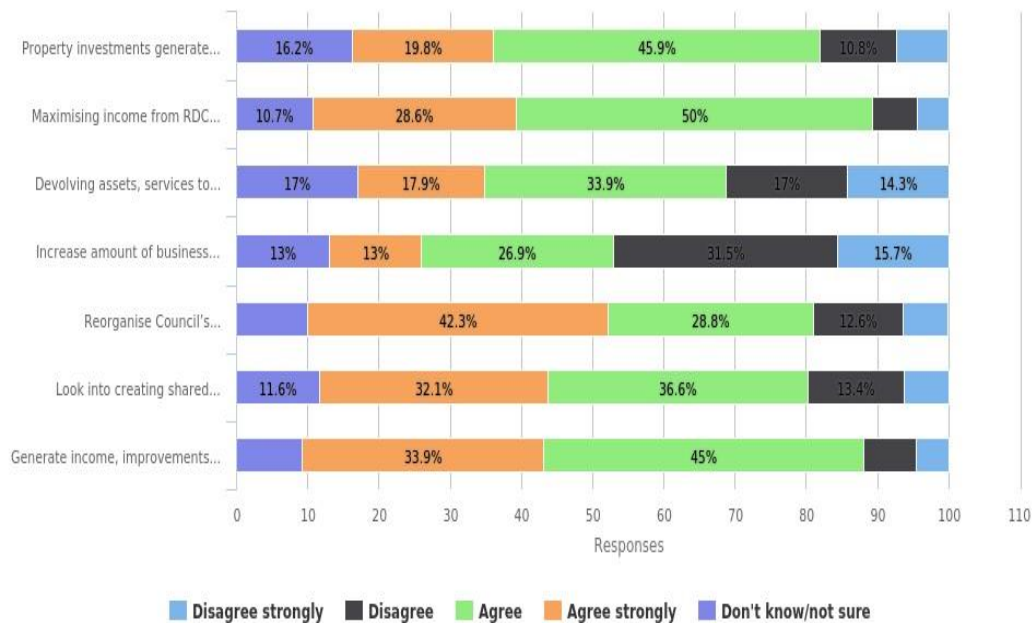

Answer	%
Strongly agree	37%
Agree	50%
Disagree	4%
Strongly disagree	1%
Don't know/not sure	6%
Total responses (no.)	101

13. We can breakdown this information into some groups but due to the small sample they are limited and are only reported where there is a significant statistical difference.

a) Women are more likely to select 'agree' at 60% but a little less likely to select strongly agree (31%). There is still majority support, of course.

b) Working age respondents (18-64) are less likely to select strongly support at 32% but combined agreement is still 86%.

Action Plan for Financial Stability

14. We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed that the actions in the action plan would help to deliver the financial stability objective.

15. Local organisations said:

   a) **Property investment income £3.44m by 2025** – One organisation agreed strongly, five agreed and two did not know or were not sure if this action would help deliver the objective.
   b) **Maximising income from RDC assets** – One agreed strongly and seven local organisations agreed this action would help deliver the objective.
   c) **Devolving assets to town and parish councils, etc.** – Two agreed strongly (Bexhill Heritage, Rother Environmental Group), five local organisations agreed and two disagreed (Battle Town Council and Rye Conservation Society.
   d) **Increase amount of business rates generated** – one local organisation agrees strongly, four agree and two did not know or were not sure if this action would help deliver the objective.
   e) **Reorganise council's structure for cost efficiencies** – two organisations agreed strongly, four agreed and two didn't know or were not sure.
   f) **Sharing services with other organisations** – two local organisations agreed strongly and six agreed that this action would help deliver the objective.
   g) **Generate income** – three local organisations agreed strongly, four agreed and one organisation did not know if this action would help deliver the objective.

16. Residents responded as follows:

   a) **Property investment income** £3.44m by 2025 – 62% agreed or strongly agreed that raising income would help deliver the objective. Men were more likely to agree & strongly agree with this action at 71%. Bexhill residents were overall more in agreement with this action at 76%.
   b) **Maximising income from RDC assets** – 79% agreed or strongly agreed.
   c) **Devolving assets to town and parish councils**, etc. – 52% agreed or strongly agreed. Women are a little more likely to agree at 57%. However, working age residents were less likely to support this action. Only 41% of 18 to 63 year olds agreed or strongly agreed and 31% disagreed or strongly disagreed and the remaining 15% didn't know.
   d) **Increase amount of business rates generated** – 40% agreed but 48% disagreed. Bexhill residents were less in agreement with this action with only 34% agreeing and 52% disagreeing.
   e) **Reorganise council's structure for cost efficiencies** – 71% agreed or strongly agreed.
   f) **Sharing services with other organisations** – 69% agreed or strongly agreed. Bexhill residents were slightly less in agreement at 63%, although still a majority.
   g) **Generate income** – 79% agreed or strongly agreed.

Answer	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Don't know/not sure	Total
Property investments generate net extra income of £3.449m by 2025	20%	46%	11%	7%	16%	**111**
Maximising income from RDC assets	29%	50%	6%	5%	11%	**112**
Devolving assets, services to parish, town councils, etc.	18%	34%	17%	14%	17%	**112**
Increase amount of business rates generated.	13%	27%	32%	16%	13%	**108**
Reorganise Council's structure: reduce cost, greater efficiency.	42%	29%	13%	6%	10%	**111**
Look into creating shared services with other orgs.	32%	37%	13%	6%	12%	**112**
Generate income, improvements in service delivery	34%	45%	7%	5%	9%	**109**

Other matters to take into account for financial stability

17.   We asked if there was anything else the council should take into account for this objective or the action plan. Organisations said:

   a) **Rye Conservation Society** We note the Councils aspiration to devolve some services such as public toilets to the parish council, but do not know if this is realistic. In Rye at least the toilets are used mostly by day trippers and visitors, many of whom are elderly coach trippers and are an essential

service. We are not convinced that the cost of providing these services should fall on the towns people alone.

b) If devolving the services is a means of saving money, then we see no benefit to Rye and the other parishes unless there is some way they can derive income from them.

c) **Bexhill Heritage** We recommend also that assets be devolved, where appropriate, to local charities and community organisations such as Bexhill Heritage.

d) Such a strategy is effective with regard to financial stability but also enhances community cohesion.

e) **Battle Town Council** Insufficient detail provided to allow for a reasoned response for some of the categories; where a response of 'don't know' is used.

f) **1066 Cycle Club** RDC should divest funds from fossil fuels.

g) **Rother Environmental Group** It is not clear to us what the implications of the measures listed may be.

e.g. There are essential services that we would not like to be reduced/value engineered, and we would not agree with business rates being increased to the detriment of local businesses who are already struggling - We do not want to see more chain shops in Rye, as its unique character comes from the unique local businesses.

However, we would like to see more 'useful' shops on the high street, aimed at locals not tourists, i.e. grocers, repair cafe, and any prioritising businesses supporting zero waste, low carbon sustainable lifestyles - again to emphasise a consistent message.

When putting a number of targets, it would be better to put them in the order in which they happen.

Any opportunity of energy generation investment should be pursued vigorously in conjunction with local stakeholders. Perhaps work with Energise South.

18. Residents commented and most comments were suggested additions for the action plan. A full list of all responses is available as an appendix. A brief summary of main points is as follows in note form, without duplications and not including references to other actions only other organisations can take.

a) **Business rates:** Don't increase. Not right time. Sounds like will force out small, independents. Should be more incentives for small, independent and starts ups. Reduce business rates. Consider town centre support post Covid-19. Too many empty shops and businesses now. Business is regional and national, surely more of a hope than a quantifiable target. Regenerate by decreasing shop rates, lowering parking charges to increase use of town centres. Attracting new businesses would be a favourite.

b) **Buy local**, use local businesses, increase partnerships with private sector,

c) **Income generation** is top priority. Don't rely on council tax. Property investment by councils hasn't had a good reputation. Monitor property development for environmental impact. Use town hall for weddings. Use car parks for events, markets on quiet days. How will it be maximised and why isn't it now? No new grandiose schemes. Property investment

strategy is flawed, offices will be affected by more working from home, diversify.

d) **Add:** Reduce fraudulent benefit claims. Not enough detail, lacks clarity. New targets, as these will be achieved by the time the document is adopted. More detail needed on funding.

e) **Devolving:** Only devolve assets if this benefits residents. Passing costs/services to parishes: Is counter to action of partnership provision of services. Some parishes may welcome. Some parishes not modern, efficient, democratically accountable (not elected). Should not be with increased costs to parishes. Don't use contractors do more in-house. Get rid of Rye Town Council, waste of money. Serious concerns about devolving to parish councils, only moving to parish balance sheet, so no benefit to residents, charges residents more, RDC keep/take responsibility and delivery.

f) **Making efficiencies and re-organising:** Is a top priority. Put more emphasis on this. Shouldn't be at the expense of delivering strategic objectives. Can end up being more expensive. Should learn from good examples in other local authorities. Current level of services should remain even if a deficit. Put more emphasis on this. A lot of work needs to be done to build confidence within the organisation. Value knowledge and experience to build up staff confidence. Do not agree with plans for Town Hall, costs don't add up, just convert side buildings to housing and reduce office space combined with working from home. Restructured several times in recent years, what is the benefit? Previous experience of restructuring is staff need to be consulted, large chunks of workload get overlooked, affects new systems/processes, creates gaps, etc. Sort out Planning department. Improving service delivery is not going to increase income until improving services gets it to higher than an acceptable service level. Increase frontline workers, reduce management, reduce councillors allowances,

g) **Sharing services:** Sounds good. Less accountability. Can be poorer working conditions. Benefits to share staff, services and ideas. Can work well but dependent on many factors and takes time. Although good previous track record do not underestimate amount of work/time involved to get this right. Equals staff cuts, inferior service delivery, efficiency and effectiveness at greater cost,

h) **Private sector service delivery:** COVID-19 has shown failures of private sector such as exploiting workers, wasteful track and trace.

Objective 3: Increase Supply of Affordable Housing

19. We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the third objective for increasing the supply of affordable housing (to deliver 400 affordable rent homes by the end of 2023). Ten local organisations answered this question and all of them agreed with the objective. Seven agreed strongly and three agreed the council should include affordable housing as an objective.

20. For the public, 40% strongly agreed and 38% agreed, giving us a total of 78% agreeing that the Council should have an objective on affordable housing. Only 13% of public respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The chart and table below refer only to the responses from the public.

Affordable Housing: residents agree/disagree
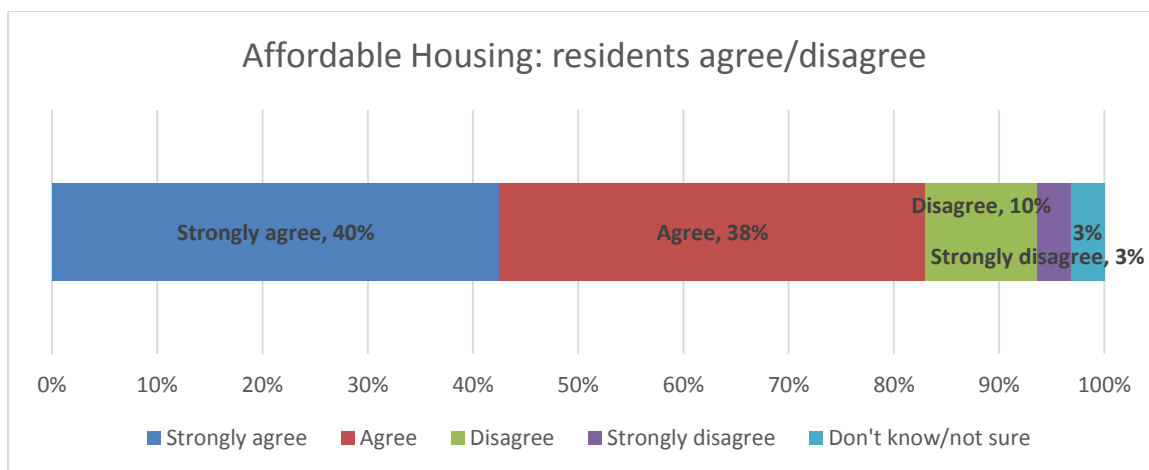
Answer	%
Strongly agree	40%
Agree	38%
Disagree	10%
Strongly disagree	3%
Don't know/not sure	3%
Total no. of respondents	101

21. We can breakdown this information into some groups but due to the small sample they are limited and are only reported where there is a significant statistical difference. Bexhill residents are less likely to agree and strongly agree with this objective. In total, 71% of Bexhill residents agree and strongly agree, which is still majority support. This is divided into 30% strongly agree and 41% agree. They are also a bit more likely to disagree at 15%.

Action plan for affordable housing objective

22. We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed that each of the actions or projects in the draft action plan would help deliver the affordable housing objective.

23. Local organisations that responded unanimously supported this objective:

   a) **Ensuring schemes progressed by developers**: five organisations strongly agreed and five agreed that this action would help tackle affordable housing.
   b) **Delivery on two stalled sites**: Five local organisations strongly agreed and five agreed that this action would help.
   c) **Direct development of affordable rent homes**: Six local organisations strongly agreed, five agreed that this action would help deliver affordable housing.
   d) Residents gave the following responses:
   e) **Ensuring schemes progressed by developers**: 79% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help deliver affordable housing. Working age (18-64) respondents are a little less likely to agree with this action at 71% selecting agree/agree strongly. Bexhill residents are a little less likely to agree/disagree at 74%, although still majority agreement.
   f) **Delivery on two stalled sites**: 79% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help.

g) **Direct development of affordable rent homes**: 78% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. Working age respondents are a little less likely to agree with this action at 71% (although still majority agreement). Bexhill residents are a little less likely to agree with this action at 72%.

24. The chart and table below refer to the responses by the general public and show the distribution of agreement. In particular, it demonstrates how more than three quarters of respondents agreed or strongly with each action.

Agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver the objective to increase supply of affordable housing?
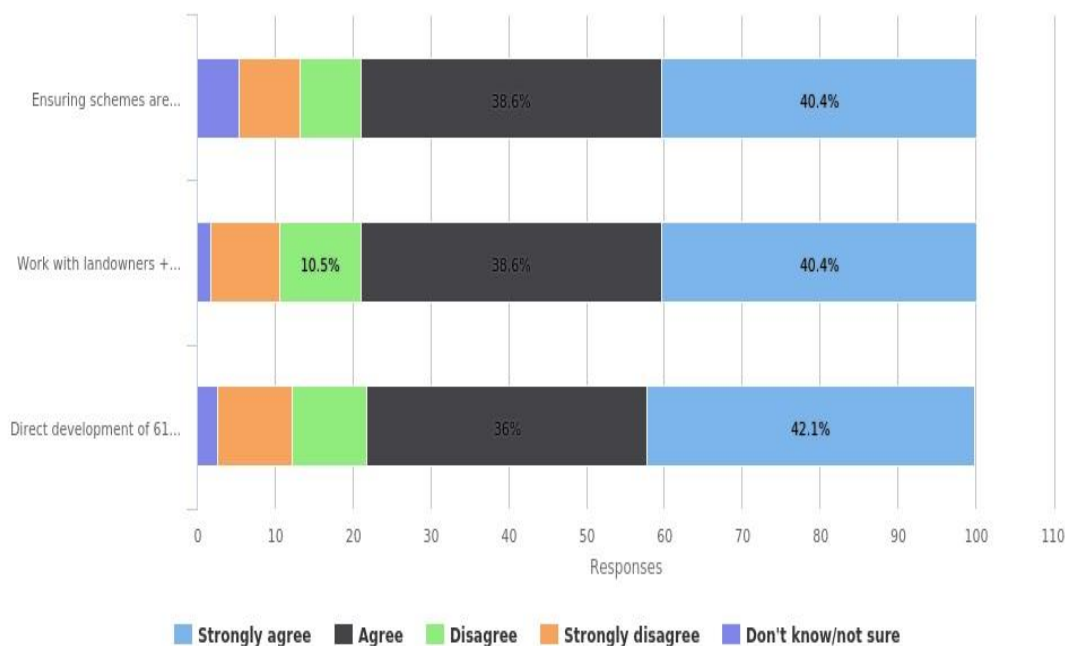
Answer	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/not sure	Total
Ensuring schemes are progressed by developers (85 in 2021, 106 in 2022, 118 in 2023)	40%	39%	8%	8%	5%	**114 100%**
Work with landowners + Registered Providers to begin delivery on 2 stalled sites (30 affordable rent homes)	40%	39%	11%	9%	2%	**114 100%**
Direct development of 61 affordable rent homes by our company: Alliance Homes (Rother)	42%	36%	10%	10%	3%	**114 100%**

Other matters to take into account on affordable housing

25. We asked if there was anything else the council should take into account for this objective or the action plan. Organisations said:

a) **Rye Conservation Society** We recognise that there is likely to be increasing pressure in favour of housing development, but are concerned that much current development around Rye at least is not geared towards local people but in practice results in ever more second homes and buy to let or Air BNB properties. The impact of climate change on low lying areas is also worrying. In short there is strong feeling in Rye that local people are being priced out of housing as very little new housing is 'affordable'• , at least since the completion of the Valley Park development.

b) **Bexhill Heritage** Rural We strongly support strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing but such strategies should be implemented with the following in mind: 1. Schemes should be considered with the longer-term needs of future generations in mind as well as the need for additional housing in the short term. (See our response to Objective 1 - climate emergency.) 2. Ensure that strategies to increase affordable housing respect the town's heritage assets. We strongly support schemes in which heritage assets are converted for residential use and so preserved for future generations.

c) **Battle Town Council** In support of as much affordable housing to be built as possible. These should be suited to those requiring homes in the Rother area.

d) **1066 Cycle Club** Homes should have facilities/space to store bicycles. Public transport links (local bus routes) should be provided. Services and infrastructure should be put in place (doctors, schools, community centres, etc)

e) **Rother Environmental Group** Affordable housing also needs to prioritise net zero houses, to mitigate fuel poverty and show leadership.eg Passivhaus style, solar panels on all roofs.
There are some great examples now: https://architizer.com/blog/inspiration/stories/goldsmith-street-stirling-prize/ http://www.mikhailriches.com/project/goldsmith-street/
or the number of examples listed here: https://amp-theguardian-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/amp.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/mar/06/eco-homes-become-hot-property-in-uks-zero-carbon-paradigm-shift
More rigorous enquiry into viability assessment.
Encourage the creation of community land trusts.

f) **Sedlescombe Parish Council** The plan to achieve 400 affordable houses by 2023 is in itself admirable although perhaps the target should be set higher as these targets are rarely achieved and it would allow for slippage.

Build more affordable housing but strategic thought should be given to the mixing of communities which can otherwise provide problems in social housing. Conversely integration with owner/occupiers has its own problems not least the friction between the different tenures and it would seem that tenants who have some stake in their housing are less likely to cause this friction. This stake may be a longer strictly regulated tenancy to make the affordable housing less 'identifiable'.

Building by Housing Association must provide reasonable homes at a reasonable price. The tendency is to over-spec the house because the 'government' is providing the finance leading to over-charging for the work. Case: small estate of new houses by a national builder offered to Housing Association who refused the purchase on the basis of specification. The expectation of the nation for housing supply is an ever changing one. By the middle of the 20th century house builders were concerned that equilibrium in the market was being reached. By the 21st century expectations and demands had considerably altered. The demands of single families, expansion of university education, children leaving home prior to marriage and immigration into the country. First generation immigrants were willing to accept higher density accommodation to provide a close-knit social community. Rightly their children now wish to have accommodation in line with the rest of the population. The abandonment of the 'council house' building and its replacement by Housing Associations, whilst a good idea at the time, failed because the proceeds received from these sales were not re-invested in new housing. In Hastings and Rother, at the time of the transfer of local authority housing to the Housing Association, the base rents were set taking into account that this area was deprived so the rental values had always lagged behind more prosperous areas whilst other costs, repairs, renewals etc., remained by and large the same in most areas. The rent levels were always a problem in the local area.

It is difficult to involve the individual in the decision making on affordable houses in the local community as nimbyism is rife. My solution to the problem is to build affordable homes at a reasonable price and to try to integrate them into the local community. The tenancies granted not by a points auction but to those with the ability to integrate and contribute to the community. A long-term family association with the area should be a strong factor and perhaps consideration should be given to involving Parish Councils in the nomination process. Local knowledge is a powerful tool in some of these things. The community might be happier when their representatives, i.e. the Parish Council, are helping with these decisions.

26. Residents commented and most comments were suggested additions for the action plan. A full list of all responses is available as an appendix. A summary of main points is as follows:

a) **Add -** Prioritising local families/residents for social housing. Stop spread of misinformation by nimby groups. Stop nimby groups blocking development. Targets are too low. Target should be 25% higher. 400 is not enough. Work in partnership with: parish councils, AIRS. New developments should have enough dedicated parking, should not make parking problems worse. Support employability programmes for social housing tenants. Accommodation above shops. Filling empty homes. Be more progressive, innovative to get more home ownership by those struggling to get on housing ladder. Building to lifetime homes standards, make sure some are wheelchair accessible. Add self-build schemes. More about environment and climate emergency, biodiversity in relation to housing/developments. Community gardens or allotments for all developments over 12 homes. Have actions that reduces need for affordable housing such as employment. Build on brownfield sites. Prioritise locals first. Ways to get private landlords to accept housing

benefit tenants. Increase sheltered housing. Increase accommodation for frontline key workers.

b) **Disagreement** - Government models are wrong and too much provision made for South East England and should be in North East England. Don't support large developments in villages, no employment, no infrastructure, longer journeys, not environmentally friendly. Don't have a housing company, you have no experience. Don't build on green space. No need for green sites to be delivered if filled all empty, derelict, abandoned property or sites. Discourage second home ownership.

c) **Direct development by housing company** - Any housing built by the council should: prioritise brownfield building, stay in council control, not sold off, build more, will council consider being letting manager for private sector, supportive of shared ownership schemes, buy existing accommodation and affordable rent.

d) **Ensuring schemes progressed by developers** – be stricter enforcing building of affordable housing by developers, be more pro-active, stronger messages. Don't approve any planning application without affordable provision. Don't allow developers to change plans to more expensive homes. Stop leasehold as part of any development. Do legal minimum and then increase involvement of housing company to take over. Use any means possible to progress stalled sites. Increase target.

Objective 4: Housing List Reduction

27.   We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the council adopting an objective to reduce the housing list from 1600 to 1200 by 2023. Nine local organisations answered this question and three agreed strongly with the objective and six agreed.

28.   For residents, 31% strongly agreed and 46% agreed, giving us a total of 77% agreeing that the Council should have an objective on reducing the housing list. Only 10% of public respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and 9% did not know or were not sure of their answer. The chart and table below refer only to the responses from the public.
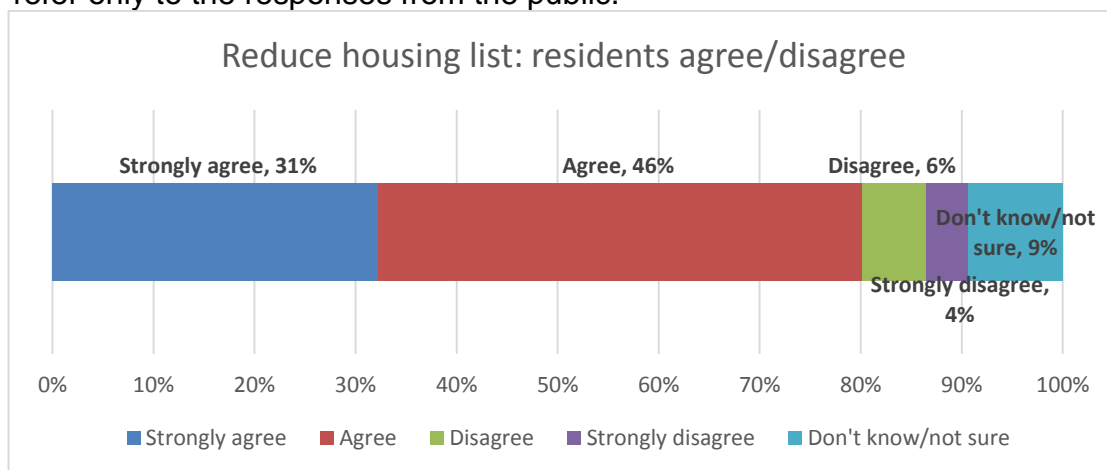
Answer	%
Strongly agree	31%
Agree	46%
Disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	4%
Don't know/not sure	9%

Total	100%

29. There are no statistically significant difference in any sub-set of respondents.

Action plan to reduce the housing list

30. We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed that each of the actions or projects in the draft action plan would help deliver the objective to reducing the housing list by 500 households.

31. Local organisations said:

    a) **Increase supported housing options for temporary accommodation**: three local organisations strongly agreed and five agreed that this action would help reduce the housing list. ESCC Young People Housing & Accommodation Team strongly disagreed.
    b) **Increase home adaptations for disabled residents**: three local organisations strongly agreed and five agreed that this action would help reduce the housing list. ESCC Young People Housing & Accommodation Team strongly disagreed.
    c) **Provision of Discretionary Housing Benefit**: three local organisations strongly agreed and five agreed that this action would help reduce the housing list. ESCC Young People Housing & Accommodation Team strongly disagreed.
    d) **New homes through Alliance Homes (Rother)**: three local organisations agreed strongly and six agreed that this action would help. ESCC Housing and Accommodation for Young People strongly disagreed.
    e) **Rother Tenant Finder Scheme**: three local organisations strongly agree and five agreed that this action would help. ESCC Housing and Accommodation for Young People strongly disagreed.
    f) **Multi-complex needs through multi-agency support**: four local organisations strongly agree and four agree that this action would help. ESCC Housing and Accommodation for Young People strongly disagreed.

    g) **Revised Housing Allocations Policy delivery and Local Plan focus on Council Tax Band A properties:** three local organisations strongly agreed and four agreed that this action would help. ESCC Housing and Accommodation for Young People strongly disagreed. Battle Town Council did not know if it would help.

32. Residents responses for agreement or disagreement with having this objective were:

    a) **Increase supported housing options for temporary accommodation**: 79% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help reduce the housing list.
    b) **Increase home adaptations for disabled residents**: 86% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help.
    c) **Provision of Discretionary Housing Benefit**: 74% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. Women were more likely to strongly agree and agree with this action as 80% of women respondents gave these answers.

d) **New homes through Alliance Homes (Rother)**: 66% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. Bexhill residents are a little less likely to agree and strongly agree at 61%.

e) **Rother Tenant Finder Scheme**: 74% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help.

f) **Multi-complex needs through multi-agency support**: 81% of residents either strongly agree or agree that this action would help.

g) **Revised Housing Allocations Policy delivery and Local Plan focus on Council Tax Band A properties:** 69% agree or strongly agree that this action would help. Women were slightly more likely to agree/strongly agree at 74%.

33. The chart and table below refer to the responses by the general public and show the distribution of agreement. It shows that the most popular actions were disabled facilities grants and addressing households with multi-complex needs through multi-agency support. The least supported action, although still majority support, was about the housing allocations policy and the Local Plan.

How much do you agree or disagree that these actions will help deliver the objective to reduce the housing list?
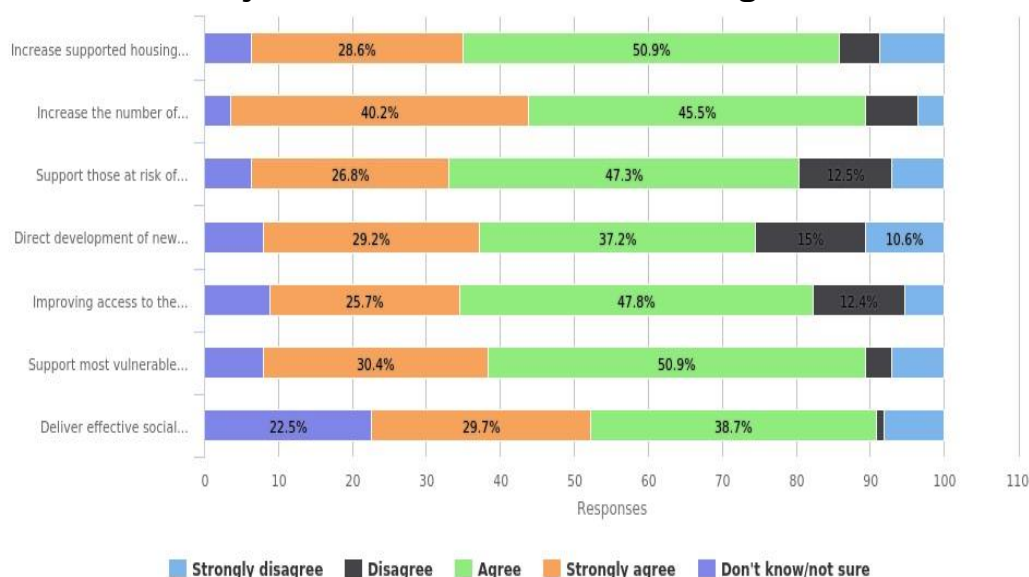
Answer	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/not sure	Total
Increase supported housing options to meet identified temporary accommodation needs for homeless.	29%	51%	5%	9%	6%	**112**
Increase the number of adaptations made to the homes of disabled people and support them to sustain their accommodation through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)*.	40%	46%	7%	4%	4%	**112**
Support those at risk of homelessness to sustain their	27%	47%	13%	7%	6%	**112**

accommodation through the provision of Discretionary Housing Benefit.						
Direct development of new homes through the Alliance Homes (Rother) delivery vehicle to increase the supply of housing in all tenure types across the District.	29%	37%	15%	11%	8%	**113**
Improving access to the private rented sector through the Rother Tenant Finder scheme	26%	48%	12%	5%	9%	**113**
Support most vulnerable households with multiple, complex support needs to access accommodation through multi-agency service delivery.	30%	51%	4%	7%	8%	**112**
Deliver effective social housing allocations through a revised Housing Allocations Policy for Rother. The Rother Local Plan to prioritise affordable housing for those in Band A Council Tax properties.	30%	39%	1%	8%	23%	**111**

Other matters to take into account for reducing the housing list

34.   We asked if there was anything else the council should take into account for this objective or the action plan. Organisations said:

a) **Bexhill Heritage** We strongly support strategies to reduce the housing list but such strategies should be implemented with the following in mind:
1. Schemes should be considered with the longer-term needs of future generations in mind as well as the need for additional accommodation in the short term. (See our response to Objective 1 - climate emergency.)
2. Ensure that strategies to reduce the housing list respect the town's heritage assets. We strongly support schemes in which heritage assets are converted for residential use and so preserved for future generations.

b) **Battle Town Council** A more ambitious target for the rough sleeping objective is required.

We strongly support a change in the housing allocation policy to ensure that people living in unsuitable accommodation eg families in one room are moved at the earliest possible time to suitable accommodation.

c) **1066 Cycle Club**   RDC should ensure there is the necessary support for people in their housing.

d) **Rother Environmental Group**   We understand Rother has a high proportion of secondary residences which are empty for a large proportion

of the year, these should be taxed appropriately to compensate for the loss of housing to the local economy and consequent increase in house prices/rent, which takes level above the affordable range of many local people.

When revising the allocation policy take into account family and community connections i.e where people are currently living.

e) **East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group** Good health depends on having homes that are safe and free from physical hazards. In contrast, poor quality and inadequate housing contributes to health problems such as chronic diseases and injuries and can have harmful effects on childhood development. The CCG therefore supports the proposed actions to support those at risk of homelessness to sustain their accommodation, to relieve homelessness by improving access to the private rented sector, to support the most vulnerable households with multiple and complex support needs to access accommodation through multi-agency service delivery.

35.   Residents commented and most comments were suggested additions for the action plan.   A full list of all responses is available as an appendix.   A summary of main points is as follows:

a) **Add -** addressing empty properties, filling large empty buildings, adapting commercial properties. Self-build projects. Build more affordable/social housing. Stop developers building expensive houses. Prioritise families with children, local residents or workers. Add projects beyond 2023. Address issues of landlords, renters rights, affordable rent. Add filling empty homes. More action to tackle the causes. Need a community hub for housing, life skills and employment support.

b) **Clarify:** What if reduction met temporarily or situation improves? What about increased unemployment from Covid? What is a housing list?

c) **Disagreement:** Not necessary because homeless people have choices. New homes are not needed and stress environment and resources/infrastructure. Target drives wrong behaviour of building houses which are not good for environment. Problems of housing a person with mental illness in a rural village. Don't build on AONB. Plenty of empty properties. You can achieve this by simply changing the criteria to join the housing list, don't agree with reducing housing list because used as evidence of housing need with developers to get affordable housing or need for affordable housing in rural areas. Double edged sword, don't agree with wording, re-word: is priority to take positive action to help people into suitable housing or reduce a database, should be about people not a list. Will affect developers' viability arguments. National problem. Too many people want to live in Rother, enough is enough.

d) **Disabled Facilities grants** – disagree with giving disabled people public money when can get other funding through government.

e) **Tenant Finder Scheme** – not much impact yet. Big local issue of private landlords taking housing benefit tenants. Heard support stops after tenant moves in. Sometimes issues with tenants that private landlords needs support with. Estate agents say payments from council are very slow.

Objective 5: Housing Supply

36.   We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the fifth objective to bring Rother above the 5-year housing supply requirement by the end of 2023. Nine local organisations answered this question and three agreed strongly with the objective and four agreed. One organisation disagreed, Battle Town Council, and one organisation did not know, 1066 Cycle Club.

37.   For residents, 28% strongly agreed and 31% agreed, giving us a total of 59% of residents and visitors (the public) agreeing that the Council should have an objective on housing supply. However, 32% of public respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The chart and table below refer only to the responses from the public.
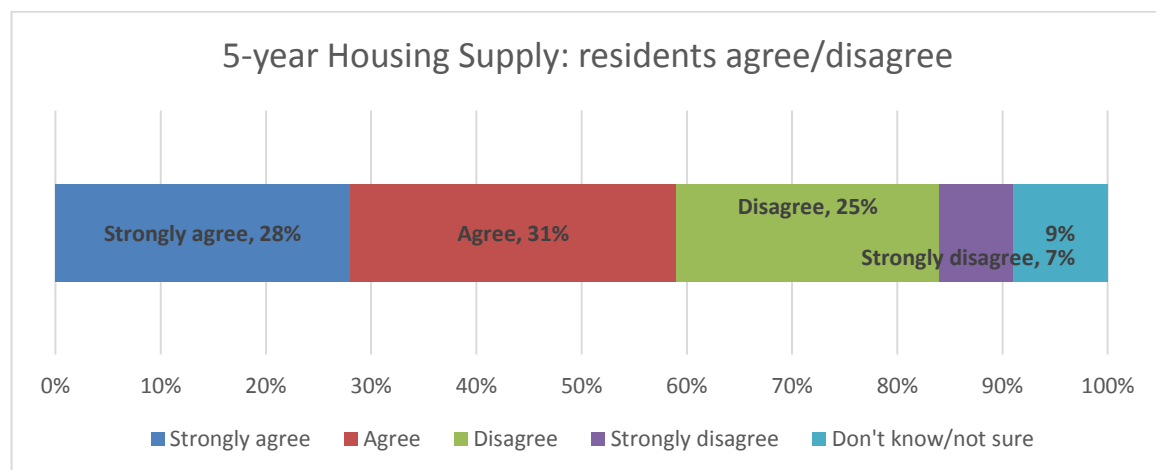
How much do you agree or disagree with having an objective to bring Rother above the five-year housing supply?

Answer	%
Strongly agree	28%
Agree	31%
Disagree	25%
Strongly disagree	7%
Don't know/not sure	9%
Total	110

38.   We can breakdown this information into some groups but due to the small sample they are limited and are only reported where there is a significant statistical difference, as follows.

- Men were a little more likely to agree strongly (36%) and less likely to agree (25%).
- Women were less likely to select agree strongly (17%) and more likely to select agree at 38%.

Action plan for Housing Supply

39.   We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed that each of the actions or projects in the draft action plan would help deliver the 5-year housing supply.

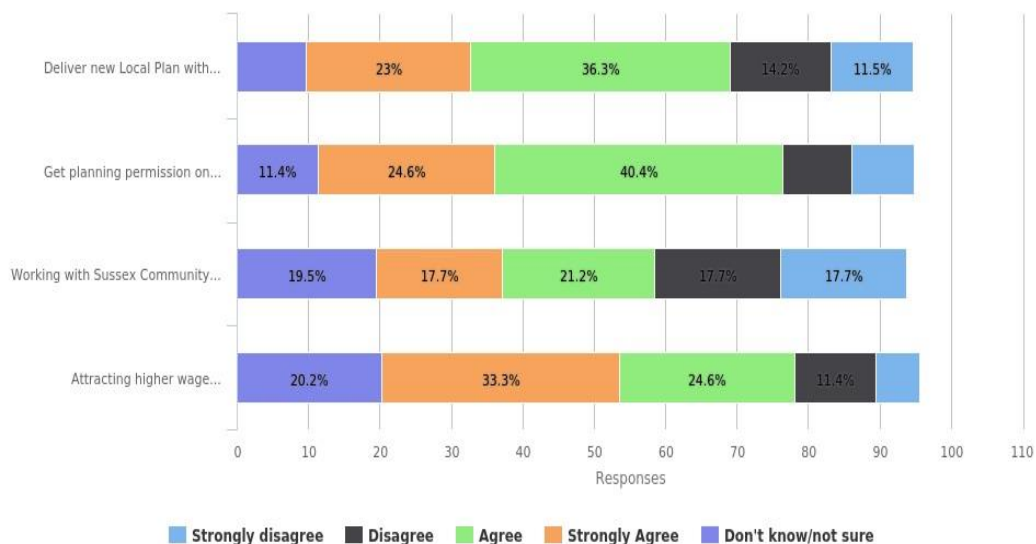40. Local organisations' responses in summary were:

a) **New Local Plan has policies to speed planning permission, incentivise small sites, etc.**: one organisation strongly agreed (Bexhill Heritage) four agreed that this action would help tackle delivery of the housing supply. However, one organisation disagreed (Rother Environmental Group) and one strongly disagreed (East Sussex County Council: Young Person's Housing & Accommodation) and one organisation didn't know.

b) **Getting planning permission [for housing] on council-owned land** Three local organisations strongly agreed and five agreed that this action would help. One organisation strongly disagreed (as above).

c) **Bring forward rural exception sites**: One local organisation strongly agreed (Bexhill Heritage), five agreed. One organisation strongly disagreed (ESCC). Three local organisations did not know or were not sure if they agreed or disagreed if this action would help deliver more than a 5-year supply. They were Battle Town Council, Peasmarsh Parish Council and 1066 Cycle Club.

d) **Supporting higher housing demand: higher wage employers to new employment sites, Local Plan policies**: Two local organisations agreed strongly and seven agreed that this action would help. One organisation strongly disagreed (ESCC: Young Person's Housing & Accommodation).

41. Residents said:

a) **Local Plan policies to speed permission, incentivise small sites**: 62% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help housing supply. Men were less likely to agree at 55%.

b) **Getting planning permission on council-owned land**: 69% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. Men were less likely to agree at 63%. Working age (18-64) respondents were less likely to agree/strongly agree at 62%.

c) **Bring forward rural exception sites**: 42% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. However, 38% disagree or strongly disagree. A further 21% did not know if this action would help or not. Women were less likely to agree with this action, only 36% of women respondents agreed/strongly agreed. Working age respondents were a bit less likely to agree/strongly agree at 36%.

d) **Supporting higher housing demand**: 61% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help raise supply over the 5-year housing supply threshold. Men were less likely to agree at 55%.

42. The chart and table below refer to the responses by the general public and show the distribution of agreement. It shows that getting planning approval for housing developments on council-owned sites has the most supported action and working with local partners to bring forward rural exception sites has the least support. Resident were more likely to say they didn't know if it would help with rural exception sites and measures to stimulate housing demand.

How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help delivery the housing supply objective?

Answer	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/not sure	Total
Deliver new Local Plan with policies to speed up planning process, incentivise smaller sites, etc.	24%	38%	15%	12%	10%	**113 100%**
Get planning permission on Council-owned land and land owned or purchased through Alliance Homes (Rother).	26%	43%	10%	9%	12%	**114 100%**
Working with Sussex Community Housing Hub and Registered Providers to bring forward applications on rural exception sites.	19%	23%	19%	19%	21%	**113 100%**
Attracting higher wage business to new employment sites and incentivising businesses with higher wages to Bexhill and rural areas, which will support further housing demand. Ensure Local Plan reflects housing mix which supports needs of incoming businesses.	35%	26%	12%	6%	21%	**114 100%**

Other matters to take into account for housing supply

43. We asked if there was anything else the council should take into account for this objective on exceeding the 5 year housing supply or the action plan. Organisations said:

   a) **East Sussex County Council: Young People Housing & Accommodation** Work with a private landlord to access TA for homeless households with direct tenancies to the occupiers and RDC (+Homeworks?) providing tenancy support to ensure the household gains

the necessary skills to manage the tenancy. If, after an appropriate period, the private landlord and RDC are satisfied the tenant has assimilated the necessary skills, there are no rent arrears and no ASB then consideration can be given to converting the tenancy to periodic for permanent occupation, on the basis that the landlord commits to limiting the rent to LHA + 10 or 20%?

b) **Rye Conservation Society**   If the business does not come and the houses are not built what then? All areas of the country seem to be in a competition on the one hand to attract investment and on the other hand places like Rye could easily be badly impacted by inappropriate housing or economic developments. As the Conservation Society we seek to preserve the unique character of Rye but are not against useful new development such as the Rye Hill social and medical centre, the Hub.

We have of course recently helped produce the Rye Neighbourhood Plan and would hope that you will work with the Rye Neighbourhood planning group, notably Col. Kimber, and Rye Town Council to ensure that the RNP policies are fully taken into account when drawing up this Corporate Plan. After all the RNP took many man hours to produce and was subject to a successful local referendum.

c) **Rother Greenways**   All new housing developments should be in alignment with Climate Emergency policies. This would include better access to public transport, safe walking and cycling routes to key trip attractors such as schools, shops and transport interchanges. In addition, we need to reduce the number of assumed car parking spaces in new developments and instead supplement these with EV charging, e-bike sheds, and so forth. All new housing developments should be carbon-neutral in their construction and have integrated renewable energy systems.

d) **Bexhill Heritage**   We strongly support strategies to increase housing supply but such strategies should be implemented with the following in mind:

Schemes should be considered with the longer-term needs of future generations in mind as well as the need for additional housing in the short term. (See our response to Objective 1 - climate emergency.) 2. Ensure that strategies to increase housing supply respect the town's heritage assets and their setting. We strongly support schemes in which heritage assets are converted for residential use and so preserved for future generations.

e) **Battle Town Council**   We are unsure what the implications of progressing rural exceptions sites would be.

No details of proposals to improve speed of planning process.

f) **1066 Cycle Club**   The planning process needs to be more efficient, not just speeded up.

g) **Rother Environmental Group**   Make the planning process efficient without sacrificing public consultation.

Small sites do not need incentivising.

Encourage community land trusts as community sites are better for small villages.

Encourage owners of permanently unlived in houses to allow them to let out to rent, including upper floors in town centres.
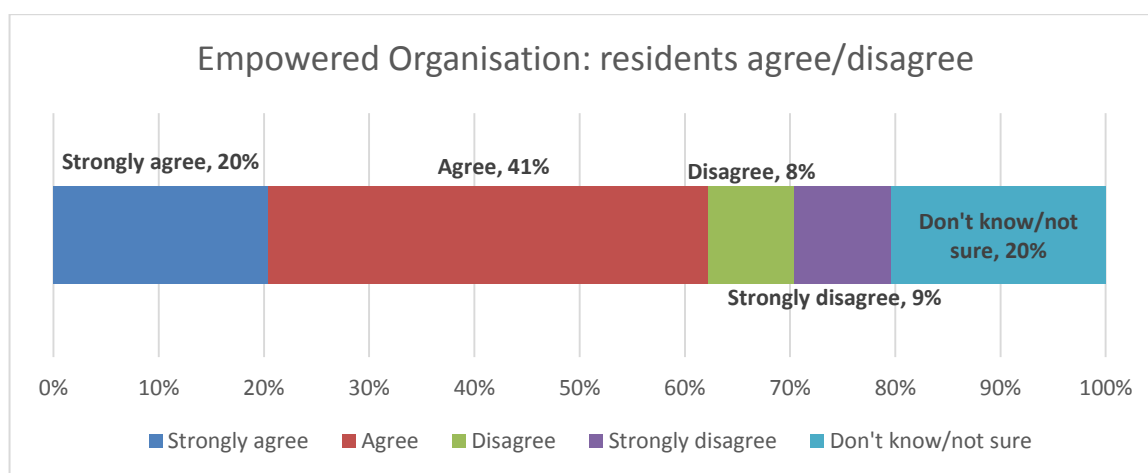
Promote the rent a room scheme.

44. Residents commented and most comments were suggested additions for the action plan. A full list of all responses is available as an appendix. A summary of main points is as follows:

a) **Speeding up planning process:** not sure will deliver quality, review resources in planning, address councillors making decisions against officers advice thereby adding significant costs in appeals and lost income for infrastructure improvements.
b) **Incentivising small sites:** more likely to spread housing need through existing communities. Remove planning rules about only over 6 units count towards local targets. Support larger developments in villages. As long as residents agree.
c) **Rother housing company** – council should not make a profit. Should be made fully transparent on decisions and accounts. Not the role of a council.
d) **Rural exception sites** – take 5 years get more efficient planning and partnership,
e) **Attracting higher wage businesses** – risk of driving out low wage businesses like farming, better to encourage local businesses to grow or start, support those struggling from pandemic, jobs are key here, especially jobs in all parts of the district, need the infrastructure improved to be attractive,
f) **Add** - tie into environmental initiatives, focus on brownfield sites, improving infrastructure like local roads around housing developments, better use of current available sites, address quality of housing, requirements for green housing and ties to transport/cycling, redevelopment and renovation schemes, minimum accepted room size (re. quality of housing), ensuring plans include play areas and facilities for young people.
g) **Disagree** – strongly oppose development in rural Rother, object to building on AONB, just meet the requirement don't exceed it, can't keep building more, stop population growth instead, things like jobs and infrastructure are more important than providing more homes than we need, the only housing shortage here is affordable/social, could lead to hasty decisions, could lead to more costs for council,
h) **Clarify** – what is a rural exception site, PINS, regulation 18, what is the baseline and where do you want to be, any plan to control current population,

Objective 6: An Empowered Organisation

45. We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the fifth objective for an empowered organisation, to create an organisational structure that allows for a clearer, more effective, resident focused organisation by the end of

2023. Only seven local organisations answered this question and one agreed strongly with the objective and two agreed. Three organisations strongly disagreed with the council having this objective. One organisation said that it didn't know or was not sure if this objective should be included. One additional organisation added comments when they had not answered the survey questions on agreement/disagreement but their comments suggest they did not agree with the objective or its action plan.

46. For residents, 20% strongly agreed and 41% agreed, giving us a total of 61% of the public agreeing the council should have an objective for an empowered organisation. Only 17% of public respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, quite a large 20% did not know or were not sure if this objective should be included. The chart and table below refer only to the responses from the public.

Empowered Organisation: residents agree/disagree

Strongly agree, 20% Agree, 41% Disagree, 8% Don't know/not sure, 20% Strongly disagree, 9%

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know/not sure

Answer	%
Strongly agree	20%
Agree	41%
Disagree	8%
Strongly disagree	9%
Don't know/not sure	20%
Total No. Answered	103

47. We can breakdown this information into some groups but due to the small sample they are limited and are only reported where there is a significant statistical difference. Bexhill residents varied from the overall results because 15% disagreed with this objective and only 11% didn't know or were not sure.

## Action plan for empowered organisation objective

48. We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed that each of the actions or projects in the draft action plan would help deliver the empowered organisation objective.

49. Local organisation responses in summary were:

a) **Review and amend organisational structure**: three organisations strongly agreed and three agreed that this action would help deliver an empowered organisation and one organisation did not know.

b) **Reduce complaints through self-help and digitalisation**: two local organisations strongly agreed and two agreed that this action would help. Two organisations strongly disagreed and one did not know.

50.   Residents said:

a) **Review and amend organisational structure**: 68% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help deliver an empowered organisation.
b) **Reduce complaints through self-help and digitalisation**: 58% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. Working age residents were much less likely to agree/strongly agree at 49% but 30% disagreed and 21% didn't know if this action would help deliver the objective.

51.   The chart and table below refer to the responses by the general public and show the distribution of agreement. It is notable that for the actions there were 18% and 19% of residents (respectively) who didn't know if these actions would help deliver an empowered organisation.
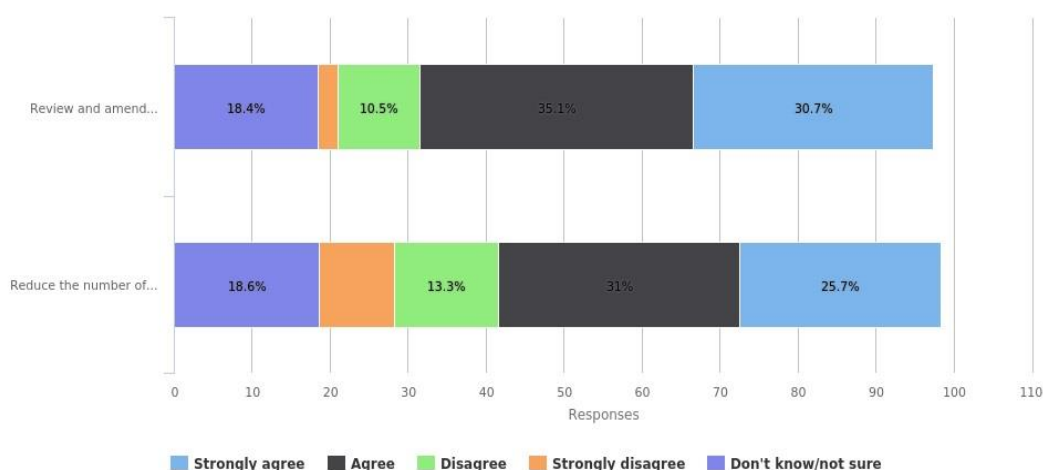
Answer	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/not sure	Total
Review and amend organisational structure	31.6%	36.1%	10.8%	2.7%	18.9%	**114 100%**
Reduce the number of complaints through improved self-help and the digitalisation of services	26.1%	31.5%	13.5%	9.9%	18.9%	**113 100%**

Other matters to take into account for an empowered organisation

52.   We asked if there was anything else the council should take into account for this objective or the action plan. This gives an opportunity to comment on the objective and its actions as well as to suggest additions or amendments. One additional organisation added comments when they had not answered the survey questions on agreement/disagreement. Organisations said:

a) **Bexhill Heritage** We agree that this objective is fundamental. There is nothing more important than seeking to support and engage potentially

resourceful local groups, organisations and households in projects and programmes of community development.

We suggest that the title of this objective be changed from 'Empowered Organisation' to 'Empowered Community' in order to reflect the council's commitment to community cohesion through community action. [Bexhill Heritage answered strongly disagree on the objective but strongly agree on both actions.]

b) **Battle Town Council** Rural Lack of clarity on the objective makes it difficult to respond.

There is an assumption that everybody has use of and an ability to use computers. Often the people that require assistance do not have private access to IT. [BTC answered don't know on whether the council should have this objective and don't know on re-organisation and strongly disagree on reducing the number of complaints.]

c) **1066 Cycle Club** People prefer contact with an actual person, not an algorithmic, automated solution. Reduce the number of complaints by having a more effective service. [1066 Cycle Club answered strongly agree with the objective, agree with re-organisation but strongly disagree with reducing the number of complaints.]

d) **Rother Environmental Group** We did not fill in the form part of this section because it is smoke and mirrors.

How do you propose to design out demand e.g. not answering the telephone?

The council should be resident focused anyway.

We would have assumed that officers are already taking decisions at the right level.

53. Residents commented and most comments were suggested additions for the action plan. A full list of all responses is available as an appendix. A summary of main points is as follows:

a) **Organisational structure** - Add more local jobs. Be more responsive and adaptive. Do not spend thousands on re-organising. Delegating more to those working at full capacity will not work. Not needed. Already re-organised several times and lost a third of jobs. Let the staff just get on with their jobs. Structure should be focussed on residents, businesses, visitors and best use of resources. More addressing diversity, BAME and gender representation. Corporate still dominated by men.

b) **Self-help and digitalisation** - Add clearer communication, reduce jargon on planning process, add making planning processes simpler, more customer friendly, self-help and digitisation can't make any difference to complaints about the council. Instead have target to on being effective, changing procedures. Add improve response times. Don't agree with increased digitalisation. Those not computer literate. Not everyone has IT equipment. Poor can't afford broadband. Telephone still required. Need to speak to real people not recorded messages, sometimes need to speak to

someone and should be easy to do so. Requires much better rural broadband speeds to be effective. All contact methods should be equally prioritised: discriminates. Digitalisation is the route to customer frustration. Address that customer services staff need to be backed up by staff from other services being equally helpful, informative and responsive to customers. Not everyone can self help and that is why we have the public sector and a public service ethos. Complaints are good for organisational development and learning and should value time taken by resident to complain.

c) **Add** – The key way to empower is to hear what people say, councillors should listen. Put in method so only have to tell story once. Increase accountability and transparency.

d) **Clarify** – don't see how reducing complaints empowers officers or equates to a staff restructure. How does self-help and digitisation reduce complaints to the council? What does design out demand mean? How many complaints were there to begin with? What is an acceptable number of complaints? Who do you want to empower – residents or staff or both?

Objective 7: A fairer society

54.   We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the council adopting an objective of a fairer society - to build a fairer society by promoting acceptance and equality in the district, developing an anti-poverty strategy to improve existing support services and identifying new ways of working in collaboration with the voluntary sector to reduce poverty and hardship within the district.   Ten local organisations answered this question and seven agreed strongly with the objective and three agreed.

55.   For residents, 36% strongly agreed and 38% agreed, giving us a total of 74% of residents and visitors (the public) agreeing that the Council should have an objective for a fairer society. However, 19% of public respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.   The remaining 7% did not know if they agree or disagree. The chart and table below refer only to the responses from the public.

A fairer society: residents agree/disagree
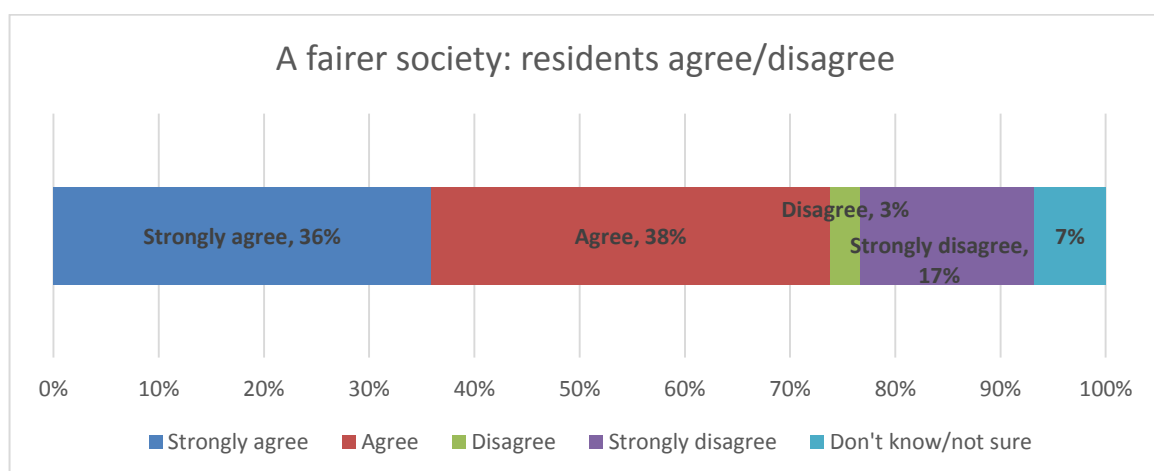
Answer	%
Strongly agree	36%
Agree	38%
Disagree	3%
Strongly disagree	17%

Don't know/not sure	7%
Total no. of respondents	103

56. We can breakdown this information into some groups but due to the small sample they are limited and are only reported where there is a significant statistical difference.

   • Working age respondents are less likely to strongly disagree at 10% of those respondents.
   • Bexhill residents are more likely to agree with this objective at 43% strongly agree and total agreement is 79%.

Action plan for the fair society objective

57. We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed that each of the actions or projects in the draft action plan would help deliver the objective for a fair society.

58. Local organisations said:

   a) **Develop an anti-poverty strategy for 2021**: Five organisations strongly agreed and three agreed that this action would help deliver a fair society. One organisation did not know or was not sure.
   b) **Improve employment access/readiness for homeless**: Six local organisations strongly agreed and three agreed that this action would help.
   c) **Improve physical activity in disadvantaged and poor health groups**: Six local organisations strongly agreed, two agreed and one organisation did not know or was not sure that this action would help.

59. Residents said:

   a) **Develop an anti-poverty strategy**: 83% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help deliver a fair society.
   b) **Improve employment for homeless**: 89% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. Men are slightly less likely to agree at 84%. Women are slightly more likely to agree with this action at 94%.
   c) **Improve physical activity in disadvantaged and poor health**: 84% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help.

60. The chart and table below refer to the responses by the general public and show the distribution of agreement. The chart shows that where residents were least sure if an action would help were when 10% answered they don't know about improving levels of activity in target groups. It shows the most popular action was improving employment access and employment readiness for the vulnerable homeless.

How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver the objective for a fairer society?
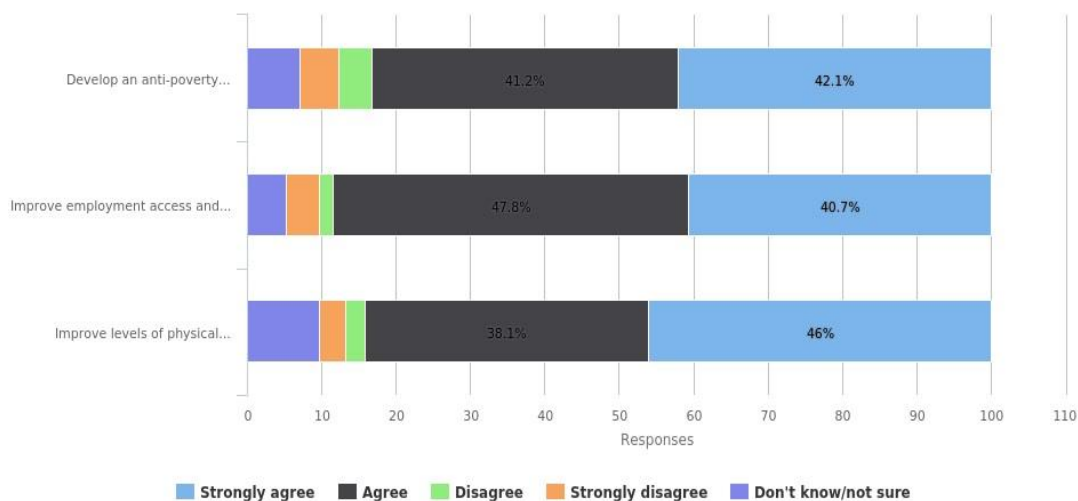
Answer	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/not sure	Total
Develop an anti-poverty strategy for the District by 2021	42%	41%	4%	5%	7%	**114**
Improve employment access and readiness among vulnerable homeless groups: 40 supported by 2022	41%	48%	2%	4%	5%	**113**
Improve levels of physical activity among residents experiencing socio-economic deprivation and poor health outcomes	46%	38%	3%	4%	10%	**113**

Other matters to take into account on a fair society

61.   We asked if there was anything else the council should take into account for this objective or the action plan. Organisations said:

a) **Active Rother**
1. The objective statement reads *To build a fairer society by promoting acceptance and equality in the District, developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy to improve existing support services and identifying new ways of working in collaboration with the voluntary sector to reduce poverty and hardship within the Distric*t.
   - Can this be changed to reflect collaboration not just with the voluntary sector but also with the rest of the statutory sector e.g. schools and the NHS. This would better reflect a whole system approach, which I believe is essential to action on addressing poverty and its associated determinants.

2. The action *For the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group to develop an anti-poverty strategy for the District.*
   - If not already done so, is the Anti-Poverty Strategy working group engaging with the new Rother Food Partnership? This is led by RVA

and supported by funding from ESCC Public Health. Created as a local response to the Covid pandemic disparity findings and recovery planning, this is a priority area within the new East Sussex Healthy Weight Action Plan, co-ordinated by ESCC Public Health and due to be published in April. The Plan will be taken forward by the East Sussex Healthy Weight Partnership, of which RDC is a member. It is recommended that the work of the Rother Food Partnership is reflected in the Anti-Poverty strategy.

- Has an Equalities and Health Inequalities Impact Assessment been completed and published in relation to the work of the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group?

3. The action *Improve levels of physical activity amongst residents experiencing socio-economic deprivation and poor health outcomes. Milestone - New leisure contract delivers demonstrable improvement in levels of activity amongst residents experiencing deprivation.*
   - It is not just the leisure contract that can contribute to this milestone. The Active Rother programme which RDC hosts and is supported by a partnership funding agreement with ESCC. The funding that RDC receives from ESCC in respect of this agreement funds my post and thus supports the co-ordination of the Active Rother programme and the Partnership. The aims and outcome areas in respect of this agreement are as follows:
     - To improve health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities in Rother by increasing access and participation in physical activity interventions
     - To utilise physical activity as a driver for community development and building social capital in Rother
     - To develop the physical activity sector in Rother through effective communication, networking and capacity building
     - To build the physical activity evidence base at a local level
   - The Active Rother Partnership strategy reflects the current evidence base, as well as national and local policy guidance in relation to increasing physical activity participation, with strategic aims and priorities that focus on inactivity amongst residents, in areas in which deprivation and health inequalities are most prevalent. https://www.activerother.org.uk/about-us
   - This approach aligns fully with the new recently launched Sport England strategy https://www.sportengland.org/why-were-here/uniting-the-movement This is important.
   - How is this *demonstrable improvement* going to be measured? It would be good to understand this further and integrate the agreed approach with Active Rother and Sport England approaches.
   - Reporting progress to both the Active Rother Partnership and the East Sussex Healthy Weight Partnership would demonstrate connectivity as part of a system wide approach.

b) **Bexhill Heritage** Loneliness is one of the main issues in Bexhill. It's a major driver of poor mental health in the town, especially among older people. We suggest that addressing this issue be included in the Council's action plan alongside its commitment to improve physical health.

Bexhill Heritage would like to work alongside the Council and other voluntary groups in developing this strategy.

c) **1066 Cycle Club** Implement a cycling and walking strategy.

d) **Rother Environment Group** Prioritise training for 'green jobs' as part of a just transition to a net zero society.

What is lacking is a recognition of the ageing population. Rother is the third area with over 80s district in the country.

Why have a new Bexhill leisure centre when Hastings is planning a new leisure centre just three miles away?

Affordable houses for young people.

e) **East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group** 'developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy'.
   - It would be helpful to extend this collaboration to the statutory section and include schools, social care and the NHS, in particular the NHS East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). We believe a whole system approach is essential to taking action on addressing poverty and its associated determinants.
   - Engagement with the new Rother Food Partnership is key to development of this strategy. The partnership is led by RVA and supported by funding from East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Public Health. Created as a local response to Covid-19 disparity findings and recovery planning, this is a priority area within the new East Sussex Healthy Weight Action Plan, co-ordinated by ESCC Public Health and due to be published in April. The plan will be taken forward by the East Sussex Healthy Weight Partnership, of which RDC is a member, along with the CCG. It would be helpful if the work of the Rother Food Partnership could be reflected in the anti-poverty strategy.

f) **Sedlescombe Parish Council** Should be a 100% reduction (in line with HBC) of council tax to poorest households.
Commitment to funding mental health services to all age groups in light of the pandemic.

g) **Parks Development Service (RDC)** Can this also include 'healthier' i.e. A fairer and healthier society. Much of RDC's work (not just our service area) has a direct link to people's physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Our public realm and the facilities we provide are for all, not just those who are affected by inequality. The importance of this and the services we provide to maintain the public realm (waste collection, grounds maintenance, public toilets, safe beaches etc.) in terms of both people's physical health and mental health has been clearer than ever throughout this past year during the pandemic. Access to public space for exercise, recreation, play, sport, fresh air, reflection, socialising, closeness to nature etc. has been critical to the majority of residents. On that basis, it might be more appropriate to have an additional objective; 'A healthier society'.

A high-quality public realm that is attractive to residents, visitors and business supports the creation of a more prosperous society which also links to the development of Rother's economy.
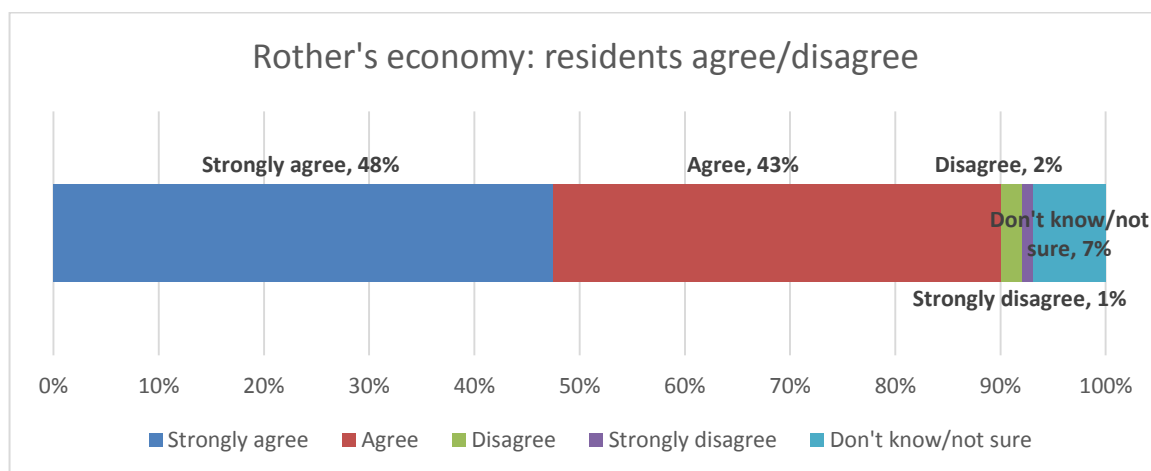
The action 'Improve levels of physical activity amongst residents experiencing socio-economic deprivation and poor health outcomes' only refers to the new leisure centre. Parks, open spaces and the facilities within them (or the public realm) should also be referenced. Specific projects could also be stated. This is a big part of the services we provide.

62.	Residents commented and most comments were suggested additions for the action plan. A full list of all responses is available as an appendix. A summary of main points is as follows:

a) Prioritise this objective over others and over less important actions or projects.
b) **Add -** Add more ideas/actions, 3 not enough. Ask target groups what they need. Listen to residents. Work with voluntary sector. Add buddying scheme for those leaving long term care or hospital to reduce long term costs. Address fast broadband and internet access. Invest in infrastructure and green projects that create jobs. Speaking of fairness do something that helps reduce average age of councillors. Anti-social behaviour and safe, well-lit areas. Accessible transport.
c) **Anti-poverty strategy** – want to know what would be in it. Make staff more aware of what poverty exists in community and which services impact upon it.
d) **Employment access/readiness homeless** - Needs improved education levels. Raise aspirations, qualifications, work experience.
e) **More activity:** Prioritise walking and cycle to improve activity levels. Planning remove dangerous junctions. Address activity in outdoor areas. Work with non-council indoor and outdoor facilities, make accessible. Not enough about activity and health in the corporate plan. Milestone due to be achieved before start of plan, so what next? Build the new leisure centre. Add connection with health, nutrition, lifestyle, mental health, etc. Up to the individual too. Include education programme. Free access to some facilities.
f) **Disagree -** This objective is beyond the powers/remit/role of a district council – for county council, for government. Needs fairer distribution of wealth. A district council will not have a significant effect. No/little hope for a fairer society. Impossible to achieve. Can only add to cost of running business, living locally. People want everything for nothing, stop this culture. Official interference in people's lives. People choose to be short of a home and a job.

Objective 8: Development of Rother's Economy

63.	We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the eighth objective for the development of Rother's economy: to lift the average indexed wage in Rother District from the bottom of the national league table by the end of 2023. Ten local organisations responded to this question and six agreed strongly with the objective and two agreed. One organisation did not know if this objective should be included. In addition, Bexhill Chamber of Commerce sent a detailed report analysing the Corporate Plan from a business and regeneration point of view that is attached as Appendix A.

64.	For residents, 48% strongly agreed and 43% agreed, giving us a total of 91% of residents and visitors (the public) agreeing that the Council should have an objective on Rother's economy. This is a highest level of agreement out of any of the objectives. Only 3% of public respondents disagreed or strongly

disagreed. The chart and table below refer only to the responses from the public.

Rother's economy: residents agree/disagree

Strongly agree, 48%   Agree, 43%   Disagree, 2%

Don't know/not sure, 7%

Strongly disagree, 1%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know/not sure

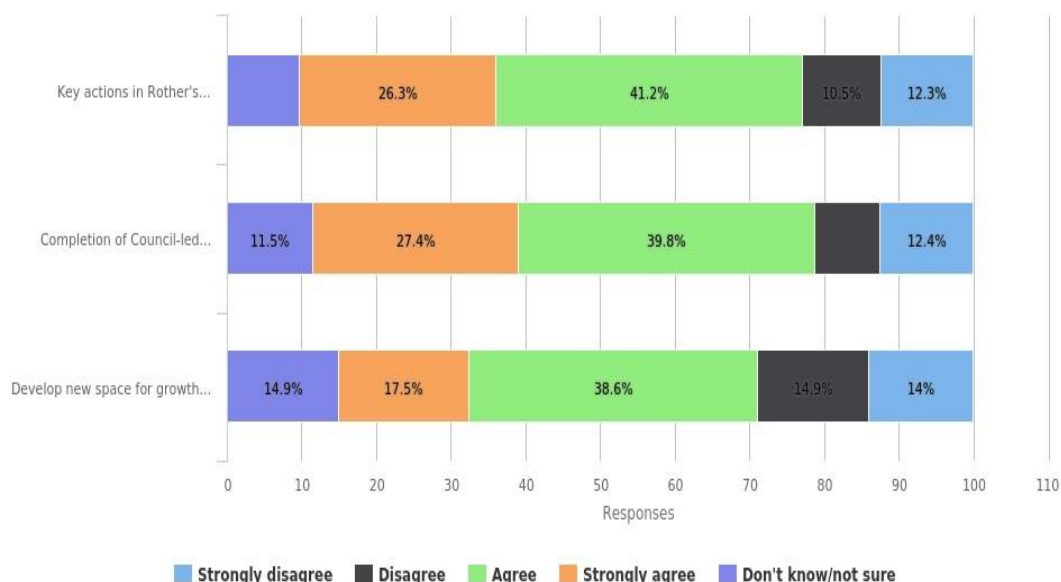| Answer	%
Strongly agree	48%
Agree	43%
Disagree	2%
Strongly disagree	1%
Don't know/not sure	7%
Total number of respondents	105

65.   We can breakdown this information into some groups but due to the small sample they are limited and are only reported where there is a significant statistical difference. Women were more likely to agree at 48% of women agreeing. Added with women who strongly agreed a total of 96% of women respondents agreed with having this objective.

Action plan for Rother's economy objective

66.   We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed that each of the actions or projects in the draft action plan would help deliver the objective on Rother's economy.

67.   Local organisations said:

a) **Key actions in Rother's economic recovery plan, rural ultrafast broadband and tourism events:** four organisations strongly agreed and two agreed that this action would help tackle the economy. One strongly disagreed and one did organisation didn't know or wasn't sure if these actions would help.

b) **Completion of council-led commercial developments increasing employment levels**: four local organisations strongly agreed and two agreed that this action would help. However, two strongly disagreed with this action. One organisation didn't know if this would help.

c) **New space for creative sector: Bexhill studios**: Three local organisations strongly agreed, two agreed. One organisation disagreed and two strongly disagreed that this action would help.

68.   Residents said:

a) **Key actions in Rother's economic recovery plan**: 67% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help tackle Rother's economy. Working age respondents (18-64 yrs) were a little more likely to agree that this action would help at 72% of respondents. Bexhill residents are morely a little more likely to agree/strongly agree at 72%.
b) **Council-led commercial developments**: 67% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. Working age respondents (18-64 yrs) were a little more likely to agree that this action would help at 72% of respondents. Bexhill residents are a little more likely to agree/strongly agree with this action at 72%.
c) **Bexhill studios**: 57% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. Men were a little less likely to agree at 52%. Bexhill residents are a bit more likely to agree/strongly agree with this action at 64%.

69. The chart and table below refer to the responses by the general public and show the distribution of agreement.   One point of interest is how the chart shows how 14% of respondents disagree with the Bexhill studios and 14% didn't know or were not sure if it would help.

Answer	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/not sure	Total
Key actions in Rother's Economic Recovery Plan: 500 more rural homes with ultrafast broadband, 15 new sustainable tourism events by 2023	26%	41%	11%	12%	10%	**114 100%**
Completion of Council-led commercial developments increasing employment levels in the district: 15,000 sq metres by 2023.	27%	40%	9%	12%	12%	**113 100%**
Develop new space for growth of creative sector in the district: Bexhill Studios	18%	39%	15%	14%	15%	**114 100%**

# Other matters to take into account on Rother's economy

70. We asked if there was anything else the council should take into account for this objective or the action plan. Organisations said:

    a) **Rother Greenways**   All new commercial developments should include improved walking and cycling access and public transport. The number of car parking spaces should be reduced, instead car sharing and EV car sharing schemes should be put in place. [Rother Greenways strongly disagreed with commercial development and Bexhill Studios.]
    b) **Bexhill Heritage** strongly supports this objective and wishes to play a significant part through the development of Bexhill's former bandstand.
    c) **Battle Town Council**   Growth of the creative sector should be across the whole of Rother and not just Bexhill. [Battle Town Council disagreed with the Bexhill Studios action.]
    d) **1066 Cycle Club**   RDC should be acquiring green space to be kept and used as green space, yielding economic and wellbeing benefits.
    e) **Rother Environment Group**   Prioritise sustainable development that helps Rother meet its net zero targets, and improves quality of life for all, so including other well-being measures as well as indexed wages.
    f) **East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group** We acknowledge the link between deprivation, economic growth, education, skills and employment and exclusion and health outcomes. The positive impact that health has on economic growth and poverty reduction, occurs through less worker illness, increased productivity, lower absenteeism rates and improved learning among school children and adults, higher incomes and improved housing accessibility. We therefore support the aspirations set out in these objectives and would wish to further develop our collaborative work with RDC, established in recent years through the CCG'™s membership of the Local Strategic Partnership and the CHART Connecting Hastings and Rother Together) Executive Board.
    g) **Bexhill Chamber of Commerce** - the full submission is at Appendix A

71. Residents commented and most comments were suggested additions for the action plan. A full list of all responses is available as an appendix available to Members. A summary of the main points is as follows:

    a) **Recovery Plan: Ultrafast Broadband** - Broadband is the work of the county council, central government paid. Why only 500 homes? Specify the benefits. All homes is a better target. Unsure how this helps economic development if in homes.
    b) **Recovery Plan: Tourism events -** against tourism events because: Cost to taxpayer. Should be paid for by local businesses. Other priorities (e.g. housing, homeless). Prioritise low impact, environmentally, and eco-tourism.
    c) **Employment space** - Against new commercial, office space, etc. There are already empty offices/shops. Businesses should pay to develop, pay for own premises. Use brownfield sites.
    d) **Bexhill Studios** - It is not clear what is Bexhill Studios. Is this housing, studio flats? Is the creative sector not low income, low pay?
    e) **Add -** supporting rural tourism, pubs, campsites, things to support UK holiday market, green economy. Add improving unattractive appearance of Bexhill. Add transport. Road and rail links. Focus on larger employers, larger sites. Not all in Bexhill. Add Rye Harbour. More investment in

Eastern Rother. Add environmental protection sector. Find ways to use local people's knowledge, experience, skills, including retired. DWP office in Hastings is not fit for purpose so consider building them an office block to rent. Protection for green spaces, though. Add repurposing our high streets.

f) **Clarify** – how these actions will help lift wage levels, where is the connection.

Objective 9: Open Council

72. We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the ninth objective for an open council: to improve access to Council meetings, open the council to the public ensuring increased transparency, meaningful consultation and better visibility by end 2023. Eight local organisations answered this question and six agreed strongly with the objective and two organisations agreed.

73. For residents, 52% strongly agreed and 40% agreed, giving us a total of 92% of residents and visitors (the public) agreeing that the Council should have an objective for an open council. Only 3% of public respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, 5% said they didn't know or were not sure about this objective. The chart and table below refer only to the responses from the public.
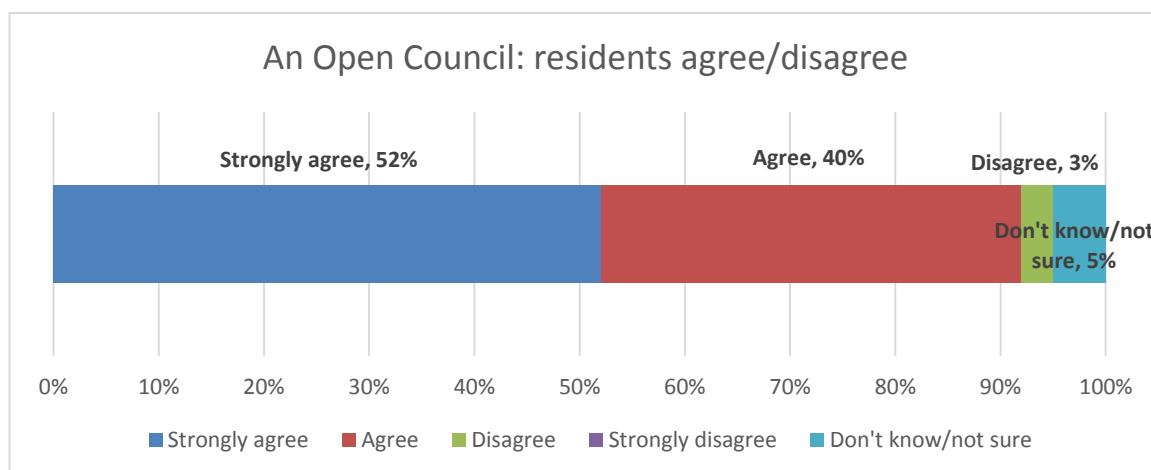
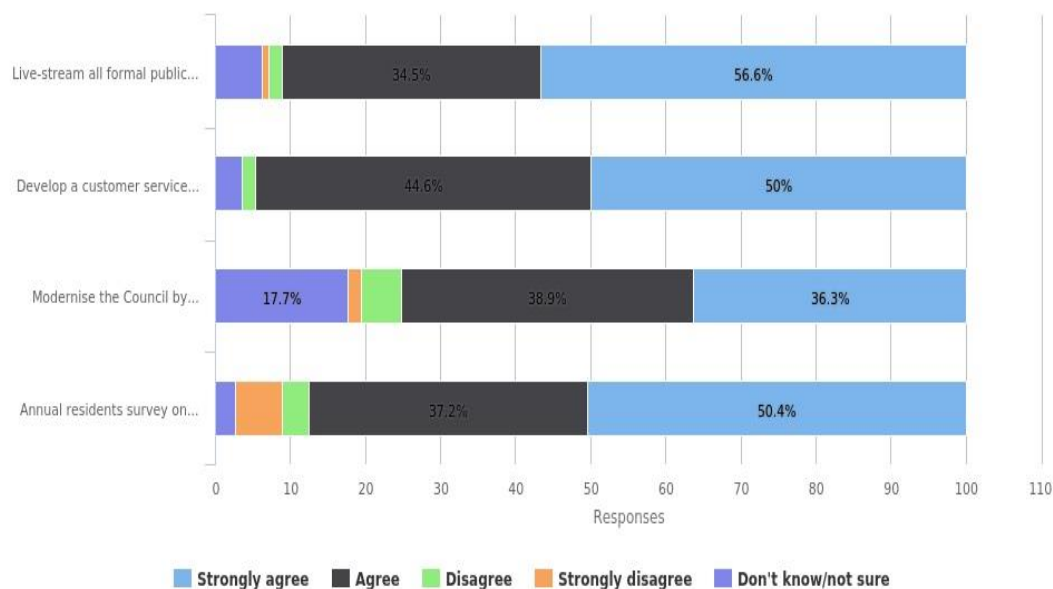| Answer	%
Strongly agree	52%
Agree	40%
Disagree	3%
Strongly disagree	0%
Don't know/not sure	5%
Total number answered	100

74. We can breakdown this information into some groups but due to the small sample they are limited and are only reported where there is a significant statistical difference.

- Men were more likely to strongly agree at 59%. Women were less likely to strongly agree at 43% and more likely to agree at 48%.
- Working age people were less likely to strongly agree (45%) and more likely to select agree (48%) but still the greater majority agreed with this objective.

- Bexhill residents are more likely to say strongly agree at 58%.

Action plan for an open council

75. We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed that each of the actions or projects in the draft action plan would help deliver the XXX objective.

76. Local organisations said:

   a) **Live stream all formal public council meetings**: Five organisations strongly agreed and three agreed that this action would help deliver an open council.
   b) **Develop a customer service strategy. Ensure equality of access**: Six local organisations strongly agreed and two agreed that this action would help.
   c) **Updating the council's constitution**: four local organisations strongly agreed, three agreed and one organisation did not know or was not sure that this action would help.
   d) **Annual residents survey on needs and experiences**: three local organisations agreed strongly and four agreed that this action would help. One organisation didn't know if this would help deliver an open council.

77. Residents said:

   a) **Live stream public meetings**: 92% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help deliver an open council.
   b) **Customer service strategy, equality of access**: 95% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help.
   c) **Updating council constitution**: 75% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. Bexhill residents are slightly more likely to agree with this action at 80%.
   d) **Annual residents survey**: 87% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help.

78. The chart and table below refer to the responses by the general public and show the distribution of agreement. It shows how the most popular action is the customer service strategy and equality of access and the least supported action is updating the council's constitution (although it does have a high majority support). We can also see that 18% of respondents said they didn't know or were not sure if updating the constitution would help deliver an open council.

How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver the objective of an open council?

Answer	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/not sure	Total No.
Live-stream all formal public Council meetings on accessible platforms by 2021	57%	35%	2%	1%	6%	**113**
Develop a customer service strategy - improving accessibility to all services and customer services standards. Ensure equality of access to meet the diverse needs of residents	50%	45%	2%	0%	4%	**112**
Modernise the Council by updating the constitution by 2022	36%	39%	5%	2%	18%	**113**
Annual residents survey on needs and experiences	50%	37%	4%	6%	3%	**113**

## Other matters to take into account on an open council

79.   We asked if there was anything else the council should take into account for this objective or the action plan. Not all organisations commented but those that did said:

a) **Bexhill Heritage**   We recommend that the Council should also develop a strategy to engage and work alongside local groups and organisations in reviewing its operational effectiveness.
b) **Battle Town Council**   The Constitution should be reviewed regularly and updated when necessary.
c) **1066 Cycle Club**   Look into having a citizens' assembly in relation to the climate emergency. Press ahead with the Bexhill Town Council as an important means of engagement with the residents of Bexhill.

80. Residents commented and most comments were suggested additions for the action plan. A full list of all responses is available as an appendix. A summary of main points is as follows:

   a) **Live Streaming** Concerns about cost of live streaming being value for money considering lack of debate. Make more welcoming atmosphere for public to attend meetings, including documents/text should welcome public attendance. The council has always been open and people could attend meetings and see documents, this makes it sound like that never happened.

   b) **Constitution** Concerns about being costly. Not aware current has any problems. What is wrong with it? Prioritise improving services first. Shouldn't the constitution meet the needs of the council and district and not simply modernise it? Add more accountability and clear leadership. Remove the Queen and God from the council chamber as have no place in 2021.

   c) **Customer Service Strategy** Better not to have hard targets like answer in three rings. Have general directives. Make part of staff handbook. Removing services from the Town Hall, moving out, does not meet improved customer service. Carry out annual survey before developing a customer service strategy to help inform it.

   d) **Equality of access** Concerns about expensive translation services. Do not start printing everything in multiple languages.

   e) **Annual Survey** Concerns about cost of annual survey. Waste of resources. Combine with budget consultation. Combine with customer surveys after service use. Concerns this will not result in actions. Surveys and consultations are currently designed to get the answers the council wants. Make less frequent than annual as it takes time to get impact such as changes in economy, also pandemic is going to have immediate downward impact.

   f) **Add these actions:** Improve communication from the council. Make communications less ESCC centric. Address fake news on social media groups. Clearer suggestions and complaints system. Review if all reports are needed. Use less jargon. Have lay people sit on scrutiny and review committees. Have more long term actions, doesn't cover 7 years. Add one stop help channels for all public services. Actions to get young people involved, with schools and colleges. Add an annual report to the Council Tax bill like Sussex Police so can see what money has gone on. Members should hold local surgeries. Do a regular ward tour with councillors. Schedule zoom meetings for residents about the Corporate Plan so residents can ask questions of senior councillors and officers.

Objective 10: A Town Council for Bexhill

81. We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed with the final objective for the creation of a town council for Bexhill-on-Sea: to form a parish (town) council for Bexhill with effect from 1 April 2021 and first elections in May 2021. Seven local organisations answered this question and four agreed strongly with the objective and three agreed.

82. For residents, 29% strongly agreed and 19% agreed, giving us a total of 48% of residents and visitors (the public) agreeing that the Council should have an objective on creating Bexhill Town Council. There are 28% of public

respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The chart and table below refer only to the responses from the public.

Bexhill Town Council: residents agree/disagree
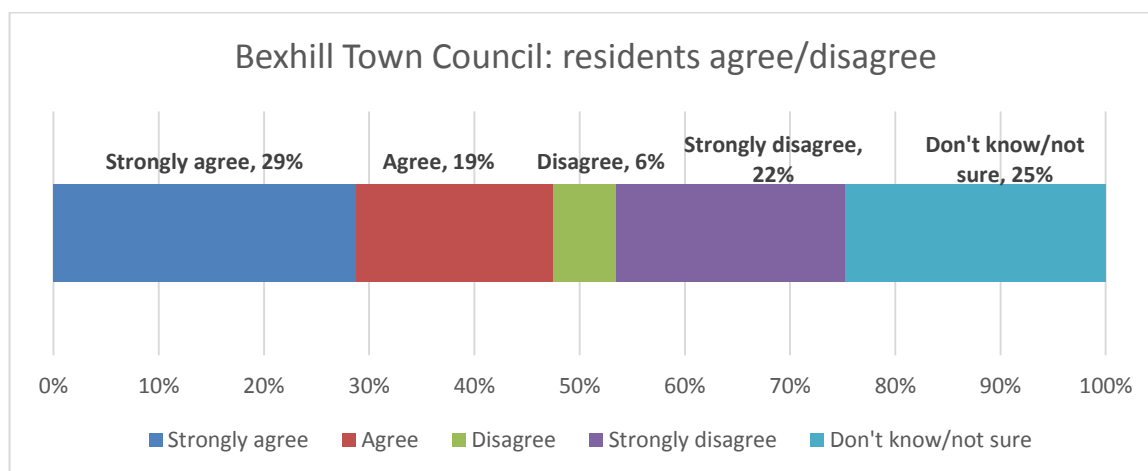
Answer	%
Strongly agree	29%
Agree	19%
Disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	22%
Don't know/not sure	25%
Total number of respondents	102

83.   We can breakdown this information into some groups but due to the small sample they are limited and are only reported where there is a significant statistical difference.

   a) Bexhill residents are more likely to say strongly agree at 45%, giving an overall agreement of 64%.
   b) Men were a little less likely to agree at 14% and therefore less likely to strongly agree and agree at 42% in total.
   c) For women, 56% either agreed or strongly agreed with this objective. Primarily, women were more likely to select 'agree' at 24%.
   d) Working age residents (18-64) were less likely to answer 'agree' at 14% and more likely to answer 'strongly disagree at 27%.

Action plan for the Bexhill Town Council objective

84.   We asked respondents if they agreed or disagreed that each of the actions or projects in the draft action plan would help deliver the objective to set up Bexhill Town Council.

85.   Local organisations said:

   a) **Draft community governance order**:   Three organisations strongly agreed and three agreed that this action would help deliver a new town council for Bexhill. One organisation strongly disagreed.
   b) **Appoint interim administrator**:   Three local organisations strongly agreed, three agreed that this action would help and one strongly disagreed.

c) **Work with new town council on transferring assets**: Three local organisations strongly agreed, three agreed that this action would help and one strongly disagreed.

d) **Work on appointing permanent town clerk**: Three local organisations strongly agreed, three agreed that this action would help and one strongly disagreed.

e) **Conduct election**: Three local organisations strongly agreed, three agreed that this action would help and one strongly disagreed.

86. Residents said:

a) **Draft community governance order**: 50% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help deliver a town council for Bexhill. Those who disagreed and strongly disagree were 28%. The remaining 23% did not know or were not sure. For Bexhill residents, 64% agreed or strongly agreed. Men were less likely to strongly agree and agree at 43%. Women were more likely to agree/strongly agree with this action at 55%. Working age respondents were more likely to disagree than overall results at 33% of working age respondents.

b) **Appoint interim administrator**: 51% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help, 28% either strongly disagreed or disagreed and 22% didn't know. Bexhill residents were more likely to agree/strongly agree at 64%. Men were less likely to strongly agree and agree at 44%. Men were more likely to strongly disagree or disagree at 34%. Women were more likely to agree/strongly agree at 57%. Working age respondents were less likely to agree at 46%.

c) **Transferring assets**: 49% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. A further 29% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Finally, 22% said they didn't know or were not sure. Bexhill residents were morelikely to agree/strongly agree at 64%. Men were slightly less likely to agree at 44% (agree and agree strongly). Women were more likely to agree/strongly agree at 55%.

d) **Permanent town clerk**: 49% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. As above, 29% either disagreed or disagreed strongly. The remaining 24% didn't know or were not sure if this action would help. Bexhill residents were more likely to agree/strongly agree at 62%. Men were less likely to agree at 40% and more likely to disagree at 34%. Women were more likely to agree/strongly agree at 57%. Working age respondents were more likely to disagree/strongly disagree at 33%.

e) **Conduct election**: 48% either strongly agree or agree that this action would help. Once again, 29% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Finally, 23% did not know or were not sure. Respondents from Bexhill had majority support for this action with 62% answering agree or strongly agree. Men were more likely to disagree at 44% (disagree and strongly disagree) and a little less likely to agree at 43%. Women were more likely to agree and strongly agree at 53%.

87. The chart and table below refer to the responses by the general public and show the distribution of agreement and disagreement. It clearly shows the consistency of the answers between all the actions.

How much do you agree or disagree that the following actions will help deliver the objective of creating a town council for Bexhill-on-Sea?
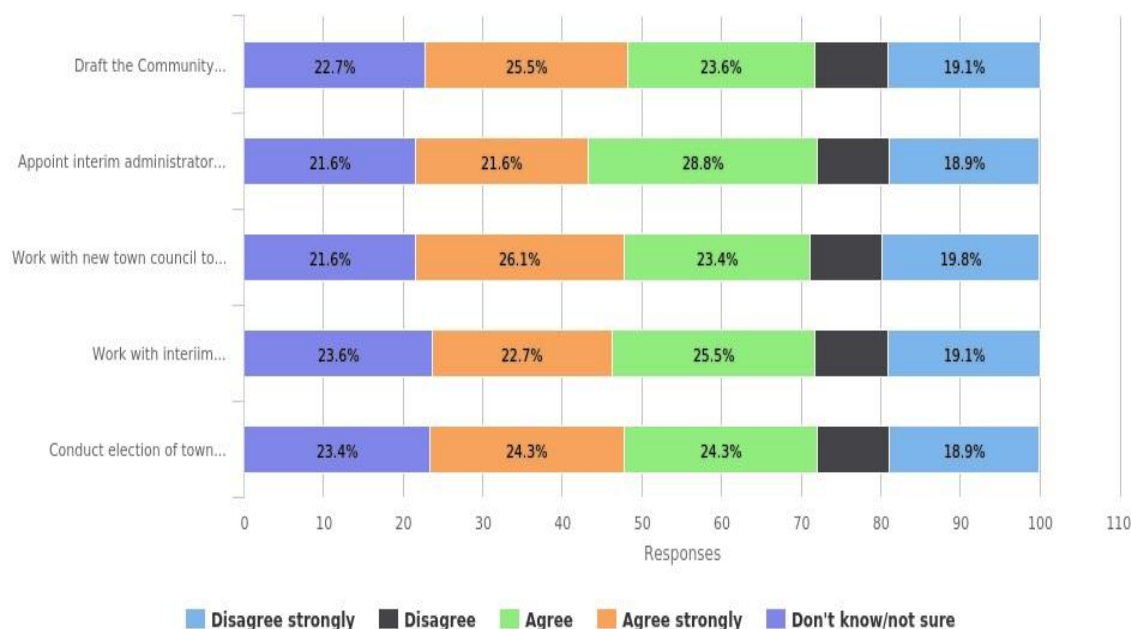
Answer	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Don't know/not sure	Total No.
Draft the Community Governance Order to establish a town council	26%	24%	9%	19%	23%	**110**
Appoint interim administrator to set up initial governance structure, including election	22%	29%	9%	19%	22%	**111**
Work with new town council to identify and agree assets and services to transfer from Rother District Council	26%	23%	9%	20%	22%	**111**
Work with interim administrator on appointment of permanent town clerk after May 2021 elections	23%	26%	9%	19%	24%	**110**
Conduct election of town council	24%	24%	9%	19%	23%	**111**

Other matters to take into account on Bexhill Town Council

88. We asked if there was anything else the council should take into account for this objective or the action plan. Organisations said:

    a) **Rye Conservation Society**: We will watch the arrival of the new Bexhill Council with interest. For Rye we would wish it noted that any plans for Rye should be discussed and agree with Rye Town Council before implementation and that we want to see good constructive relations between Rye and Rother.

    b) **Bexhill Heritage**: The town council has a critical role to play in engaging with local groups and organisations in the town and helping to release their potential for community benefit.

c) Town councillors should see themselves as facilitators and co-ordinators rather than providers. A focused community partnership and development strategy will be key to the town council's success.

d) We recommend that town councillors should be encouraged to access best practice through a focused induction programme. This is an important prerequisite for a successful council and should be include in the plan.

e) **Battle Town Council**: Events have overtaken this questionnaire. Bexhill Town Council has been formally agreed.

f) **Rother Environmental Group**: Why are you asking these questions? They are all happening! or have happened!

g) **Peasmarsh Parish Council**: RDC's objective should also be in ensuring resources/support provided to the new Bexhill Town Council are equitable with resources provided to rural towns and parishes.

h) Residents commented and most comments were suggested additions for the action plan. A full list of all responses is available as an appendix. A summary of main points is as follows:

i) **Establish Town Council**: Don't like local councils, how much cost, don't want higher costs, pointless, makes no sense, as already happened, what is impact on those not living in Bexhill, rural resident so not affected, will be a poorer place, yet another layer of bureaucracy, competing needs across the town, a distraction, only financially comfortable middle-class want this not those on UC, minimum wage, zero hours who don't want rise in Council Tax. About time, at last. Support.

j) **Transfer of services**: Transfer DLWP as a Bexhill asset/benefit, what is impact on green spaces? Transfer parks, recreation grounds, public conveniences, seafront, environmental improvements.

k) **Appointment of permanent Town Clerk**: RDC should not be involved in this.

l) **Suggested other actions**: Train new councillors.

89. Finally, we asked respondents to suggest other objective, priorities and actions that they would like the council to consider for the Corporate Plan. This was an opportunity for respondents to say where they felt there were omissions, where they had other priorities and generally give their views beyond the draft document.

90. Organisations said:

a) **Rye Conservation Society:** We feel that the objectives as listed sound good although at this stage lack detail of exactly what is meant by various actions. It is also not clear what influence local areas such as Rye will have on outcome or what consultation will be allowed?

b) **Rother Greenways:** Please start taking the Climate Emergency seriously and develop cross-cutting policies across departments that are not hampered by bureaucratic interia and unwillingness to change amongst established elites. Thank you.

c) **Bexhill Heritage:** This is an ambitious and exciting plan. Remember to take people with you by building on their goodwill, and their huge potential to engage and contribute. Bexhill Heritage will support the Council in any way that's consistent with our charity's agreed objectives.

d) **1066 Cycle Club:** We are a walking and cycling club. A strategy to encourage this activity will provide health and environmental benefits and support many of the Corporate Plan's objectives. Radical action is needed as a third of Rother's carbon footprint is from transport.

e) **Rother Environmental Group:** The format of this consultation form is inconsistent - with strongly agree and disagree changing from question to question.

f) The sequencing of the targets should be in date order.

g) We don't know at this moment if there is a post back to sender facility and there should be.

h) **East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group:** The CCG looks forward to continuing our collaborative work with RDC. This has been developed in recent years through the Healthy Hastings and Rother Programme, our membership of the Local Strategic Partnership and other themed partnerships such as Safer Communities, CHART (Connecting Hastings and Rother Together), and Active Rother. In addition, we have collaborated on joint work to support vulnerable population groups such as rough sleepers and the establishment of the Rother Community Hub as part of the local Covid-19 response.

i) **Hastings Sustainable Transport Forum:** Although Hastings Sustainable Transport Forum is focused on the Borough of Hastings we recognise that many transport issues cross our Borough/District boundary and require a Hastings and Rother perspective.

91. The following is a summary of key points made by the public. Duplications of comments already made and services provided by other public organisations (ESCC, Sussex Police) are not included. All responses are available on the appendix made available to the Members.

a) Take better financial advice.

b) Action Plans: Include actions for all 7 years. Clarify action plans and milestones. Underwhelming goals, ambiguous statements. More specific targets. Restructure action plans to remove duplication and make it clearer. Change terms to aims, deliverables, outcomes not actions and milestones.

c) Vision should be reworded 'putting residents at the heart of all we do' also sub-visions all end in 'ing' except two so should be ensuring financial stability and enabling economic prosperity.

d) Remove references to what has already been achieved or will be achieved by time of adoption of plan.

e) Focus on recovery from pandemic, particularly economic and business recovery. Health and wellbeing. Social needs.

f) Economic development – support employment, skills development, career development, business establishment and development, variety of businesses, more tourism venues or attractions for visitors, more dementia friendly businesses, farming and fishing support.

g) Repair seafront fountain.

h) Add actions for the rest of Rother, outside Bexhill. More small rural sites for both housing and business/commercial.

i) Add actions for green spaces.

j) Add actions for health and wellbeing through sport. Sport is mentioned but there are no plans for any actions. Leisure centre stopped. Improve leisure facilities. Disabled access down to the sea. Encourage sea bathing, changing rooms, showers.

k) Don't support moving Town Hall. Convert extensions to housing and have staff continue to work from Town Hall combined with home working.

l) Cleaner district – litter, dirty road signs, dirty streets, rubbish bags.

m) Transports (district council level) – car reduction plan, car parks, planning, off-road walking and cycling, rural transport.

About Our Respondents

92.   We asked the public for information about themselves to see if we were getting responses from Rother's population and to be able to analyse response by groups of residents.

93.   97% of respondents lived in Rother and 3% visited or worked in Rother but were not residents. The majority of respondents were male, at 56% compared to female at 44%. The largest age group to answer were working age adults aged 35 to 64 that made up 62% of respondents. The next largest group were retirement age adults aged 65 to 79 with 30%. No one under 18 took part, although invited there were a number of complex issues and a document to read and this may have been why. Young adults aged 18 to 34 only made up 6% of respondents and there were not enough to analyse by this age group alone. Only 2% of respondents were aged 80 and over.

94.   Residents with a disability or long-term illness made up 14% of respondents, but there were not enough individual responses to do analysis by this group.

95.   We had no representation from black and black British minority groups. Almost all respondents, 97% of respondents were white and white British. Only 2% were from Asian backgrounds and 2% from mixed ethnicities. The small sample means we can't do analysis by ethnicity. (This doesn't add up to 100% due to rounding up to the nearest whole number.)

96.   Bexhill residents were a little over-represented at 55% (47% of Rother's population lives in Bexhill). Villages and rural Rother (outside the three main towns) were under-represented at only 23%

Answer	%
A resident or Council Tax payer of Rother (live in Rother)	97%
A visitor or worker in Rother but who does not live in Rother	3%
Total who answered	116

Answer	%
Male	56%
Female	44%
Total number who answered	113

Answer	%
Under 18	0%
18 to 34	6%
35 to 64	62%
65 to 79	30%
80 and over	2%
Total who answered	113

Yes: 14.2 %

No: 85.8 %

■ Yes ■ No
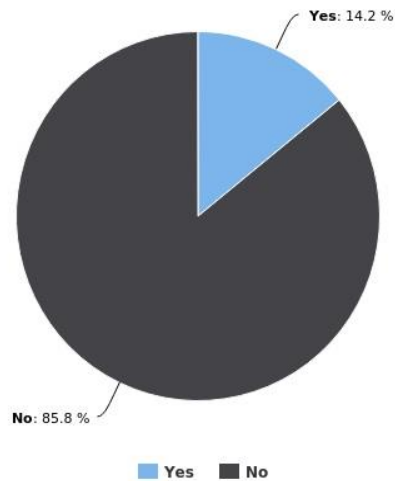
Answer	%
Yes, disabled/long term illness	14%
No, not disabled	86%

Answer	%
White British (English, Scottish, Welsh, N.Irish)	95%
White Other	2%
Mixed heritage or ethnicity of any origin	2%
Asian or Asian British	2%

Do not live in Rother, visit or work: 2.7 %

Village or countryside in Rother: 23.2 %

Rye: 8.0 %

Battle: 10.7 %

Bexhill: 55.4 %

■ Bexhill ■ Battle ■ Rye ■ Village or countryside in Rother ■ Do not live in Rother, visit or work
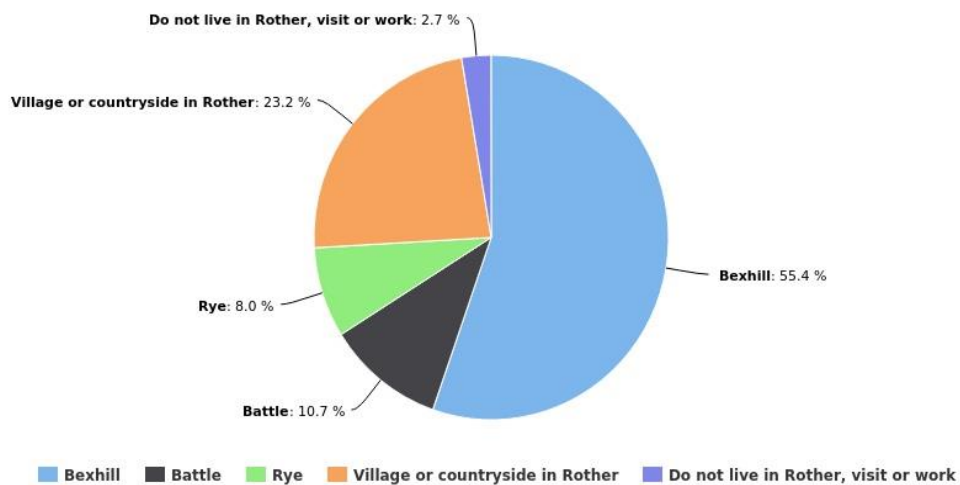
Answer	%
Bexhill	55%
Battle	11%
Rye	8%
Village or countryside in Rother	23%
Do not live in Rother but visit or work	3%
Total answered question	112

Conclusion

97.   The development of Rother's economy and having an open council were the two most supported objectives.

98. Internally focused or organisational objectives, about how the council would make itself fit to delivery its objectives, tended to have less participation from some organisations as they felt they could not make a response on these matters. A key example was an empowered organisation, which is overall the least supported objective. Another objective that was not particularly supported was the foundation of Bexhill Town Council. Part of this was due to all but one action in the action plan would be completed in the first half of 2021. However, this objective did have majority support from the Bexhill residents who took part in the consultation.

99. We also noted where respondents asked for clarification or found some terms confusing.

100. The Council is grateful to all those, both individuals and organisations, that took part in the consultation for their time and effort. Their participation and contributions are appreciated.

Acquisitions, Transformation and Regeneration
Rother District Council
14 April 2021