

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

All Member Annual Survey

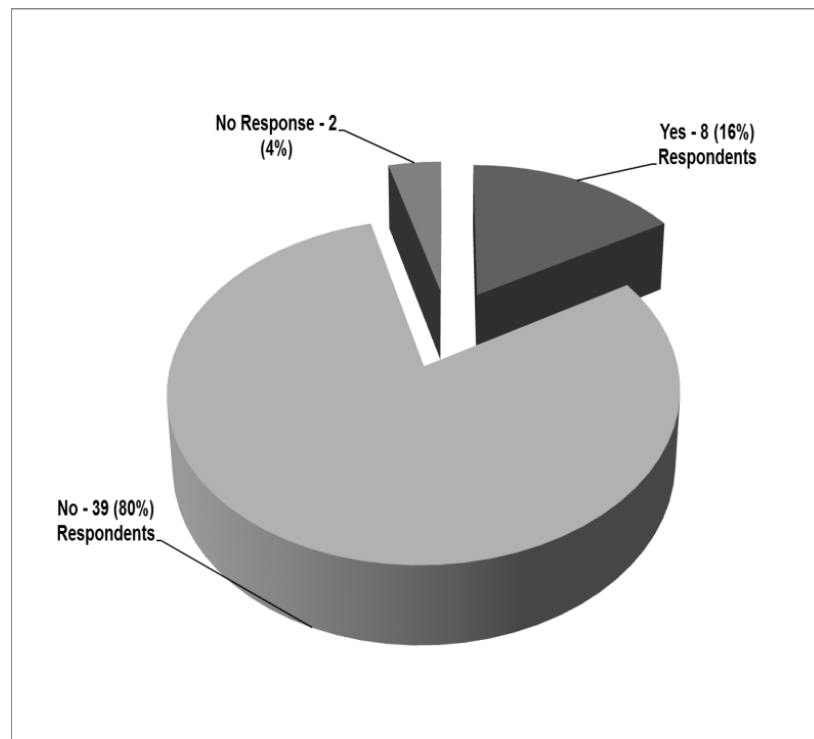
Final Report 2015

The survey opened on Monday 1st June 2015 and closed at midnight on Friday 7th August 2015.

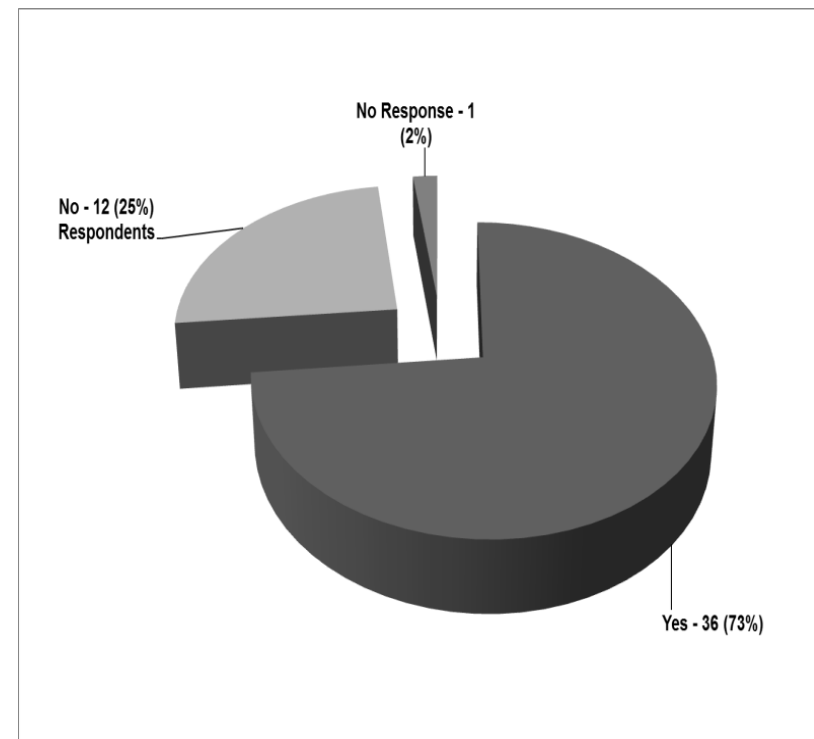
In total there are 64 elected members, 9 Cabinet Members and 46 Scrutiny members. A total of 49 completed surveys were received – a response rate of 77%.

The respondents can be categorised as follows:

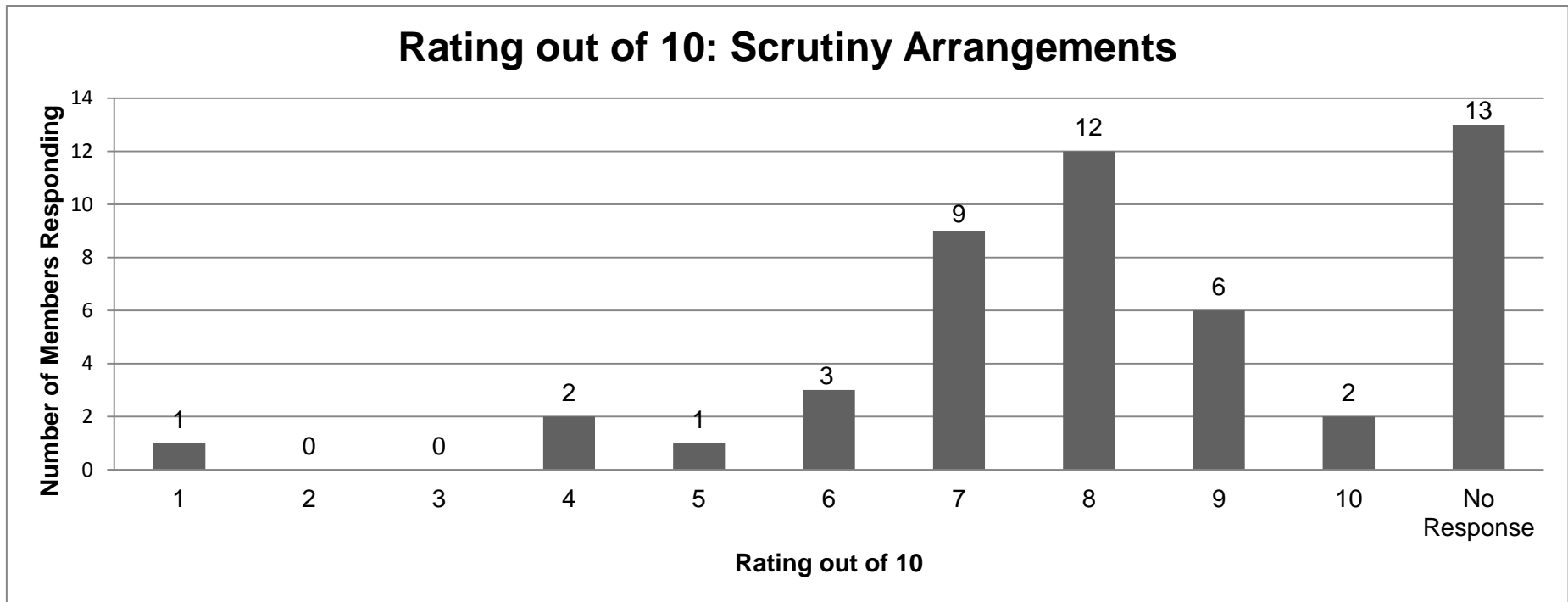
Are you a Cabinet Member?



Are you a Scrutiny Member?



Overall Scrutiny Arrangements



Positive comments

Scrutiny has improved dramatically over the last year but there is still room for improvement particularly in relation to the quality of reports and the targeting of questions. Democratic services officers do an excellent job and are always helpful. One day inquiry was very good. The officer provides excellent support for CYPE meetings.

It's useful that Members get links to meeting papers and reminders about asking questions in advance. Less time is wasted in meetings for Officers and Members make more of a contribution to meetings.

Cross party views are taken on board. The Chairs are very committed to making improvements and listen to what Members have to say.

Further work required

The Council Chamber is an intimidating space; better contributions are made when the meetings are held in different (less imposing) venues.

Still need Members to be more engaged in the process. Need to read reports before the meeting and ask questions in the meetings.

On occasion Members request additional information or ask for a Task and Finish Group to be set up and this can sometimes take longer than anticipated.

Officers are not scrutinised enough and do not always answer Members questions satisfactorily and decisions go ahead leaving members dissatisfied. Sometimes members are left uncertain of the outcomes of the recommendations they have made.

Submission of questions prior to meeting is good however members should also be free to ask more unplanned questions at meetings. It is also felt that papers /reports need to be sent a week earlier than the current set up as sometimes there is not enough time to read the information before the meetings.

Some items are not fully scrutinised and members feel rushed into decision making, in other too much time is spent. Agendas are too long, too complex and too varied, more frequent meetings would help.

Scrutiny should be of Cabinet Board Members and not simply of officers. Chairs of Scrutiny Committees don't all fulfil the role to the same standard.

Too authority/Officer led; previously it was more flexible in questions and answers. Now questions have to be asked in the way the Authority want them asked, not as you want to ask them. Would like to scrutinise on own terms.

Officer reports are sometimes not as easy to scrutinise as they have insufficient supporting information. Also Equality Impact Assessments are problematic but understand work is being done in this area.

Important decisions are made by Cabinet Boards and although Scrutiny makes recommendations, some Scrutiny Officers feel the decisions are rushed and their views are not listened to.

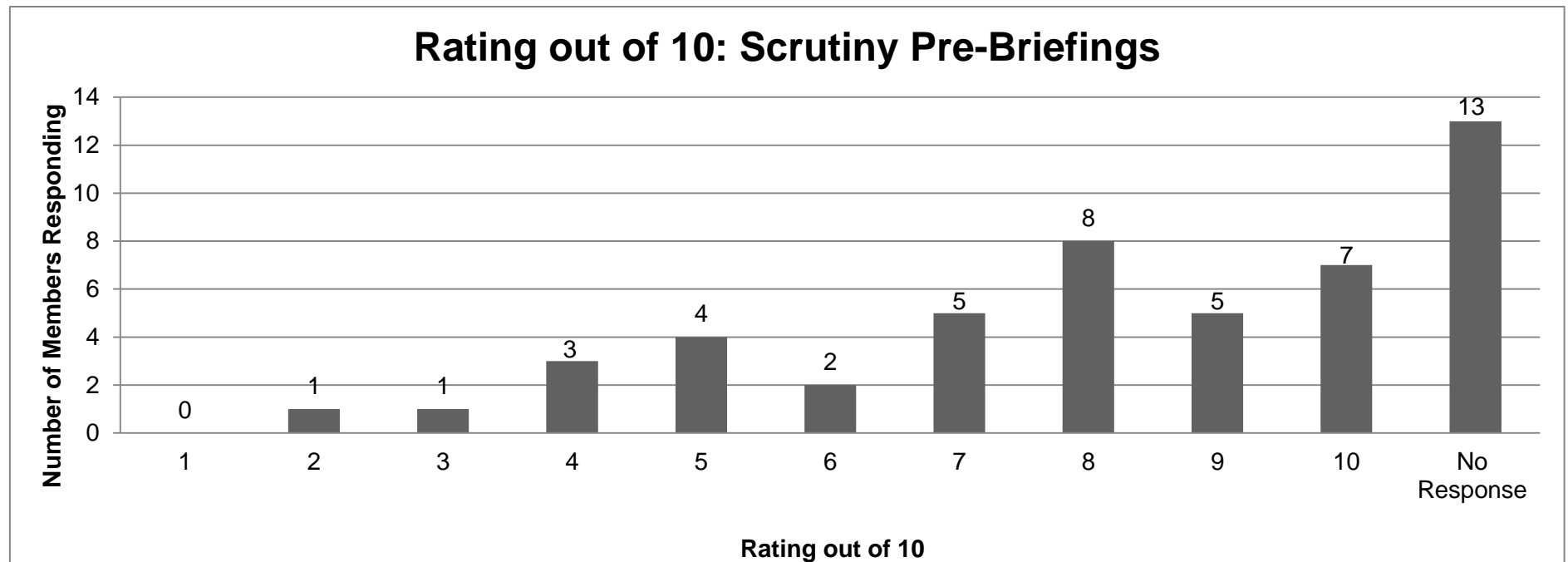
To have the full scrutiny pre-briefing before the meeting makes it too early for some Members to attend; which has a negative effect on attendance.

General comments

Happy with the new arrangements, the content of meetings and the communications with Democratic Services staff.

All members (including new members) need to make a contribution.

Scrutiny Pre-briefings



Positive comments

Emailed before with the time of the meeting, gives the opportunity go into depth on any item we want to scrutinise. Officers encourage us to raise anything we want and challenge everything that is on the agenda which cuts down the time spent on scrutiny in the main meeting.

They're not large groups - tend to be heard more and meetings structured better with more input from members. Officers supporting scrutiny should be congratulated on the way they collate and distribute scrutiny papers. They also value to the discussions and their role is indispensable and appreciated.

Better now, members see reports earlier and are actually debating information and able to challenge officers further.

Further work required

Too many Members fail to submit questions in advance and therefore a great deal of time is taken up with them formulating questions before they are prioritised. Member attendance at pre-briefings could be improved, perhaps if pre-briefings were shorter attendance would be better, briefings start too early in the day.

The responses do not always reflect accurately the questions asked by members. At pre-briefings it is suggested by relevant officers not to scrutinise certain matters which may be perfectly correct however, at times some members may feel that they would like "non-scrutiny" items to be scrutinised even if it is for one simple question.

Useful if there was more time between the pre-briefing and the main scrutiny meeting to give members more time to think about decisions.

Some Chairs and Vice Chairs do not take into consideration their schedule of work and therefore they very rarely can attend pre-briefings.

General comments

I think its effectiveness is entirely dependent on the officer in attendance. We have been fortunate that the officers who administrate the services have been very good. A contributory factor to this is the officers' capacity to be independent and impartial.

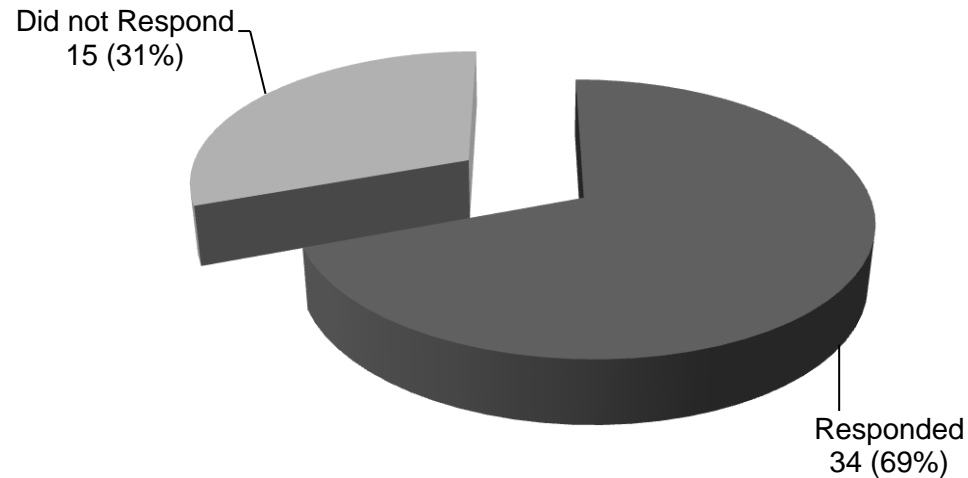
If there is 100% attendance they work well, however, if people arrive late or don't attend then they can ask questions that aren't relevant in the main meeting which can cause disruption.

Getting better but will take time for the Members to get used to the process. Gives members the opportunity to look at all aspects of the report without officer influence.

The Chair should invite all the members to the meeting.

New Scrutiny Arrangements

Is there anything you particularly like or dislike about the new scrutiny arrangements?



Positive comments

Members need to play a more important part in the scrutiny process. Good that we are able to put any items on the agenda - but this opportunity isn't taken up very often.

Pre briefings very positive, the officers reports are concise and descriptive. The new arrangements are well supported by the Scrutiny Officer e.g. freedom to question and feedback always given. Prefer the new way, it gives a better insight for members in to the process and also allows all to take part

Process is more transparent and Members are more informed as a consequence of the changes that have been made.

Arrangements of having support from scrutiny officers has been good. The pre-briefing arrangements are the key and officers can give guidance which is impartial

Particularly happy with the opportunity to submit questions in advance, improves the status of scrutiny. Takes away the concern some members may have about asking "silly" or inappropriate questions and they are able to test the water before the meeting and makes Members more confident in asking questions in advance.

Pre briefings are useful when they are not too structured so that we can have free discussions, giving everyone a chance to give their opinions.

Good progress. However, a lot of paperwork and would like papers sooner. Papers being available online is helpful but members need to get better at accessing them.

Further work required

The pre briefings question preparation can seem artificial in that it is structured/guided by officers and by the time the meeting takes place the member is a little nervous in waiting his turn to ask his question he is unable to absorb any business going on beforehand. It is also more difficult for those members who miss the briefings. It is therefore suggested that only chairs and vice chairs of scrutiny committees attend these briefings.

It would be beneficial for Members to have an additional couple of days in receiving Committee papers, as it would help Members to organise and read the papers more thoroughly. Especially for those that sit on multiple committees. I particularly like the process of the pre-briefings and submitting questions in advance. Reducing the number of items that are scrutinised would be useful. Like the mod. gov. changes particularly receiving the decision notices notifications.

Dislike the pre scrutiny briefing as it's too long, put an hours on the scrutiny meeting, could be shorter.

I feel it would be of more benefit to have the reporting officers present in the pre briefings – could be blunt with reporting officers within the pre briefing as minutes are not taken - could get a more in depth answer than would otherwise get in public.

Some agendas contain so many reports and give Members a heavy workload in order to prepare for the meetings, therefore a more efficient way of dealing with this would be to monitor business every month rather than every 6 weeks.

General comments

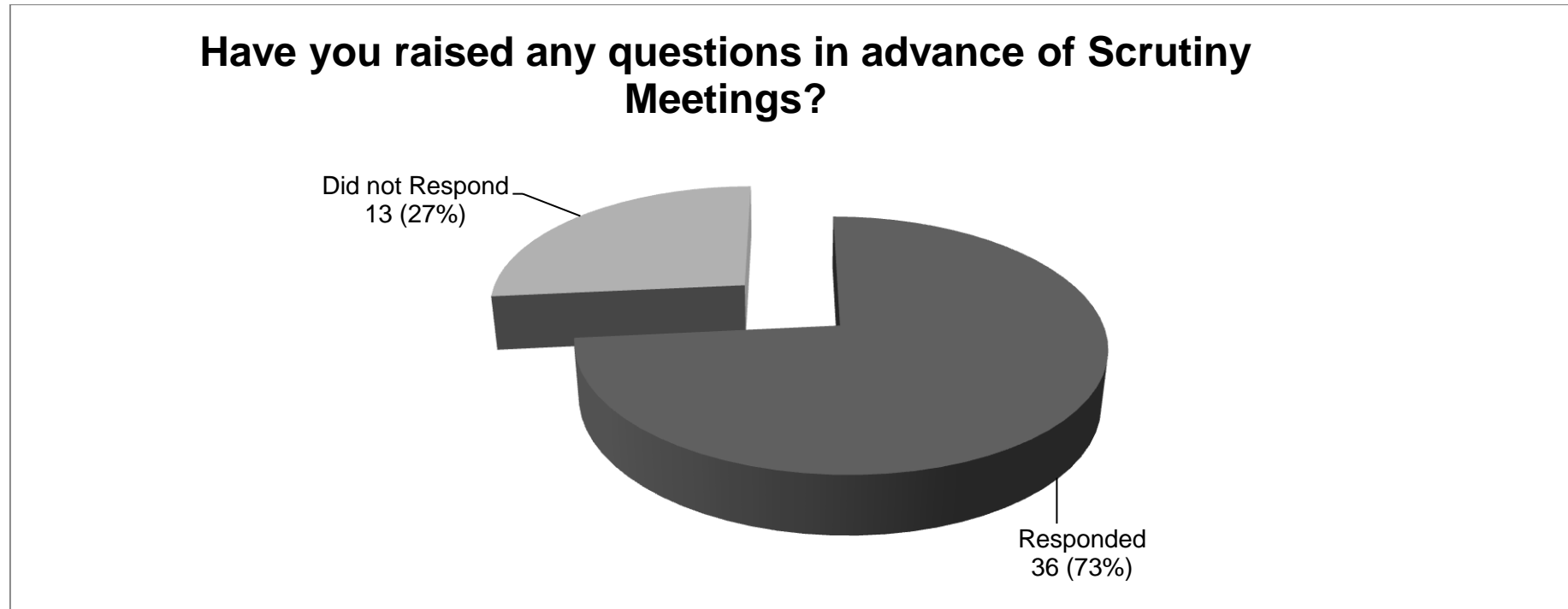
Have requested a list of abbreviations for the meeting.

Is there any way we can encourage members to be more involved in asking questions

Don't think the pre briefings are effective. They need to be worked on – especially issues around the consistency in outside visits and reporting.

Need to clarify whether or not they can ask questions over and above what's raised in the pre briefing.

Have you raised questions in advance of the meetings?



Positive comments

The pre-briefings are beneficial to get Members opinions. Getting the papers before-hand, gives opportunity to raise something and makes the process more transparent.

Chairman can scrutinise the good points raised and carry them forward to the meeting.

Have had good responses to questions raised. Sometimes don't always get answers from officers following the meetings and have to ask the same questions. We would like a log of what was requested when with the forward work programmes.

I go to the reporting Officers myself rather than through Democratic Services as I get a more in depth answer, they might not want it to go down on paper.

I have asked them verbally and either rung officer or gone to see them rather than submit them in a written format. The process is very helpful as on occasion I have misunderstood aspects of the reports.

Further work required

Don't have enough time to read papers and formulate questions. Glad that the opportunity exists at the pre briefings to ask questions also, makes the process more transparent.

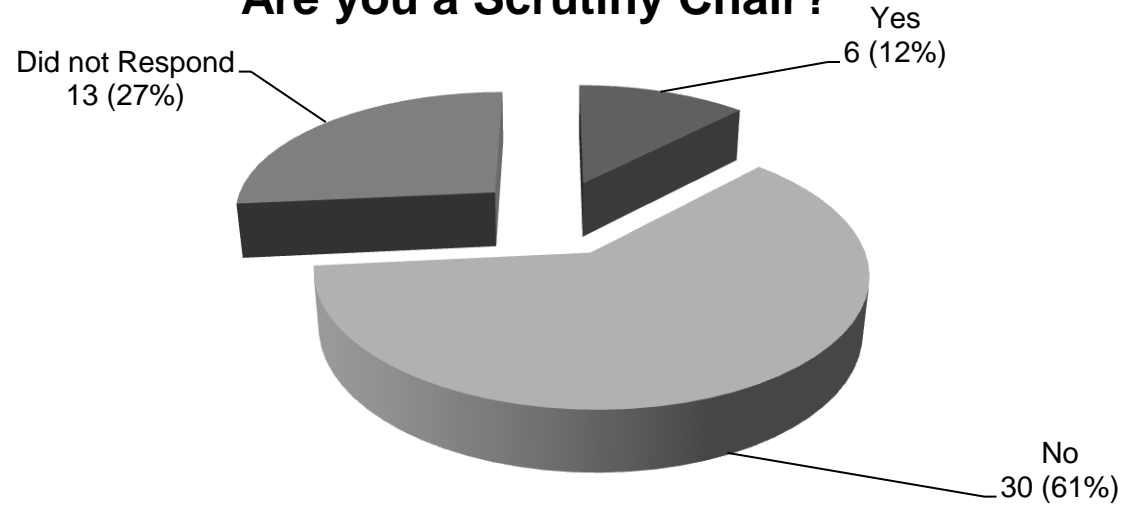
Some reservation that if officers know which questions they will be asked it may influence the information provided.

General comments

Questions not raised prior to meetings - prefer to ask questions directly to visiting officers for a more accurate answer.

Questions are not always addressed.

Are you a Scrutiny Chair?



Agenda Planning

Rating out of 10: Agenda Planning Conferences



Positive comments

Better way of working. Happy with the way it works but there is always room for improvement

Further work required

Do not always get reports on time for the agenda which is frustrating.

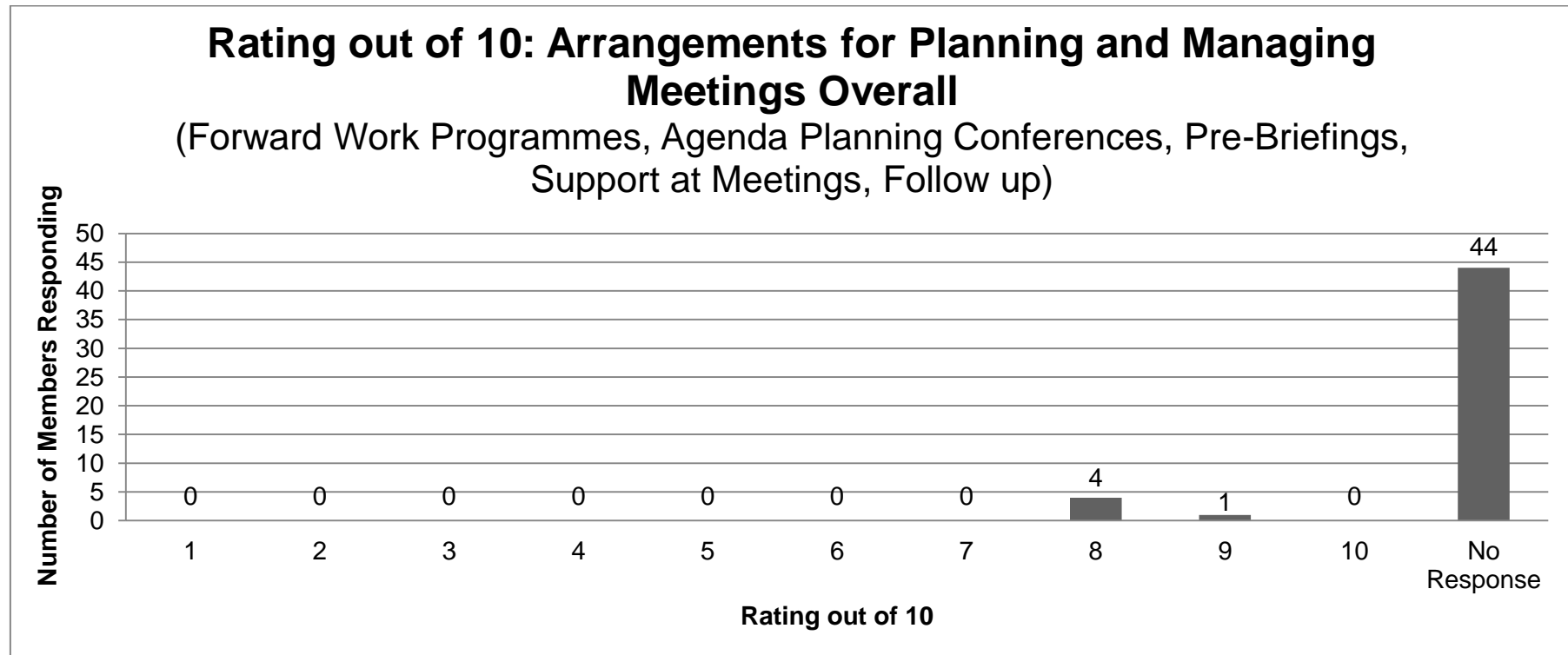
Waste of time - didn't find them any help at all.

On occasion there is inadequate information around some of the more complex issues.

General comments

Some items could be pushed back in process due to lack of clarity and information.

Planning Overall



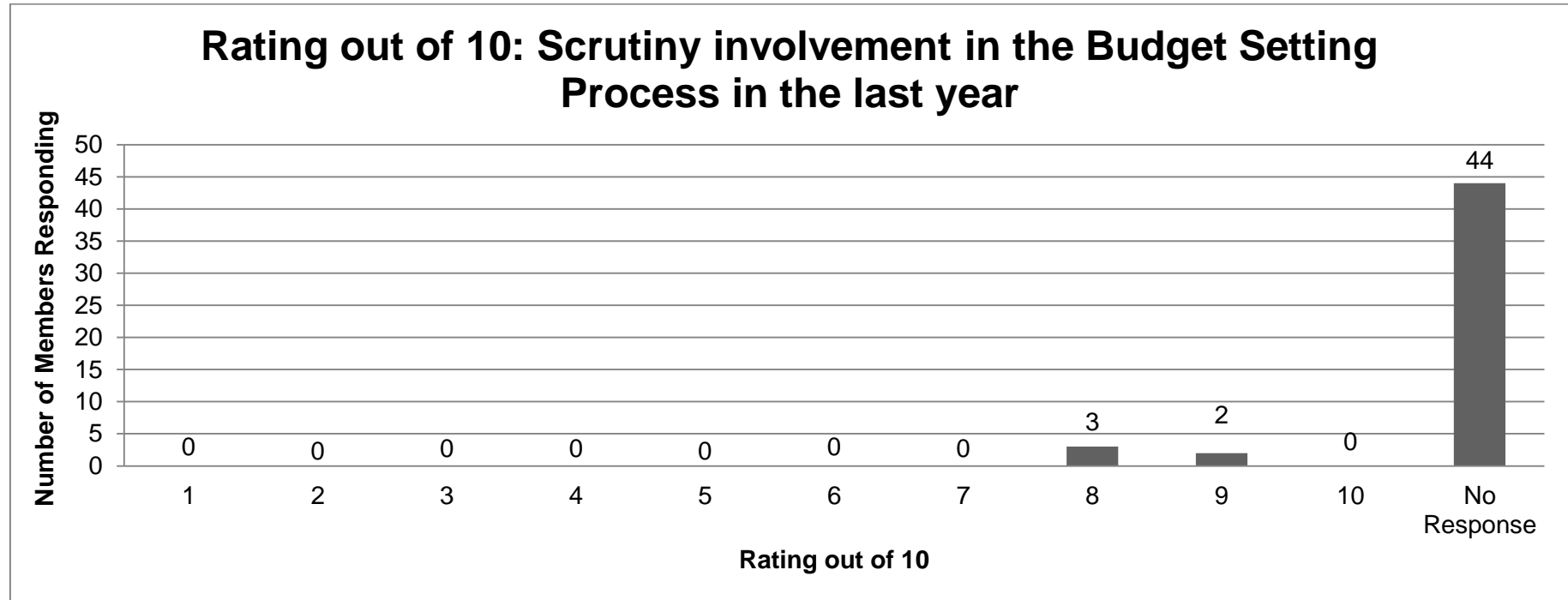
Positive comments

Happy with the way meetings are planned and managed. It's as good as it could be, because of commitments from members and officers.

Further work required

Some reports that Members have asked for by next meeting are delayed but we don't know until the agenda planning that the reports won't be submitted during the meeting. This causes concern for members as they are not told the reasons for the delay, e.g. sickness absence report.

Budget Setting Involvement



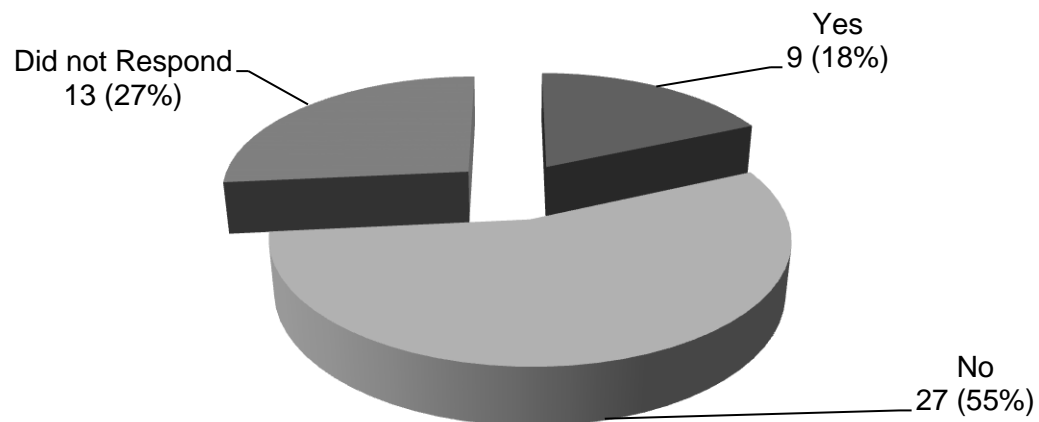
Positive comments

Pleased with the process, better informed, involved in the discussion and kept up to date with matters as they progressed.

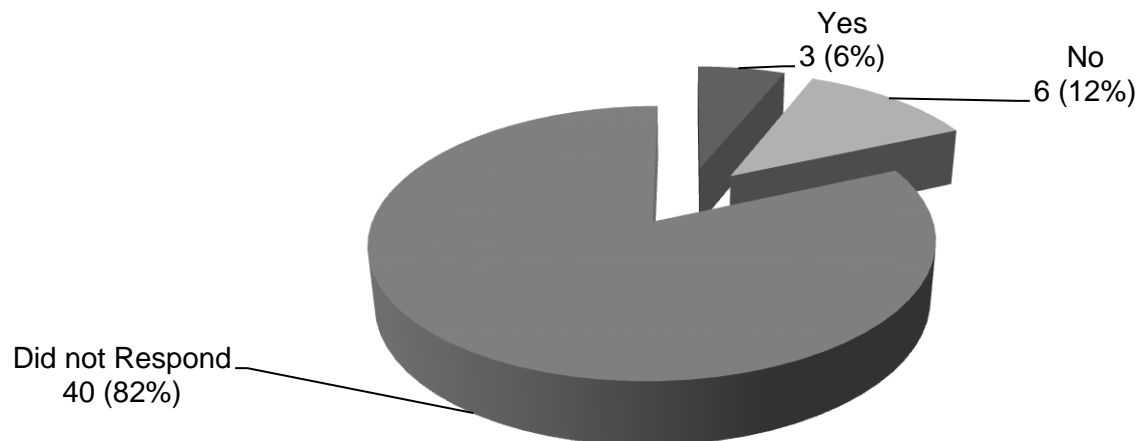
It was a vast improvement on what went on before and I feel that, should a similar process adopted for the current budget there will be a noticeable improvement in scrutiny and requests for more detail on some of the issues.

Social Care, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee

Are you a Member of the Social Care, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee?



Do you find you have enough time to Consider Public Protection Issues on the Social Care, Health and Housing Agendas?



Positive comments

The reports are readily accessible to Members in advance of the meeting. Trust that we get the information that is relevant and pertinent at the time.

Further work required

Comes down to how much time you dedicate to reading your paperwork before the meetings.

Why are there time constraints?

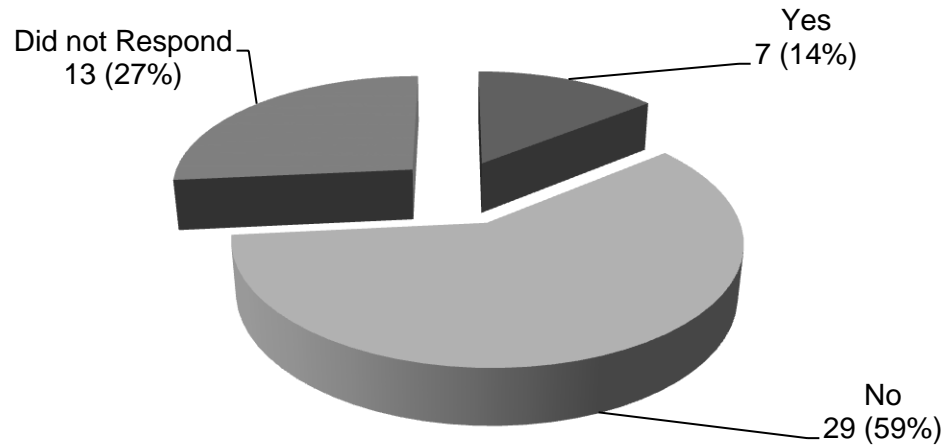
There should be a sub-committee to deal specifically with Public Protection. Or the topic of Public Protection could either be itemised as a Special Meeting supported by Workshops.

Heavy reading; lots to take in, in a short time, think it puts people off scrutinising. Perhaps summarising reports or shortening them to provide an overview would help.

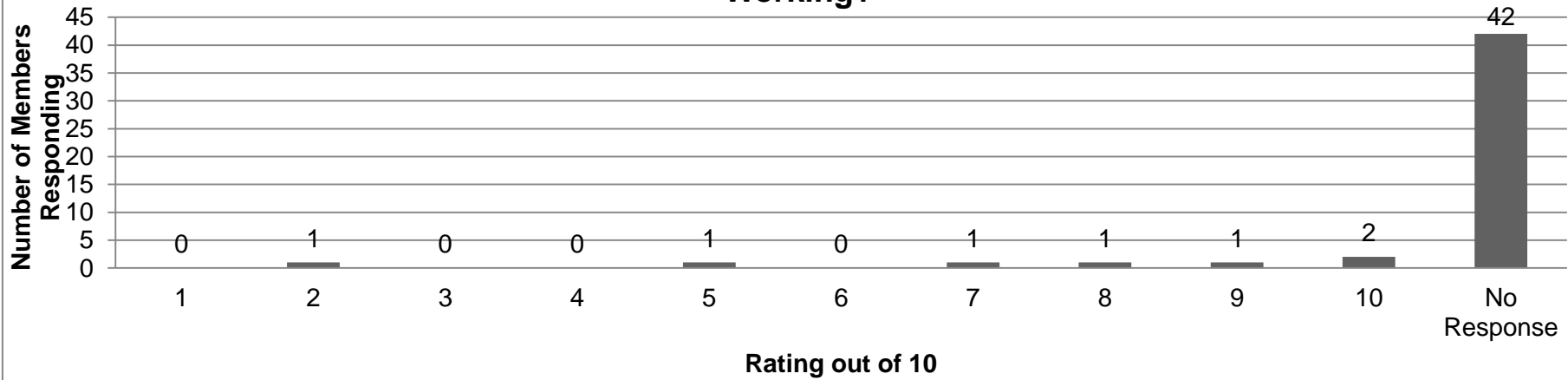
Because the paperwork comes out on a Friday there is not enough time to thoroughly consider all issues. And also any urgent items should be emailed out as soon as they become available - to scrutiny Members as well as Cabinet Members. All Members should be able to use emails.

School Standards Monitoring Group

Are you a Member of the School Standards Monitoring Group?



Rating out of 10: School Standards Monitoring Group and How well is the group Working?



Positive comments

After having only 1 meeting to date it seems as if this is a good process and should be a means of monitoring and improving standards

I think it allows Members to understand the direction, the environment, the successes and issues for individual schools. Would be nice to visit some schools but realise it puts additional pressure on schools and timetables for officers.

Changing the group name to make it less intimidating for the schools was useful. I found it very valuable and schools were open, especially at the last meeting and felt that we were working together for the same aim of improving standards for the children. I think it will work extremely well.

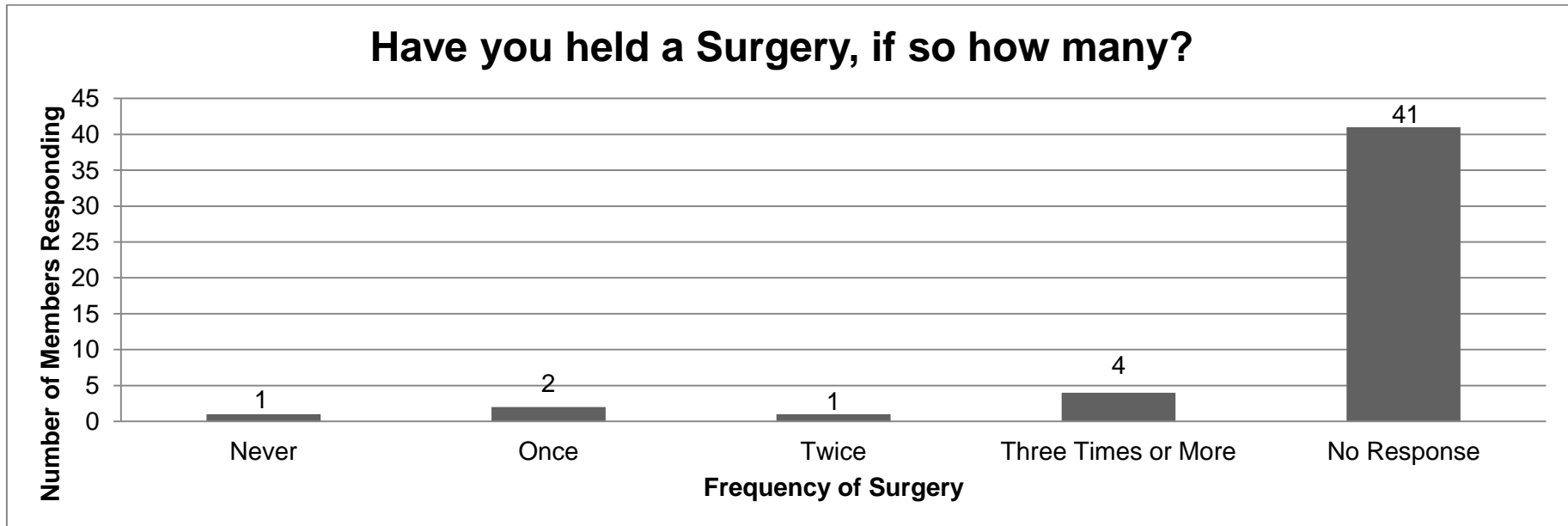
Further work required

Inconsistency in the presentations from schools - some were very good but others were data overload and were too much. This hopefully will improve.

General comments

Another layer of bureaucracy which is not required – School Standards Monitoring Group is not effective.

Surgery



Is there any feedback from Surgeries?

Positive comments

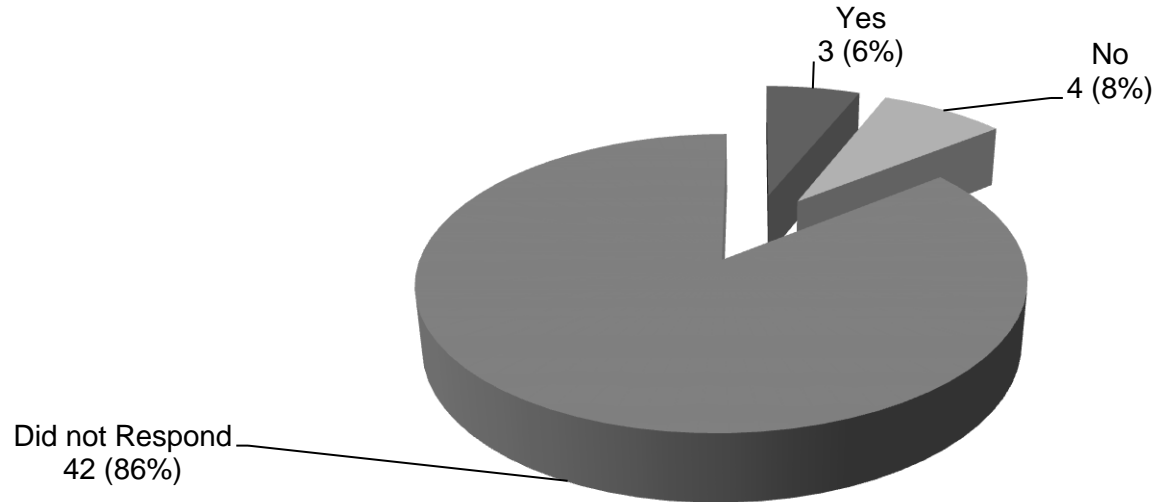
I provide street surgeries (ward Members are asked to leave notice in windows if they would like to see the Cllr) with feedback form with actions and issues on it too and I have received positive feedback from this.

General comments

I run a door to door surgery - I either call to them or they visit my home.

Run a members surgery and they were pleased to receive details of the work of cabinet members. Feedback from the two people that attended was positive.

Was the Surgery well attended?



General comments

Not well attended and no clear focus for surgeries

I don't feel the need to run a surgery as I attend Policy and Communities Together meetings.

Member Development



Positive comments

The seminars are improving and attendance is encouraged. I would like more external issues seminars – e.g. the police, specific issues re drugs and abuse – enjoyed the human trafficking seminar.

Opportunities taken up so far have been conducive in helping to understand the workings of local government in a timely manner.

Further work required

Member development is not keeping pace with requirements for the role although it is difficult to concentrate on so many aspects of development against cost and being able to facilitate specific needs against generic programme.

New members should have more direction/information available in support of their constituent work (and a better induction package). I would like to see an organisational structure on website as a tool to access the right officer when dealing with constituent issues. Services are readily available. There was a 'political mentoring' but not from the authority. Ad hoc advice is first class and Members Seminars are useful.

Not a lot of training in terms of seminars on code of conduct and policies Refreshers / training around protocols at meetings and on the use of IT and I-pads.

General comments

Last year I requested training and never received it.

A number of members have not taken up all the development opportunities when they have been given, due to other commitments.

Members sometimes ask too many questions in seminars which they should already know the answer. Members do not attend seminars or full council frequently enough. Some attendance is not very good at all.

More work on the technical side about process etc. and on a one to one basis. Understanding the overview process could help some Members become more of an advocate for it.

There are IT issues which take a long time to sort out, seminars vary - some are useful and some just seem to go over things we should already know.

Don't think actual development comes under seminars - To help the Authority as well as the Community you need more information about departments within the Council.

I have been offered Mod Gov and found it very useful. I find the seminars very useful especially safeguarding, the budget and equalities. However, because they are voluntary attendance can be low.

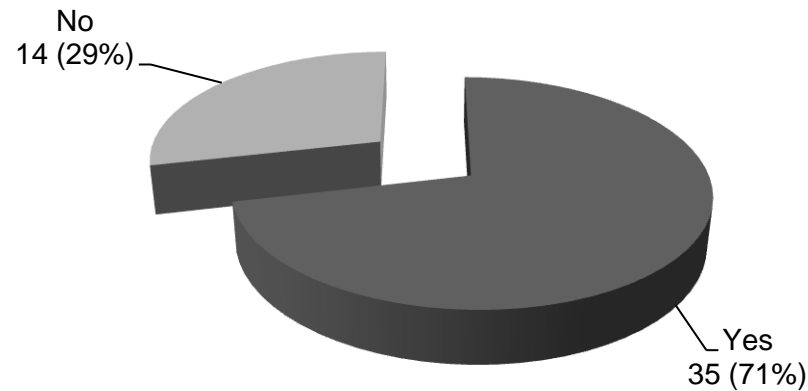
The training programmes should offer more accessibility e.g. If an update on Public Protection Act issues was arranged for example in the Autumn it is suggested that this be repeated in the Spring for example to enable Members to attend given their diary commitments.

Need more of a younger view on things.

Training on questioning techniques is needed. Due to work commitment not been able to take full advantage (not a complaint) appreciate the constraints would like More use of electronic resources. Seminars which I have attended have improved.

They tend to be adhoc although there is a programme they tend to get cancelled and need to be more interactive rather than Councillors being talked at.

Have you noticed any Improvements in Member Development over the last 12 months?



Positive comments

Seminars are better organised and more focused since the move to Mod. Gov, now spaced out better and useful now that it's in the cycle of meetings – can plan better, more opportunity to attend. The democratic services department is supportive. Plenty of information available when requested

Increased opportunities for members to go on development courses, evident and welcomed.

Unity within the Council as a whole is needed now more than ever in difficult times. I support seminars. I have seen good debates in planning and scrutiny and round table discussion- breathe of fresh air.

Yes, the information on the Seminar Briefing Notices is much better- more informative. Evening sessions were very useful especially for members who work.

Range of seminars has improved scrutiny committees', members are more informed and able to ask better questions, understand their roles and are more outcome focussed.

Easier access to the party leadership, seminars are good

Further work required

Some areas still need improvements such as communication across the council. Have to chase queries with some officers and informing Members of what is going on. However, do appreciate officers are under pressure.

Would like to receive power-points and reports electronically prior to meetings.

Would also be useful to hold the same seminar more than once programmed within an annual cycle so that if a member is unable to attend one then there would be an opportunity to attend on another date.

Officers sit in scrutiny and sometimes their reports are not scrutinised. Why are staff split between scrutiny and board?

Training needs are not been identified early enough.

General comments

Beverages I.e. Tea and coffee should be made available particularly when meetings go on for a long time. Unnecessary cut.

The scrutiny changes are conducive to democratic decision making constant evaluation is imperative.

There are more seminars and if you are not on certain Committees it provides you with an opportunity to know what is happening e.g. Social Services and equality and diversity. Unless you are involved in a committee it can be difficult to understand how things work.

Member Development needs to be more efficient and accessible and up to date.

I.T. training has and will need to continue to improve.

Additional Member Development Comments

Positive comments

Lots of opportunities to expand knowledge.

Further work required

Further I-pad and I.T. Training would be beneficial. The board of NPT Homes has gone completely paperless, which works well. You have to learn as you go a long but I recognise there are some things that you can't have seminars on but can contact officers regarding these items.

External issues; more regular computer courses, or an hour with someone (informed Member that the can pop in to Democratic Services Office anytime to go through any IT queries he may have - didn't realise that he could, I advised perhaps we need to publicise it more).

Information is not cascaded down properly.

I am reasonably competent at IT but could be training option for other Members?

Members should have more of an understanding of what is involved before taking on the role.

Cabinet scrutiny and p and r scrutiny don't have pre briefings. Could members have more info re: major strategies before they come to the meetings perhaps a session on implications could be looked at. The chamber does not lend itself to scrutiny as political seats.

Internal charges are an issue

General comments

It would be very helpful to have a directory of all the Officers we can contact directly so we don't have to go through the switchboard.

Would like to be able to sit in on other meetings to expand knowledge base. Would also be useful to have a list of seminar topics in advance so can plan which ones to prioritise.

Should be more specific scrutiny opportunities like the recent special scrutiny policy and resources committee meeting on sickness which was an excellent example of processes and collaboration working towards a defined policies and objectives.

Have covered lots of social care issues in seminars. Officers only bring Members what they want us to know – e.g. some areas of waste collection are not highlighted to Members - if we don't know about it, how can we ask about it?

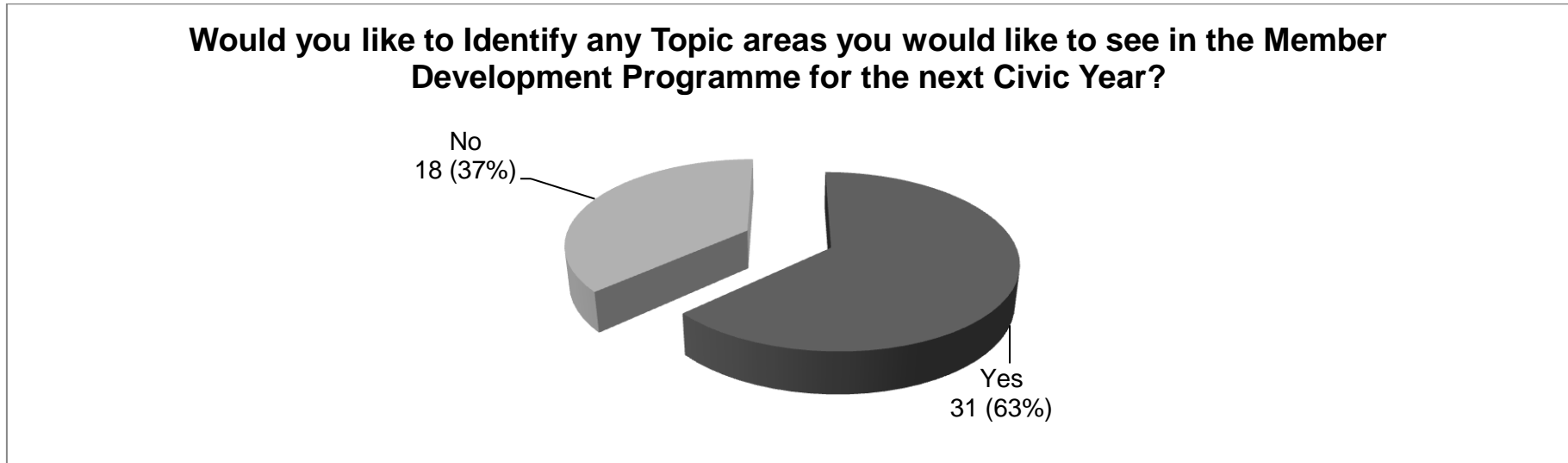
The Officers within the council need to undergo a course on communication skills to show them the relevance of communicating information ahead of the event.

In general when officers present their reports please attach/include the acronyms e.g CIP= corporate improvement plan. Officer reports are considered too long at times repetition included. They need to be less wordy and "member friendly".

Web pages- create an ask your councillor web page to contact councillors directly front facing with maps of who is who lack of understanding of council business i.e. scrutiny with some members and in the public domain- hold more meetings in public

Perhaps it could help to send questionnaire to Members re an overall impression of what they want to know about eg, if there are social care issues that Members who don't sit on the scrutiny Cttee (for example) want to know about.

Topic areas you'd like to see in the Member Development Programme next year



General comments

More IT training and support, would rather these were done with small groups with one staff member is more desirable.

Local Government finance and Tourism in the area (bigger part of the area)

More training on Modern Gov.

More frequent seminars on aspects of change in children's services, social care and welfare system and a seminar on the new Education Act

More Scrutiny training, e.g. questioning skills and follow up questions.

Need to be continually informed of all departments especially children and the elderly and any new acts also any changes that are put on-line Members are informed. Eg putting members payslip on -line without giving information on how to access

Social media (skills and greater understanding). Web pages- ask your councillor

Local Government Reorganisation.

That we have seminars from each department explaining they do, and who are the Officers there.

More training on the Constitution.

How we deal with additional budget cuts set against increased client base. Social enterprise needs to be raised and how we need to change how we do things in local government

Information Workshops on Public Protection but also training on the following: Health and Well-being Act Carer's Act Training on Dementia

Some Members could have further training on chairing skills etc. Better induction for new Members including dress code, attendance and how much commitment is required – so new Members understand what is involved.

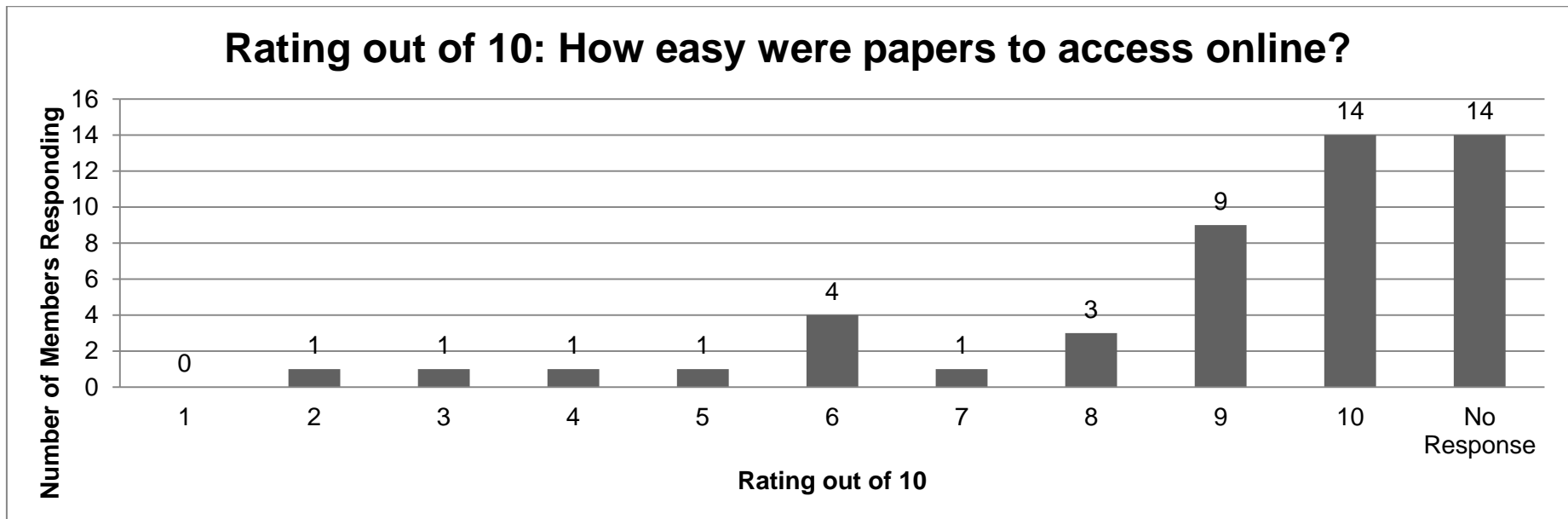
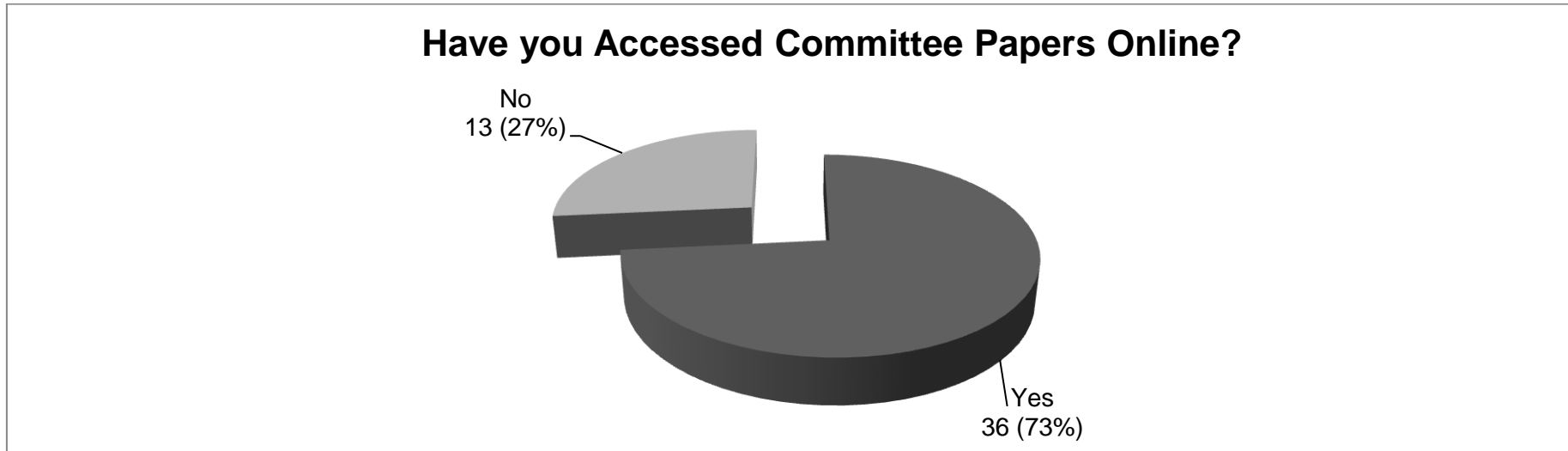
Over prescription of drugs

Good budget scrutiny training and corporate risks as a result of funding cuts is needed.

Courses on planning

Members being informed about situations in the Council before the media are informed more things on political arrangements raising motions and recommendations refresher training for chairs.

Online Access to Committee Papers



Positive comments

The development of the Mod Gov App is positive and while I have not used it I have heard other Members speak about it glowingly and I am quite interested in 'giving it a go'.

Very easy to access and use - fantastic tool

I found it very easy to access the papers online, looking forward to having electronic diaries.

Further work required

Accessing committee documents remotely is 'a frustrating nightmare' due to the level of security screens that have to be navigated and the general usability of the system however once you clearly understood the protocols then access is slightly more straightforward.

Have had some trouble accessing private papers online - but IT are looking into it

NPT website not user friendly and contains too much information, the intranet more user friendly

The first time was a nightmare – lots of passwords and log-in details to remember but it was easier after the first go.

The size of some documents sent via e-mail can be an issue. Sometimes papers are not online soon enough.

PT civic blocks wi-fi signal, need to give Members access to NPT wi-fi, all Members should have passwords - can only get to these docs in the Civic if I have downloaded them to my desktop. This is on a personal wi-fi accessible device.

General comments

I have damaged my iPad (broken screen) but haven't reported this to IT service desk. I use my own android device to access emails.

View online unless a very big paper and like paper copy

It is a lot easier following the links in e-mails.

The Council should have moved to mod gov system a lot earlier. Planning Committee have been using electronic information for a while. It means you don't have to wait until Friday night to access your papers, which makes life easier. It will take time to get used to it and the e-mailed links acts as reminder. NPT homes use a virtual boardroom system which seems to allow bigger sets of documents to be sent electronically.

I have been very successful in accessing reports. Need more training on other areas of mod gov.

Found difficulty in getting into the site at home using Council PC.

Much improved but can't access private papers yet. Still think it could be easier for public to access

What are the reasons for choosing to access/not access papers online?

Positive comments

Would still prefer hard copies also but happy to have them on line. Cabinet Members especially and other Members should be able to use on line. There is no reason why Members can't attend training as they are remunerated.

Further work required

I prefer to have hard copies as find easier to read / mark page / pick up and down - I have a vision problem and cannot spend too much time in front of a screen,

I want to be trained on Mod Gov, and want to see the IT department in relation to having a SIM card in my iPad, I want to download the net website - will speak to IT.

I was away for mod gov training and will be accessing this soon with the appropriate officer. It is felt that this digital access to information is a positive one.

Haven't used it because I don't know how to. That is why I would like IT training. Ok with e-mails but not so good in other areas. I can open attachments and links, but find it difficult to access them going in by myself.

General comments

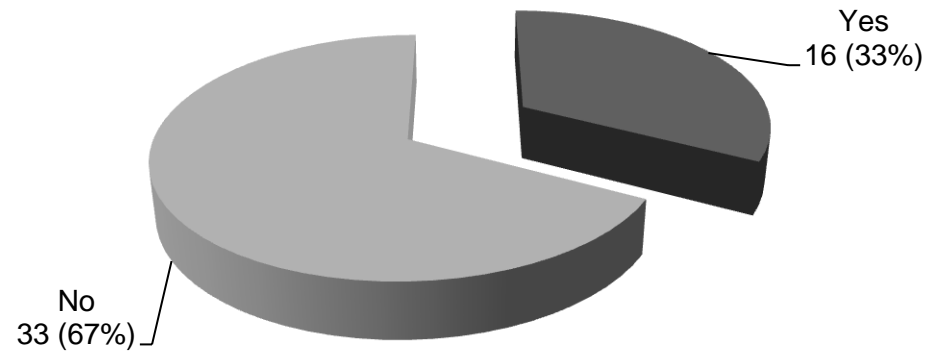
Does not go online.

The Council website is a nightmare to navigate. And I'm very tech savvy.

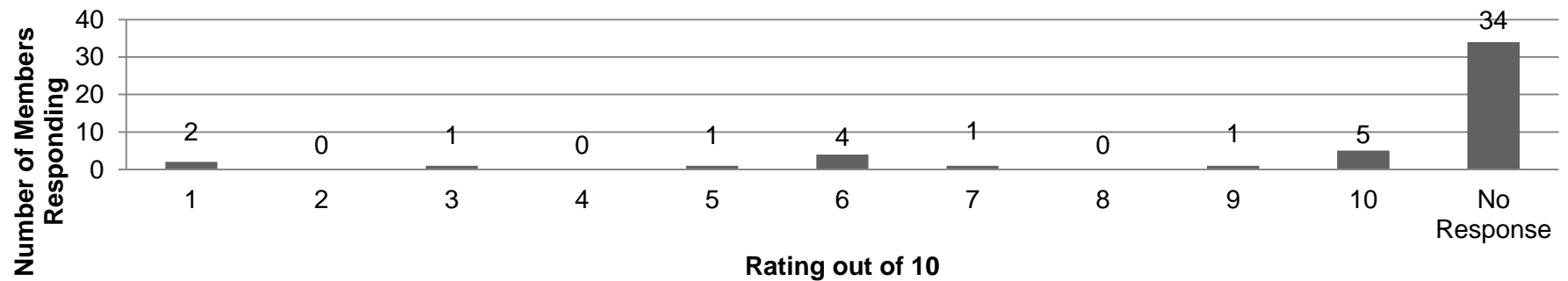
Member prefers hard copies

Other Information Accessed online

Was there other information you tried to access at the same time as trying to access the online Paperwork?



Rating out of 10: Was it easy to access the additional information online?



Positive comments

I found it very easy to access

Easy enough to access them and open the documents and to have them on screen - If I have wifi access.

Further work required

I still find the Corporate Website home page quite difficult to navigate around for us and members of the public.

General comments

Planning applications and plans were easy to locate online.

Unable to access mod.gov on iPad - possibly due to no SIM card, but will speak to IT.

Planning plans are difficult to access as there is a lot of numbers to access first

PT civic blocks wi fi signal, need to give Members access to NPT wi fi, all Members should have passwords - can only get to these docs in the Civic if I have downloaded them to my desktop. This is on a personal wi fi accessible device.

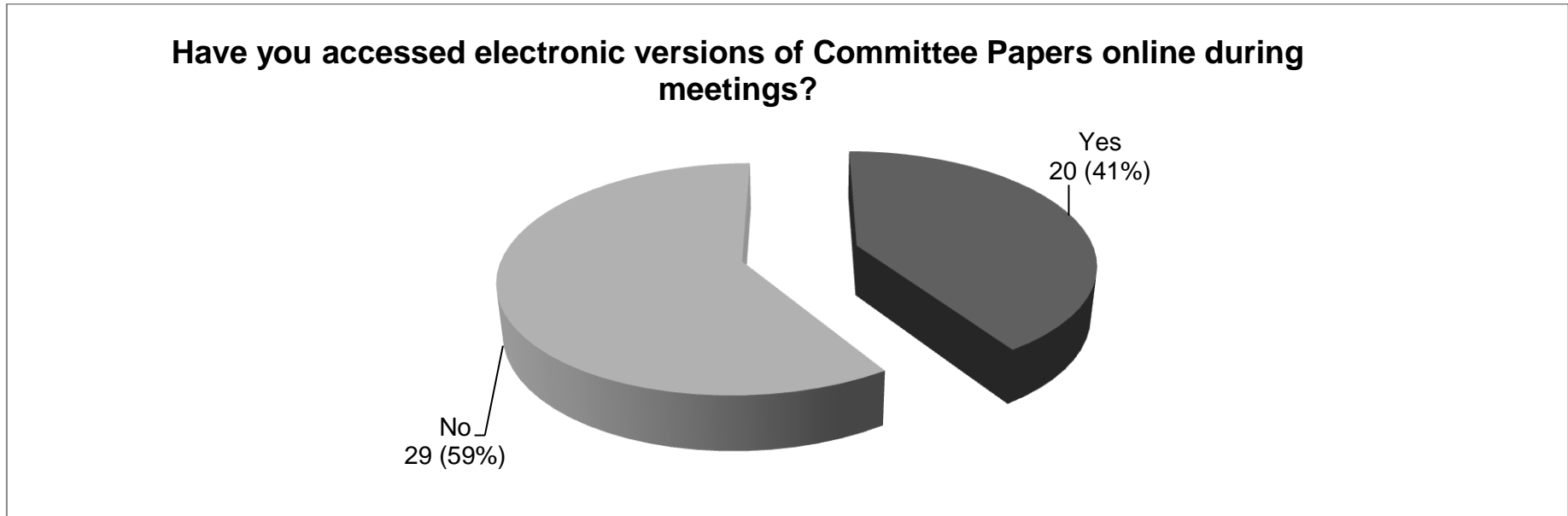
I could not find what I was looking for but that's because not everything is electronic.

Depends how regularly you access this. I don't have the same requirements at moment.

A bit confusing re attendance

Seemed to go round in a loop and I found it very frustrating and time consuming

Accessing electronic Versions of Committee Papers during a meeting



Positive comments

I found this extremely easy to access during the meeting and very useful

I find it easy to access and use in meetings.

Further work required

Sometimes awkward to make rapid movements from different pages.

Accessing private reports can be difficult.

The format of papers are sometimes numbered differently to hard copies, which makes them harder to follow in meetings and harder to formulate questions when don't match online version. Would benefit if the agenda was separate to save having to keep scrolling back up to the start especially if there are of lots of pages.

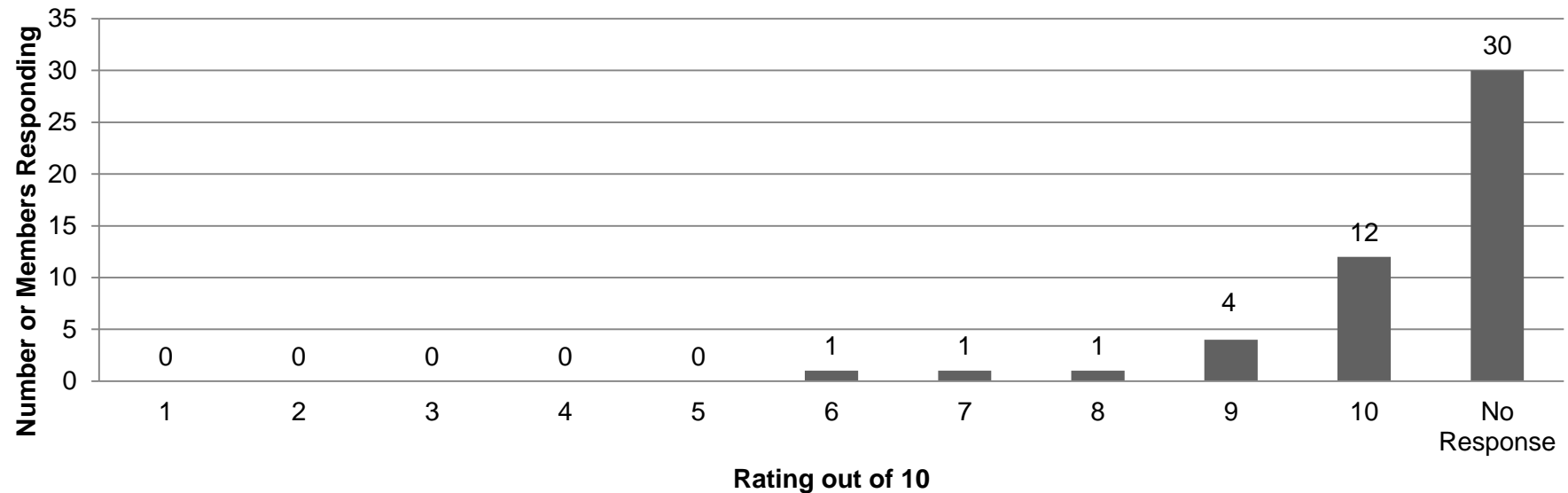
General comments.

Familiarity of equipment has helped. Because we do not use IT 7 hours a day it takes a bit longer. I am now more confident in accessing the info.

Prefer to use hard copies.

Now hotspots issues addressed in chamber good

Rating out of 10: Accessing Committee Papers Online During Meetings



Positive comments

Extremely easy to access during the meeting and very useful

Further work required

Accessing private reports is difficult and the numbering does not always correspond between paper and on-line.

The format of papers are sometimes numbered differently to hard copies, which makes them harder to follow in meetings and harder to formulate questions when don't match online version.

When accessing reports on line it would be useful for the agenda to be separate to save having to keep scrolling back up to the start especially of lots of pages and difficulty keeping track of page numbers.

Sometimes awkward to make rapid movements from front to back

General comments

No issues however some members prefer paper copies of reports.

Familiarity of equipment has helped. Because we do not use IT 7 hours a day it takes a bit longer. I am now more confident in accessing the info.

Have downloaded them prior to the meeting, but not accessed them 'live' in a meeting.

Why/why have you accessed committee papers online during a meeting?

Positive comments

I am comfortable in accessing papers electronically and would feel comfortable using an iPad in a meeting. However, I prefer to 'prep' for a meeting using hardcopy documents.

I feel this could be a distraction from the meeting

Trying very hard to get an iPad supplied by the Council instead of current desktop - finding it hard to get a swap! I cannot access wi-fi within the Port Talbot Civic Centre building as guest logins are not supplied (according to IT)

Further work required

Feel this is not necessary if hard copies are available.

Awaiting training.

I have them downloaded onto the iPad prior to the meeting. This means that sometimes I do not require paper versions. One suggestion is agendas for meetings that Members are not on could be sent electronically in one e-mail on Fridays rather than paper copies in mail.

Uses PC so not portable - would like to have iPad but only if I could see it with eye sight problem.

Does not go online/have the right equipment.

I don't have an iPad and I would like one and be shown how to use it.

Cannot access wi fi within PT Civic, and maybe Members should be able to access the Councils wi fi even on own devices.

Previously considered bad form to be on iPads during meetings.

I don't have an iPad or laptop, so not possible. I probably would if had one but would still require hard copies.

General comments

Have paper copies now but you will use in the future.

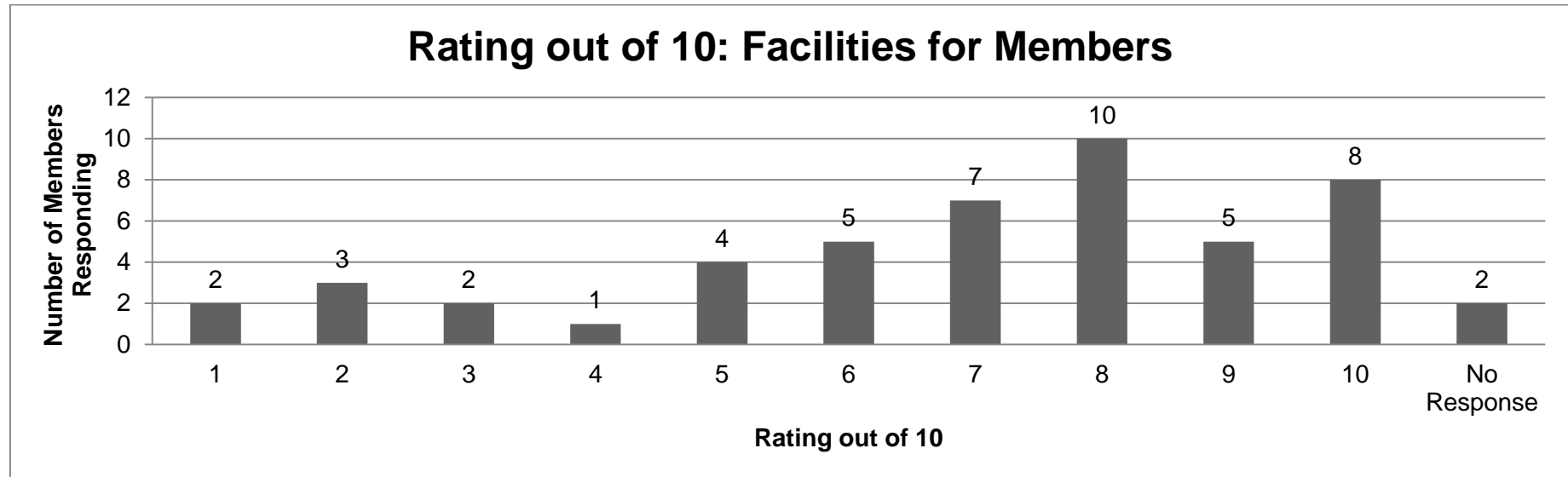
Laptop doesn't work

I require support with vision. Elections Manager has arranged support via Occupational Health Unit.

The Council website is a nightmare to navigate.

Only just had new iPad - will try to start using it in meetings.

Facilities for Members



Positive comments

Uses the members ante room in Neath occasionally. Members now have the opportunity to do more things at home due to improved personal IT facilities through the Council.

The recent refurbishment (in Neath) has been a big improvement.

I like the ModGov app.

I find everything easy to find and access, comfortable.

Further work required

The lighting in the Council Chamber is 'embarrassing'. This should be a priority and low cost LED Lighting could be used.

If we had money I would want a booth for privacy in member's rooms. Facilities are there but could do with upgrading, chairs in chamber doesn't need wheels etc. but could be static and cheaper.

No meeting room to meet with constituents - compared to other councils who are far better resourced

Poor in Members room due to no refreshments, there isn't even milk in the Members room - would like to pay monthly for a tea fund or see a vending machine near/in the Members Room. Due to cut backs there isn't milk to make a cup of tea and not very comfortable.

Would like to see provision of more water at meetings or a water cooler in the Committee rooms.

Miss the coffee, why is it that when we go to schools meetings we have an abundance of coffee and biscuits when it's the same authority? Would like nicer drinking facilities like mugs, cups and saucers - current ones are all stained.

Currently poor IT which is being improved. No office facilities for Members and poor Members room furniture. IT is particularly slow; members should have access via their cards for printing to avoid accidently printing multiple copies within the system

Members IT support within civic buildings leaves much to be desired, the computers take a long time to warm up and it is not clear how to shut down my member number because the screen changes to something different to what I have at home.

Computer area requires more light. Hot water urn is a health and safety risk as it is felt it is in too high a position when pouring boiling water potential to splash and cause burns to members.

There are only 2 computers in the Members room but I don't use them I use my iPad. I would suggest that the sofas in Neath be moved to Port Talbot, as Member Room in Neath is hardly used and the furniture in Port Talbot is too low and causes health problems.

Insufficient seating in Members room, inappropriate furniture, inadequate IT facilities, non-existent photo copying (does not have card) - where the photocopier, confidential waste bins and shredder are located is totally inadequate as this impinges on cloakroom facilities for Members - not private at all.

In addition the new chairs around the table in Members' Room in Port Talbot seem to have disappeared. The chairs in the committee rooms and chamber are way past sell by date and some set in permanent low position difficult to see.

Physical hard copies of plans or strategies would be nice.

The courier run on a Wednesday was good as it allowed you to have papers earlier. Don't want more than 1 run but would like papers earlier. Don't find the Members Room as inviting any more.

There isn't always paper and printing has to be done via Democratic Services. Members room is losing its communal feel.

General comments

In other buildings like The Quays there are no facilities. Neath has new facilities for members but no one uses it.

Don't feel Neath members room is under used

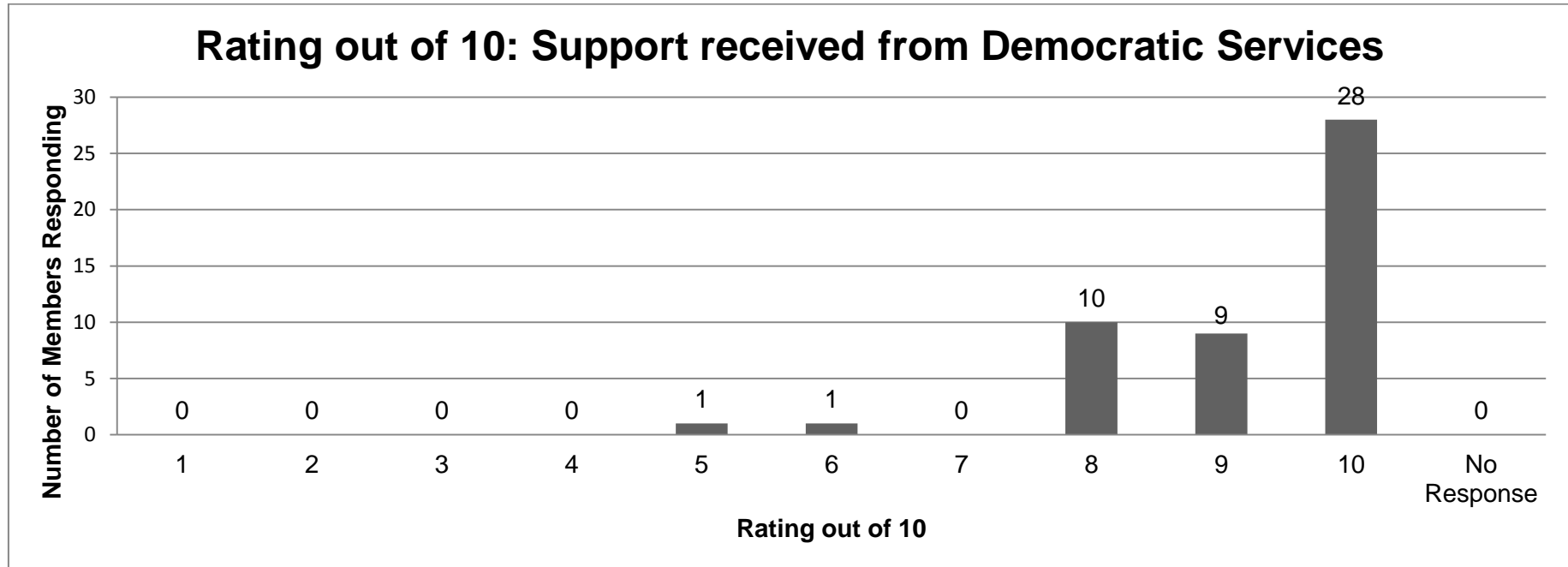
Courier run useful but would be happy to receive papers electronically. Members room fine for purpose.

It is what it is. hasn't been refurbished but why do we need anything more- we need to consider the budget here as THERE IS NO MONEY!!

The facilities are adequate for my needs.

Doesn't want us to waste money on any additions. Likes the new microphone systems in chamber and Cttee rooms.

Support for Members



Positive comments

Democratic Services support is absolutely brilliant – the staff go out their way to help Members, they are approachable, helpful, polite and friendly. Always provide excellent support - goes a long way to help Members fulfil their duty towards the electorate.

I am comfortable with the support provided and support is always there when I need it.

Every time I look for support I've only got to ask once.

Always been accommodating and always provided desired solution. Proactive and confident officers.

Very happy with service- always helpful and courteous.

Officers ring me up when I need to know things, first class communication.

Always at the end of the phone, and always puts up with our nonsense!

Always had good support from Dem Services.

I have always received a lot of support when I have required it.

Always helpful and friendly and look for the right answer for my questions.

Compliments to the section.

Further work required

Sometimes political awareness should be considered by the senior staff.

Get most things if I ask apart from IT training

Would like to talk to someone further about mod gov when I have time.

No continuity - who deals with what? Communication between Dem Services section and members as a result is poor, it is worse now than it's ever been. Different Committee Clerks covering different meetings all the time.

Previously there was an obvious manager to go to with queries. Now there seems to be more delegation across staff for different areas, which is fine, but makes it harder to know who to ask about different areas. It would be useful for the changes to be communicated to Members and for them to know who had responsibility for what. The support received when asked has been fine.

One issue is 686868 along time to get through. They tried to progress the complaint rather than transfer to relevant officers.

Final comments

Positive comments

I am very happy doing the job I do and I am very grateful for the support I get.

Given the difficult period for councils at the moment I feel that NPTCBC is one of the best councils around and fully supports its core principles.

In my experience everyone is striving to improve services within very difficult situations.

Member feels that this survey is good and should add value to the councils processes.it should occur at least twice a year.

Moving in the right directions on development and modernisation.

I find all the arrangements, facilities, and support very useful.

In this difficult time, which is going to become more difficult, I am highly respectful of how our employees carry out their work and support me as a Councillor in my difficult role.

Think it's great that Democratic Services have the time to sit with members and do the survey.

I think there have been big improvements, especially in the last few years and things seem more accessible than they were. In particular, the iPads and modern gov. system. I am glad the Council is moving forward and modernising.

This Council is trying to keep up to date with technology compared to others.

We are a very good council and what we strive to achieve is excellent, financial resources dictate how far we can go.

Further work required

Quite satisfied apart from the training on i-pads

Reduce paperwork on some scrutiny reports, to simplify the process for members

Would like to see improvements in Members facilities - no access to typing pool / secretarial support as I work it is difficult to find time to do things myself. Getting rid of members packs would not be useful. I would like to see more use of IT / better IT support / members room upgraded / transfer furniture from Neath members room to Port Talbot / concerns over ceasing courier service and delivery of members packs / and concerns over the ceasing of the dictation service over the phone. For 5 years I have been requesting an officer directory so we can avoid ringing the contact centre. Printing facilities - we have none at home only 1 copier in PT civic.

Council says it needs to be more business-like and would like to see more of that. Especially In terms of such things as communication. Members often aren't made aware of what is happening in area and hard for them to deal with queries from the public. Sometimes conflicting information being given and would like more honesty with all Members.

Social media is a big issue- we need to address this and get members trained- we can't ignore it anymore.

Even though we are a small group in the politics we should still have our say. Some communication training for all members would help so that they communicate clearly.

IT training is the biggest issue in my view at the moment.

I think that some senior officers don't seem to understand that if Members requests information they need to have it as quickly as possible. If there is a reason it cannot be provided that reason must be fully explained.

We need to consider reviewing times of meetings and seminars to accommodate new members and the public and if we need to include possible new members who have commitments we should look into providing more support.

General comments

Understands that the landscape of local government is changing in the future and obviously with cut backs there is going to be more of a role for Councillors being responsible for commissioning services and it might be useful for Members to have more input and training on how to cope with these issues which may become a part of the of future of local government at some stage.

No real concerns. Reinforce the timing of when members receive papers especially for matters of considerable weight and too close to relevant meetings.

Bitterly disappointed with the way Welsh Government has handled strategic cuts etc. Welsh Government has not informed Members of anything.

Communication is vital and strengthening communication to Members will help us to work together. I appreciate the opportunity to give my views. Members should be clear if they are not interested in being on a group so that others can have the opportunity to attend.

The people running the place are out of touch with the man on the street. And they are also out of touch with the modern ethos.

Would like to see consideration of the most economical way of taking forward the webcasting of meetings. Aware of financial implications but if there is a cheap way of doing feels it should be explored.

At present I find it very frustrating being a Councillor because of the lack of information coming from the top.