

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**HEREFORDSHIRE VOICE
PANEL SURVEY EIGHT**

DRAFT REPORT

- MAY 2003-

Prepared for: -
Herefordshire County Council

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
2.0	INTRODUCTION	7
3.0	HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS	10
3.1	READERSHIP OF HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS.....	10
3.2	CONTENT OF HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS.....	10
3.3	STYLE OF HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS.....	15
3.4	OVERALL RATING OF HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS	16
3.5	COST OF THE MAGAZINE.....	17
3.6	FUTURE OF HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS.....	17
4.0	HOUSING SERVICES	18
4.1	HOME OWNERSHIP	18
4.2	SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING TEAM	19
4.3	PRIORITIES IN COUNCIL GRANT ALLOCATION	22
4.4	ANCHOR STAYING PUT	24
4.5	THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY CENTRE	24
5.0	SAFETY CAMERA UNIT	25

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS

Readership of 'Herefordshire Matters'

- 1.1.1 Whilst over three-quarters of respondents (77%) have read a copy of *Herefordshire Matters* in the past, a smaller proportion (63%) have actually received a copy through the post at any stage.

Perceptions of the magazine content

- 1.1.2 Of those respondents who have read *Herefordshire Matters*:

- 82% find the magazine interesting, 6% uninteresting.
- 72% find the information contained useful, 6% that the information lacks use.
- 71% are satisfied with the number of stories contained within the magazine, 4% are dissatisfied.
- 69% are satisfied that the magazine covers important issues, 7% are dissatisfied with this aspect.
- 68% feel that they are well or better informed about the Council as a result of reading *Herefordshire Matters*, 6% still feel poorly informed.

- 1.1.3 Over one-quarter of *Herefordshire Matters* readers suggest articles that they would like to see in future editions of the magazine, with the largest proportions mentioning a environmental and conservation issues (4.1%), breakdown of the Community Tax Charge (3.2%), roadworks and traffic problems (3.1%), and/or details of community activities (3.0%).

Perceptions of the style and layout

- 1.1.4 Again, of those respondents who have read *Herefordshire Matters*:

- 88% think that the magazine is easy to read, 2% that it is difficult to.
- 66% like the style of the articles, 6% dislike the style.
- 71% like the overall style and layout of the magazine, 6% dislike it.

Overall perceptions of the magazine

- 1.1.5 Overall, four in five readers of *Herefordshire Matters* (80%) rate the magazine in positive terms [fairly or very good], which compares to one in seven (15%) who give a neutral rating [neither good nor poor], and fewer than one in twenty (4%) who give a negative rating [fairly or very poor].

- 1.1.6 Over three-quarters of readers think that the 28 pence to print and deliver a copy of *Herefordshire Matters* represents good value for money. In contrast, over one in five (21%) do not think it represents good value for money, whilst a small proportion (2%) fail to provide a response. Over four in five (81%) think that selling advertising space in the magazine would be a good way to reduce this cost.

The future of the magazine

- 1.1.7 Approaching nine in ten readers of *Herefordshire Matters* think that the magazine should continue (88%). In contrast, one in eleven think the magazine should be discontinued (9%), whilst a small proportion fail to provide a response (3%).

1.2 HOUSING SERVICES

The Private Sector Housing Team

- 1.2.1 Three-quarters of respondents (75%) are aware of at least one of five specified services provided by the Private Sector Housing Team at Herefordshire Council. The majority of respondents are aware of the availability of home improvement grants, and renovation and home repair assistance grants (57%), the availability of disabled facilities grants to fund disability adaptations (52%), and/or advice, grants, and interest-free loans to promote energy conservation (51%). Further, approaching one-third are aware the team inspects rented accommodation (31%), whilst over one-quarter are aware of the inspection and regulation of houses in multiple occupation (26%).
- 1.2.2 Of those respondents who are aware of one or more of the services provided by the Private Sector Housing Team, the majority (56%) became aware of the service by word of mouth, whilst over one-quarter (27%) saw local advertising.
- 1.2.3 All respondents were asked the extent to which they consider ten specified media to be effective as a means of promoting private sector housing services:
- 91% consider local newspapers to be effective [very or quite effective], compared to 7% who consider the medium ineffective [of limited or no effectiveness];
 - 70% consider *Herefordshire Matters* to be effective, 22% ineffective;
 - 69% consider direct mailing to be effective, 24% ineffective;
 - 68% consider word of mouth to be effective, 26% ineffective;
 - 65% consider local radio to be effective, 29% ineffective;
 - 62% consider *Info in Herefordshire* to be effective, 27% ineffective;
 - 38% consider the Yellow Pages to be effective, 52% ineffective;
 - 36% consider the local Councillor or Parish Clerk to be effective, 55% ineffective;
 - 35% consider other agencies to be effective, 50% ineffective.

- 26% consider the Internet to be effective, 62% ineffective.

1.2.4 All respondents were further asked to rate the importance of seven specified priorities of the Private Sector Housing Team. All priorities have been rated as fairly or very important by at least four in five respondents, with only small proportions in most cases regarding specified priorities as not so important, or of little importance.

- 96% rate the adaptation of properties to allow disabled persons to remain in their own homes as important [quite or very important], 1% as unimportant [not so important or not at all important];
- 95% rate the improvement to fire precautions in multi-occupancy properties to be important; 2% unimportant;
- 93% rate the promotion of energy efficiency improvements for reducing fuel bills as important, 4% as unimportant;
- 89% rate the improvement of home security as important; 8% as unimportant;
- 87% rate the making of owner-occupier property as habitable as important; 10% as unimportant;
- 85% rate the renovation of previously-empty property for private renting as important; 11% as unimportant;
- 84% rate the repair of privately-rented unfit properties to be important; 11% unimportant.

Priority groups for the receipt of grants

1.2.5 Respondents were further asked the importance of the Council giving priority in the awarding of grants to eight specified groups of people. For five of the eight groups, approximating three-quarters or more respondents do consider it fairly or very important to give priority to the group in question. For the remaining three groups however, the majority think that giving priority to the group is not so important or of very little importance:

- 95% rate the priority to people with disabilities as important, 2% unimportant;
- 86% rate the priority to low-income households not in receipt of an income-related benefit as important, 11% as unimportant;
- 84% rate the priority to anyone aged over sixty as important, 14% as unimportant;
- 76% rate the priority to young families and those with dependent children aged under 16 as important, 20% as unimportant;
- 74% rate the priority to low-income households in receipt of income-related benefits as important, 23% as unimportant.

But:

- 46% rate the priority to anyone needing repair work as important, 51% as unimportant;
- 25% rate the priority to landlords with one or two properties to rent as important, 71% as unimportant;
- 21% rate the priority to all landlords as important, 74% as unimportant.

'Anchor Staying Put'

- 1.2.6 One in eight respondents (13%) have heard of *Anchor Staying Put*, the not-for-profit home improvement agency funded by the Council. Of these respondents, 69% are aware that this organisation provides a small repairs and handyman service, 66% that they provide general advice and assistance regarding other benefits and grants available, 62% that they provide advice about grant eligibility, and 61% that they provide assistance in making grant applications.
- 1.2.7 Almost three-quarters of those who are aware of *Anchor Staying Put* would find the services they offer beneficial in the future.

The Energy Efficiency Centre

- 1.2.8 A large minority of respondents (45%) are aware of the Energy Efficiency Centre.

Spending on home repairs and improvements

- 1.2.9 A large majority of respondents (85%) are home owners, having either bought their house outright, or are currently in the process of paying a mortgage.
- 1.2.10 Over nine in ten home owners (92%) have spent money on home repairs and improvements in the past year, with three in five (59%) spending between £1 and £2,000, one in six (18%) between £2,000 and £5,000, and one in seven (15%) over £5,000.
- 1.2.11 Over four in five home owners (83%) have funded home repairs and improvements in the past year through private savings. A further one in twelve (8%) have taken out a loan, and one in twenty (5%) and extended mortgage or equity release. Only 3% have secured grant assistance.
- 1.2.12 The majority of home owners (51%) would be reluctant to take out a low-interest loan to fund home repairs or improvements. One in nine (11%) would be willing to do this, three in ten (29%) might do depending on the circumstances, whilst one in twelve (8%) are unsure.

1.3 THE SAFETY CAMERA UNIT

1.3.1 All respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with seven specified statements regarding safety cameras operated by the Casualty Reduction Partnership in West Mercia.

- 83% agree that the use of safety cameras should be supported as a method of reducing casualties, 6% disagree;
- 79% agree that the primary aim of safety cameras is to save lives, 12% disagree;
- 76% agree that cameras mean that more dangerous drivers are now more likely to get caught, 11% disagree;
- 76% agree that cameras are meant to encourage drivers to keep to the speed limits, 14% disagree;
- 75% agree that fewer accidents are likely to happen on roads where safety cameras are installed, 10% disagree;
- 57% agree that cameras are an easy way of making money out of motorists, 18% disagree;
- 12% agree that there are too many safety cameras in the local area, 44% disagree.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

- The modernisation agenda presents local authorities with a broad range of challenges and opportunities. Central to this agenda is the need to consult with the public. As part of their consultation strategy, Herefordshire Partnership, which includes Herefordshire Council, the Chamber of Commerce for Herefordshire and Worcestershire, the Herefordshire Health Authority, West Mercia Police, voluntary organisations and Advantage West Midlands, commissioned BMG to recruit a panel of 1000 residents with whom they could consult on a range of local issues.

- This report presents the findings of the eighth survey of the panel. The principle aims of the current survey were to investigate attitudes towards and measure usage of :
 - ◆ Herefordshire Matters;
 - ◆ Housing Services;
 - ◆ Safety Camera Unit.

- In addition to this written report, data tabulations have been produced which present the data as a whole, and broken down by the following groups:
 - ◆ Gender of the respondent;
 - ◆ Age of the respondent;
 - ◆ Ward in which the respondent lives.
 - ◆ The length of time the respondent has been resident in Herefordshire;
 - ◆ Housing ownership:
 - ◆ Housing type:
 - ◆ Illness/disability:
 - ◆ Benefits received:
 - ◆ Marital status:
 - ◆ Children in Household:
 - ◆ ICT access:
 - ◆ Use of public transport:
 - ◆ Household car access:
 - ◆ Employment status:
 - ◆ Socio-economic class.

1.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

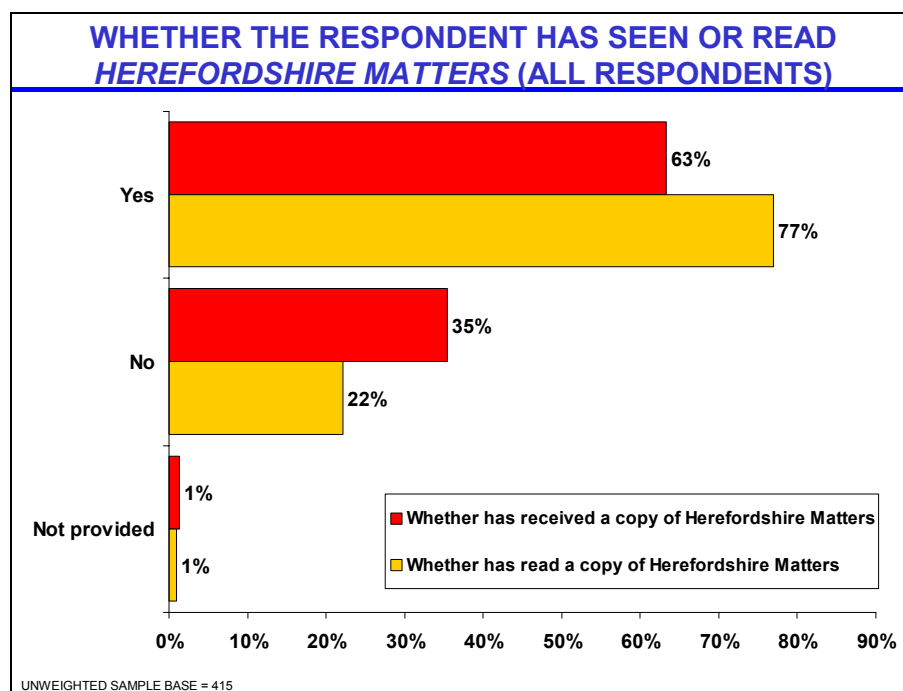
- The table below shows key demographic information on the respondents returning questionnaires for this survey.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS		
	%	UNWEIGHTED SAMPLE BASES
TOTAL		
TOTAL	100	471
GENDER		
MALE	234	50
FEMALE	237	50
AGE		
16-24	72	15
25-44	210	45
45-59	62	13
60+	127	27
ILLNESS/DISABILITY		
YES	88	19
NO	381	81
CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD		
YES	131	28
NO	340	72
SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS		
HIGHER	137	29
INTERMEDIATE	123	26
LOWER	37	8
NON WORKING	129	27

3.0 HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS

3.1 READERSHIP OF HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS

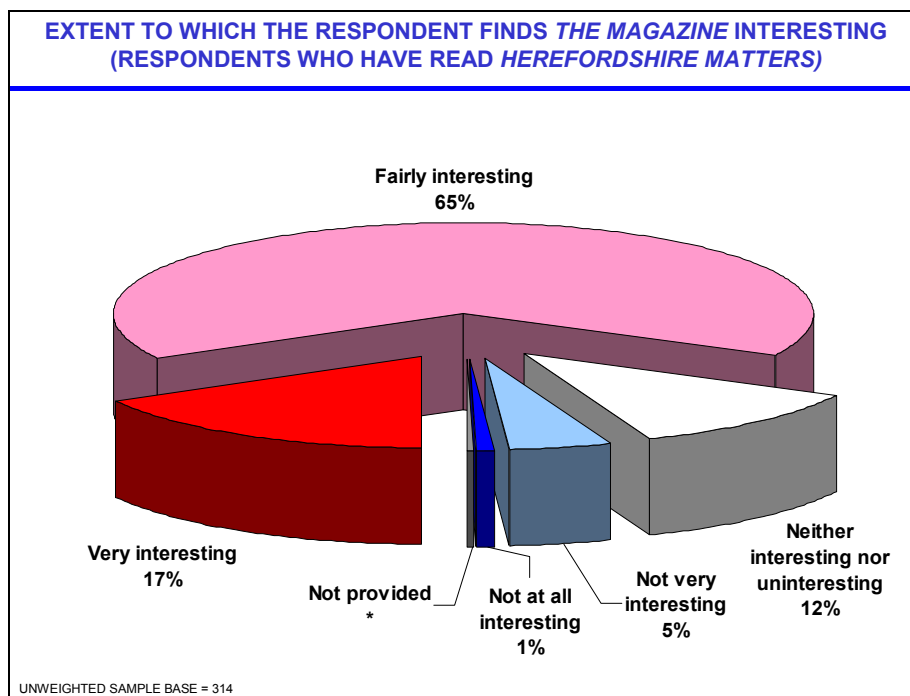
- 3.1.1 Whilst over three-quarters of respondents have previously read a copy of *Herefordshire Matters* (77%), fewer than two-thirds (63%) have received a copy by post in the past.



- 3.1.2 The receipt of *Herefordshire Matters* by post does not vary significantly according to the respondent's location: 62% of those in Hereford City have received the magazine, compared to 64% of those from other areas in the County.
- 3.1.3 Further, length of residence has no noticeable effect on delivery.
- 3.1.4 The proportion of respondents who have actually *read* the magazine is generally higher amongst elder respondents: 61% of those aged 16-24 have read it, compared to 76% of those aged 25-44, 85% of those aged 45-59, and 79% of those aged 60+.

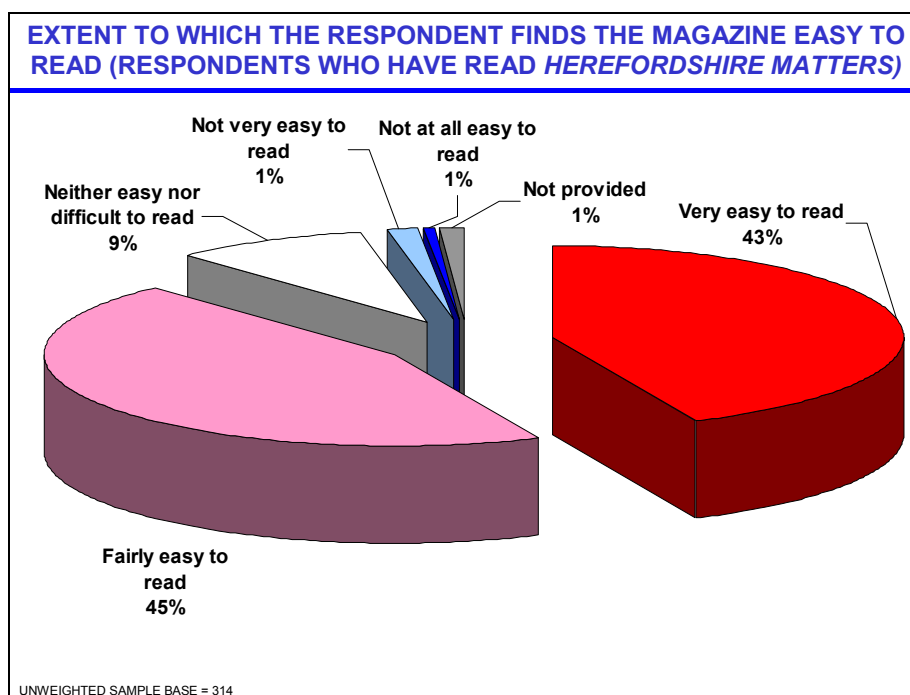
3.2 CONTENT OF HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS

- 3.2.1 Over four in five respondents who have read *Herefordshire Matters* (82%) have found the content of the magazine to be interesting. In contrast, 6% state that the content lacked interest.



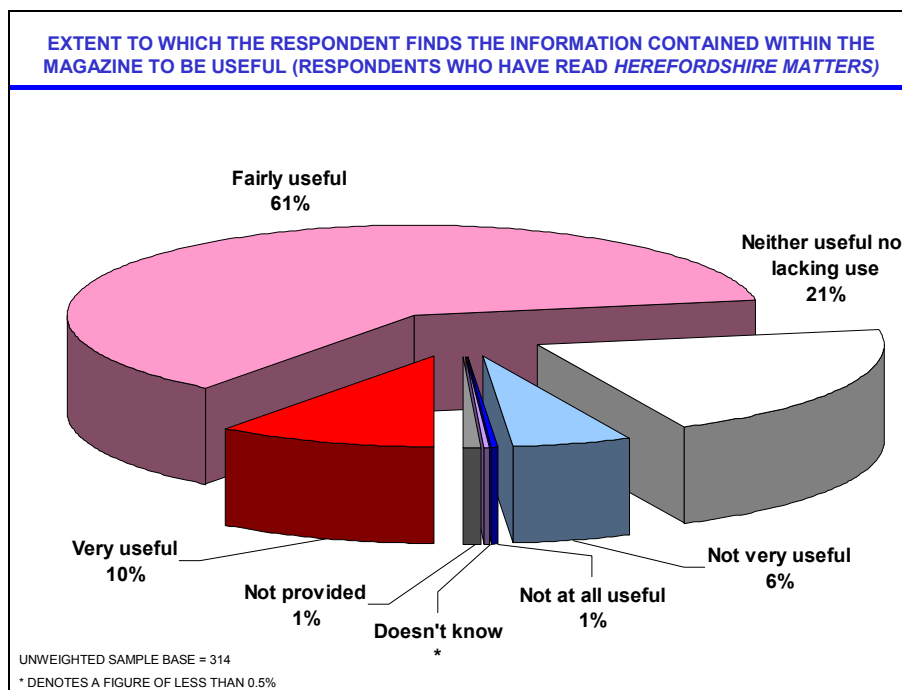
3.2.2 Despite having a lower proportional readership, those aged 16-24 are not significantly less likely to find the magazine interesting, in comparison to those from other age groups: 79% of those aged 16-24 find it interesting, compared to 81% of those aged 25-44, 82% of those aged 45-59, and 85% of those aged 60+.

3.2.3 Almost nine in ten readers of *Herefordshire Matters* (88%), find it easy to read the magazine, which contrasts with 2% who find it difficult to read.



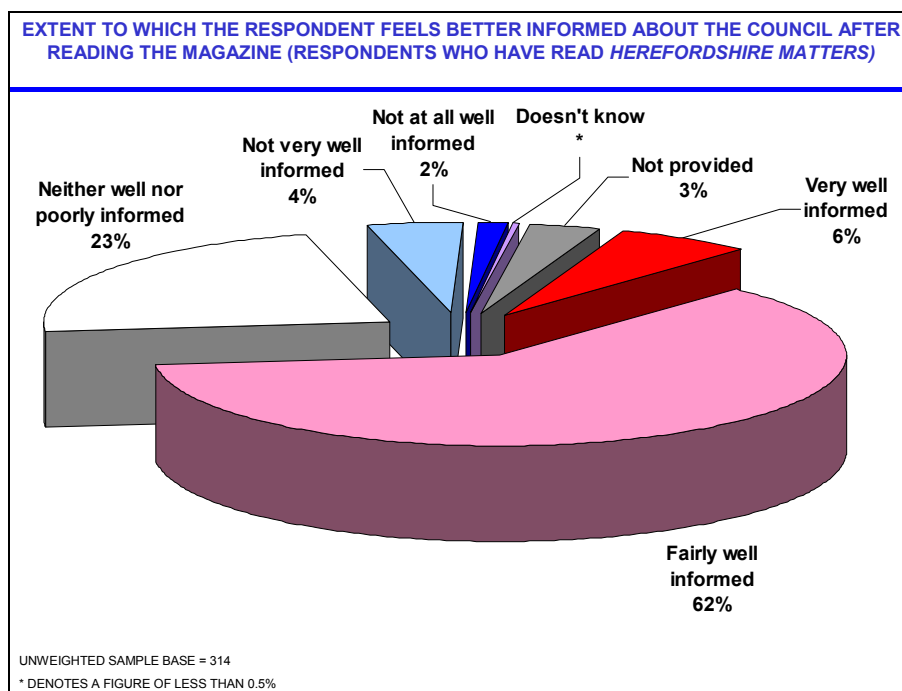
3.2.4 The proportions finding the magazine easy to read increases with respondent age, from 76% of those aged 16-24, to 86% of those aged 25-44 and 45-59, and 93% of those aged 60+.

3.2.5 Over seven in ten readers of *Herefordshire Matters* (72%) state that they have found the content of the magazine to be useful. A small proportion express the opposite (6%), stating that the content is not very, or not at all useful.

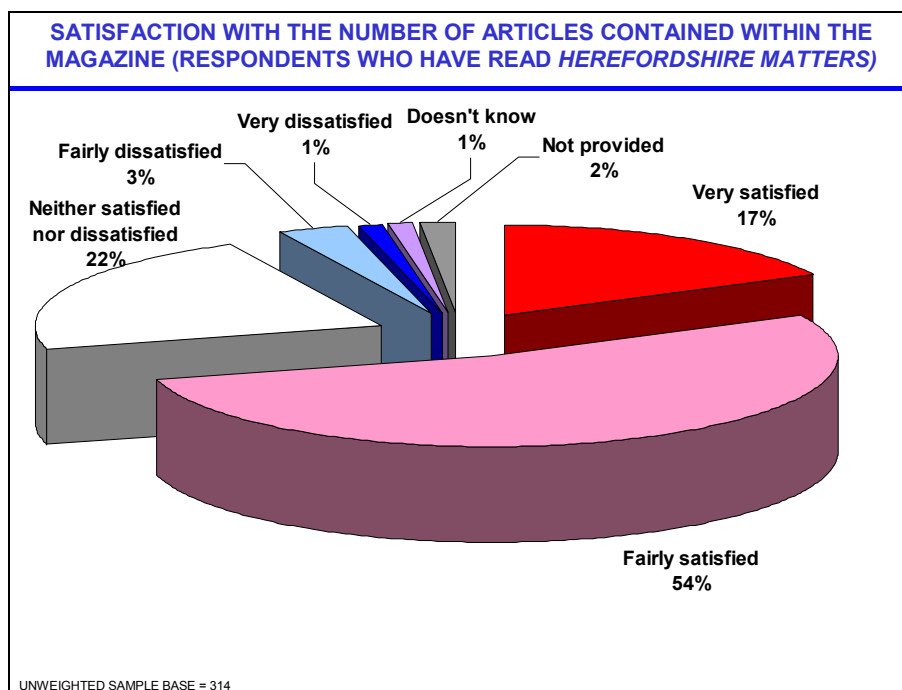


3.2.6 Significantly, residents who are newer to the area are more likely to find the information useful than those resident in Herefordshire for five years or more (79% and 71% respectively). Also, residents of Hereford City are slightly more positive than those from the rest of the County (77% rating useful, contrasting with 70%).

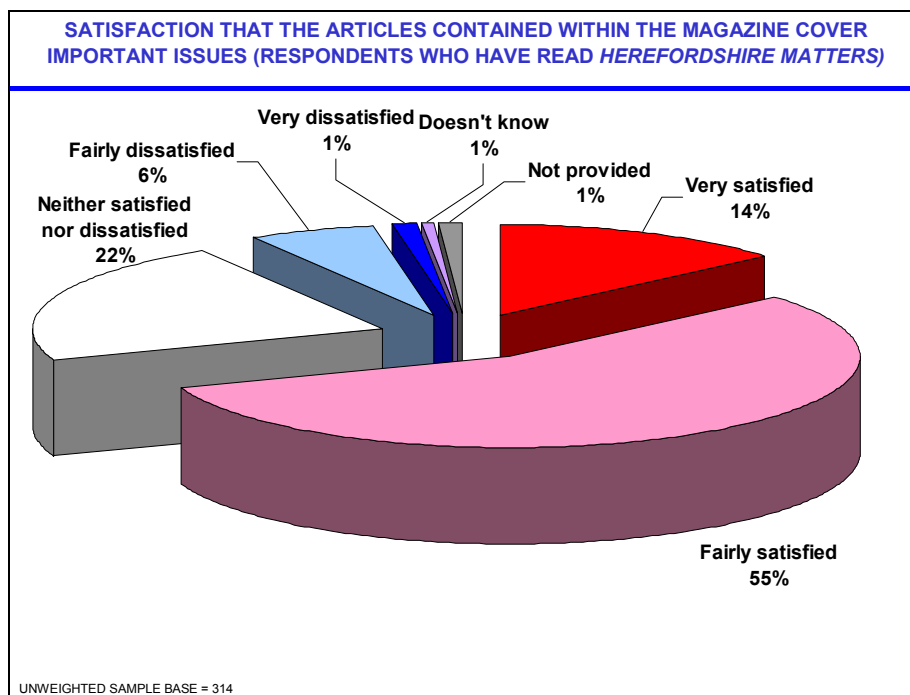
3.2.7 Over two-thirds of readers (68%) feel that they feel better informed about the Council having read *Herefordshire Matters*. In contrast, 6% of readers feel that they do not feel well-informed as a result of reading *Herefordshire Matters*.



3.2.8 Over seven in ten readers (71%) are satisfied with the number of stories included in *Herefordshire Matters*. In contrast, fewer than one in twenty (4%) express dissatisfaction with this aspect.

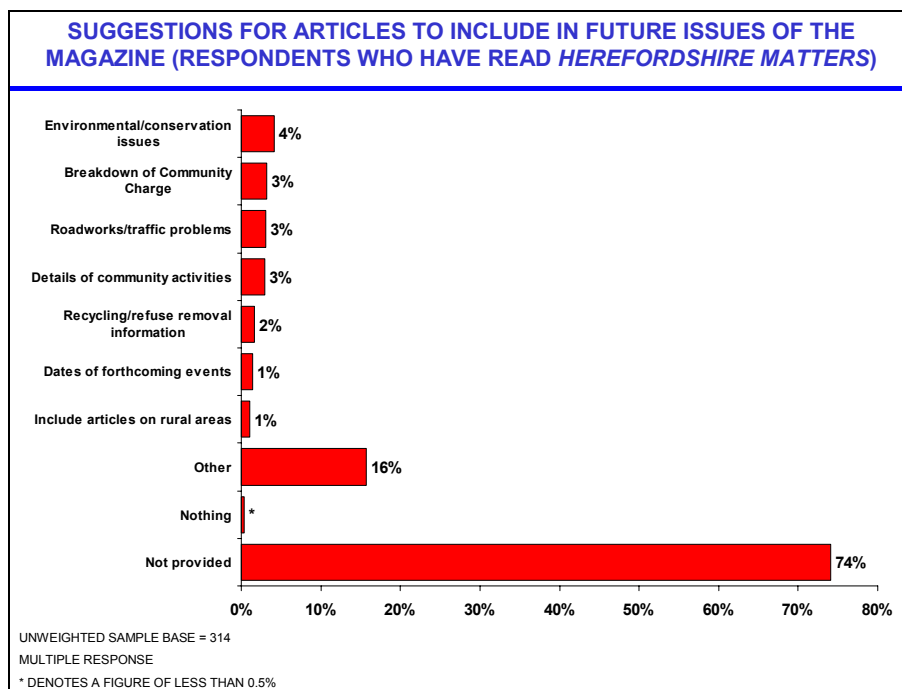


3.2.9 Almost seven in ten readers (6%) are satisfied that the articles in *Herefordshire Matters* cover important issues, which contrasts with 7% who are dissatisfied with this aspect.



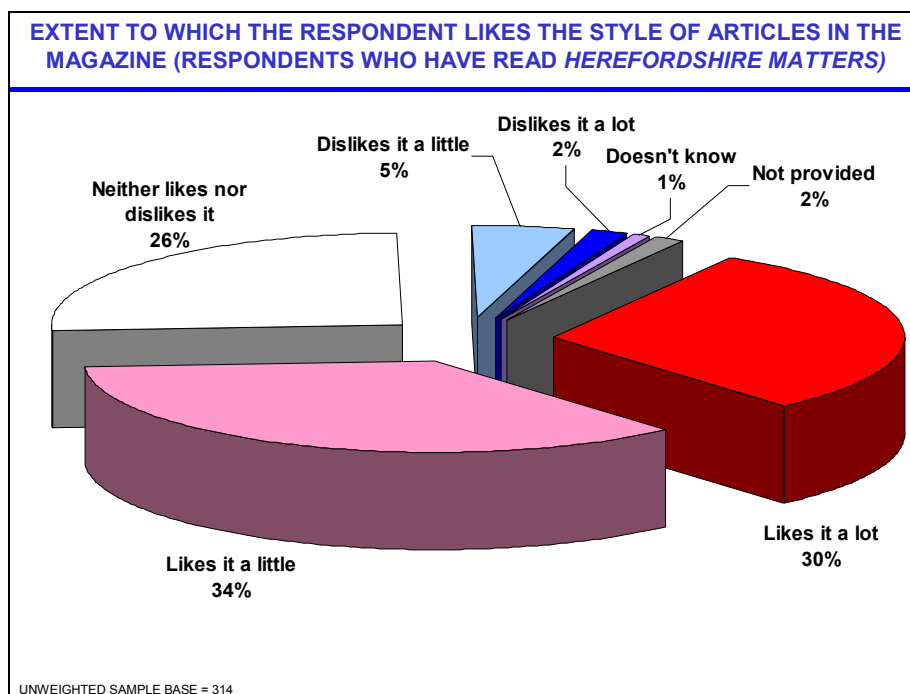
3.2.10 The proportion who feel that the magazine covers important issues is significantly lower amongst those aged 16-24, where only 51% are satisfied with this aspect. In contrast, 69% of those aged 25-44, 71% of those aged 45-59, and 73% of those aged 60+ are satisfied that the magazine covers important issues.

3.2.11 Over one-quarter of readers (24%) suggest ideas for articles they would like to see in future issues of *Herefordshire Matters*. Few individual ideas for articles are mentioned in large numbers however, with the largest proportions mentioning environmental or conservation issues, a breakdown of the Community Tax charges, roadworks and other traffic problems, and/or details of community activities.



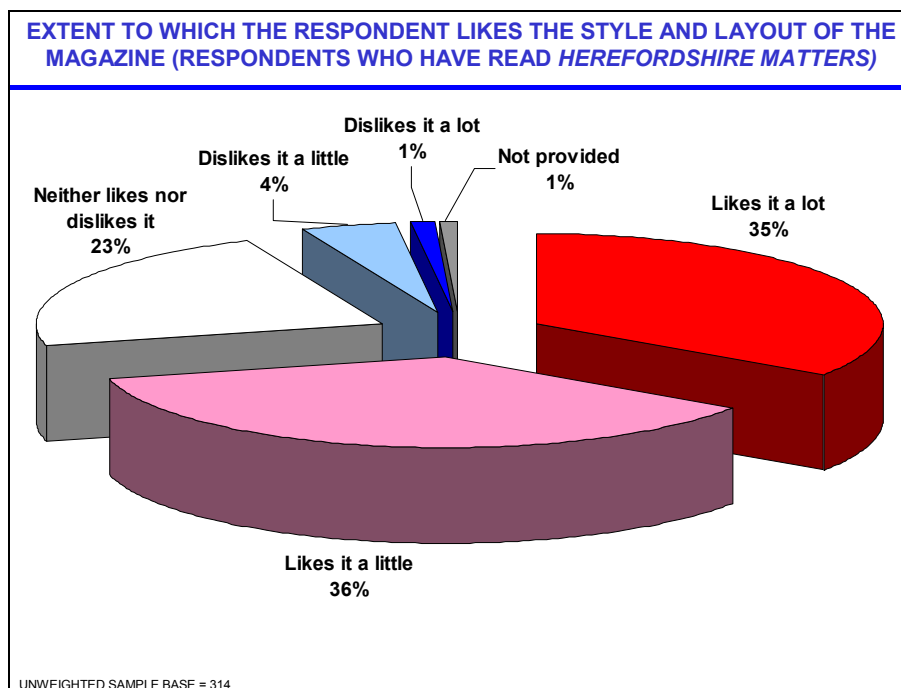
3.3 STYLE OF *HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS*

3.3.1 Almost two-thirds of *Herefordshire Matters* readers (66%) like the style of the articles in the magazine. This contrasts with only 6% who dislike the style.



3.3.2 Readers aged 16-24 are least likely to give a positive rating with regards to the style of the magazine: 52% like the style, compared to 66% of those aged 25-44, 61% of those aged 45-59, and 72% of those aged 60+.

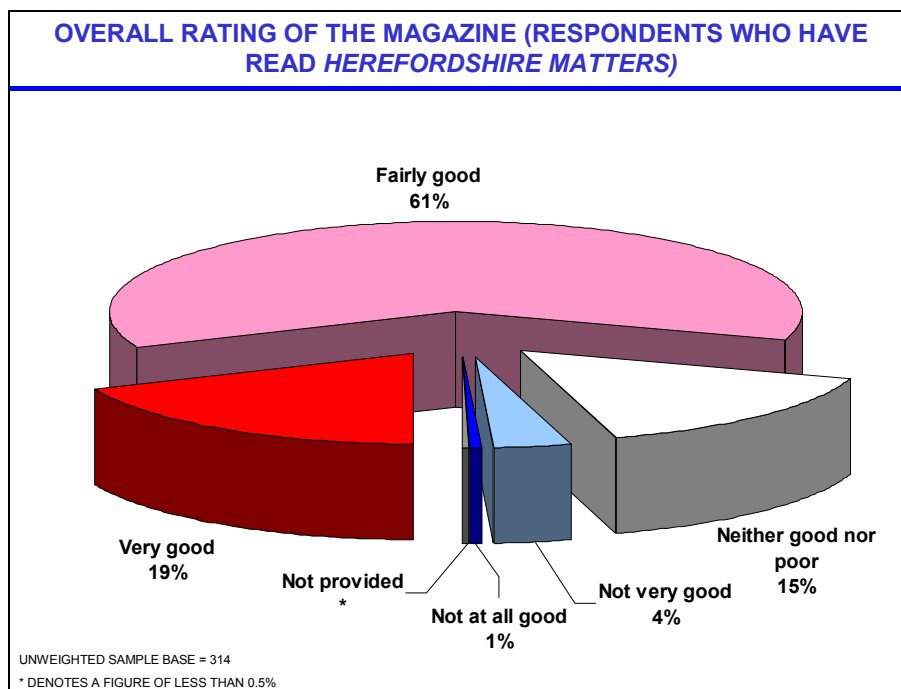
3.3.3 Over seven in ten readers (71%) like the style and layout of *Herefordshire Matters*, which contrasts with a small proportion (6%) who dislike these aspects of the magazine.



3.3.4 The proportion who like the style and layout of the magazine is significantly lower amongst those aged 16-24, of whom only 54% give a positive rating, compared to 72% of those aged 25-44, 78% of those aged 45-59, and 79% of those aged 60+

3.4 OVERALL RATING OF *HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS*

3.4.1 Four in five readers of *Herefordshire Matters* (80%) rate the magazine in positive terms overall (i.e. fairly or very good). In contrast, fewer than one in twenty rate the magazine in negative terms (4%). There are no significant differences in the proportions rating the magazine as good across gender and age groups.



3.5 COST OF THE MAGAZINE

- 3.5.1 Over three-quarters of readers (76%) feel that the 28 pence to print and deliver each copy of *Herefordshire Matters* represents good value for money. In contrast, over one in five readers (21%) feel that the magazine represents poor value, with a further small proportion (2%) failing to provide a response.
- 3.5.2 Over four in five readers (81%) feel that the selling of advertising space in *Herefordshire Matters* would be a good way to reduce the cost of the magazine. In contrast, approximately one in six (17%) do not consider this to be a good idea, whilst a small proportion (2%) fail to provide a response.

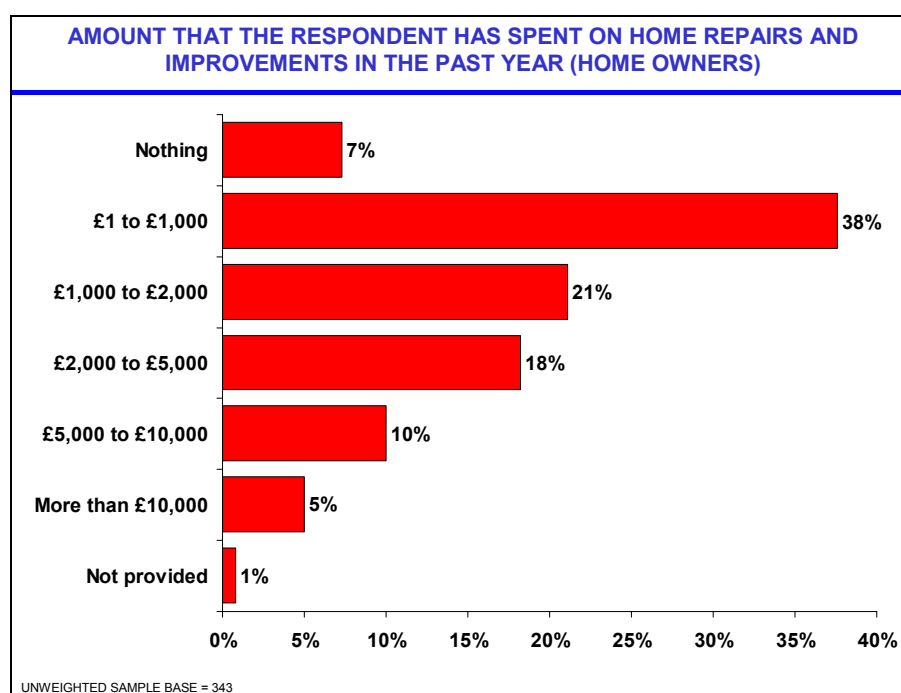
3.6 FUTURE OF HEREFORDSHIRE MATTERS

- 3.6.1 Almost nine in ten readers of *Herefordshire Matters* (88%) feel that the magazine should continue in the future. In contrast, one in eleven (9%) feel that the magazine should be discontinued, whilst a further small proportion (3%) fail to provide a response.

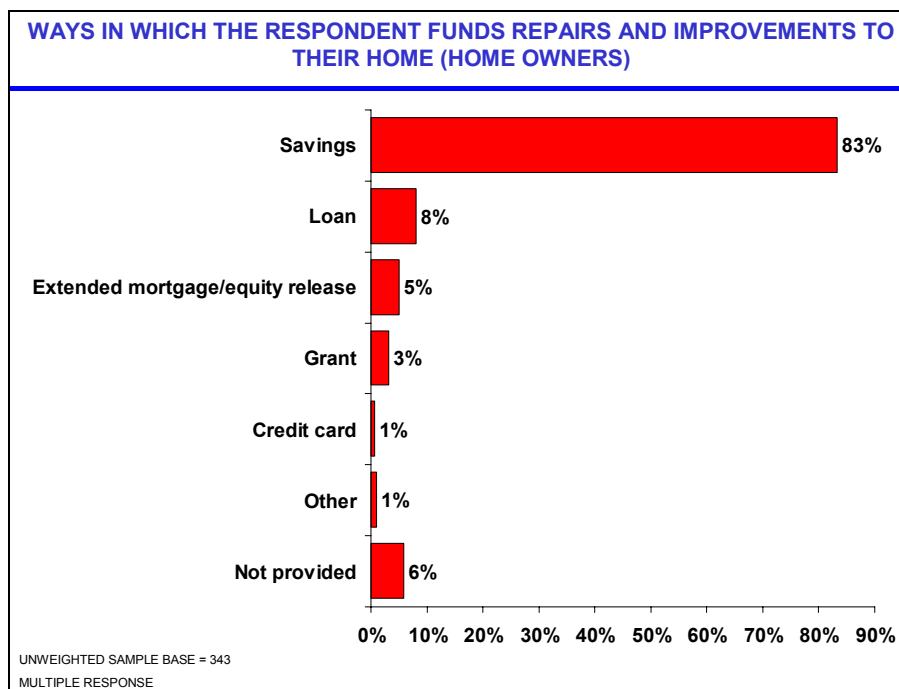
4.0 HOUSING SERVICES

4.1 HOME OWNERSHIP

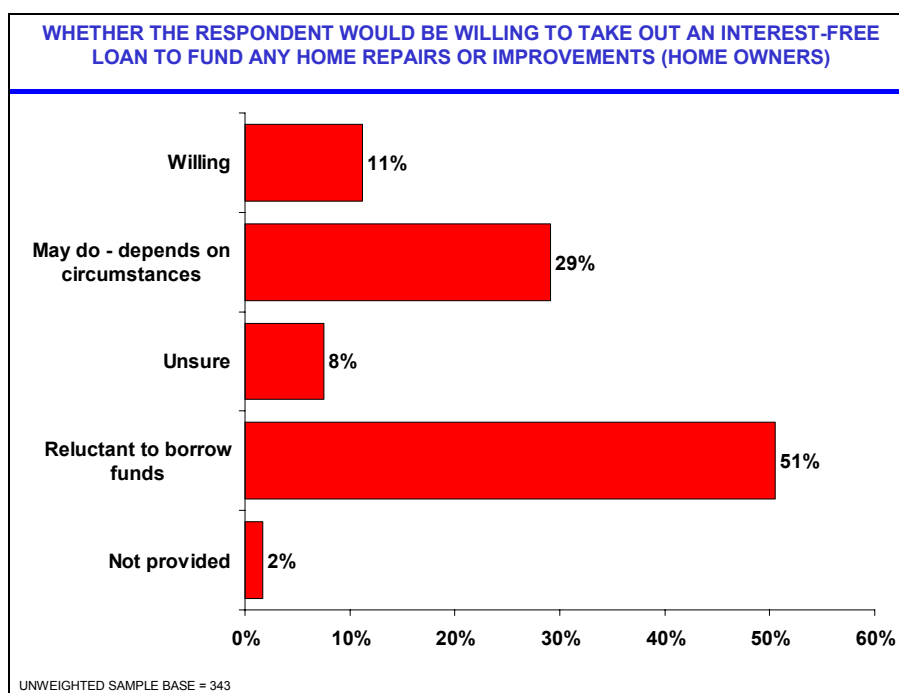
- 4.1.1 The overwhelming majority of respondents (85%) own their own home outright, or are paying a mortgage.
- 4.1.2 Over nine in ten home owners (92%) have spent money on home repairs and improvements in the past twelve months. The majority (59%) have spent up to £2,000, with a further 28% spending between £2,000 and £10,000, and 5% over £10,000.



- 4.1.3 The majority of home owners fund any improvements to their property through savings, although one in twelve have previously taken out a loan to cover the costs.



4.1.4 The majority of home owners would be reluctant to take out an interest-free loan to cover the costs of any repairs or improvements to their home.

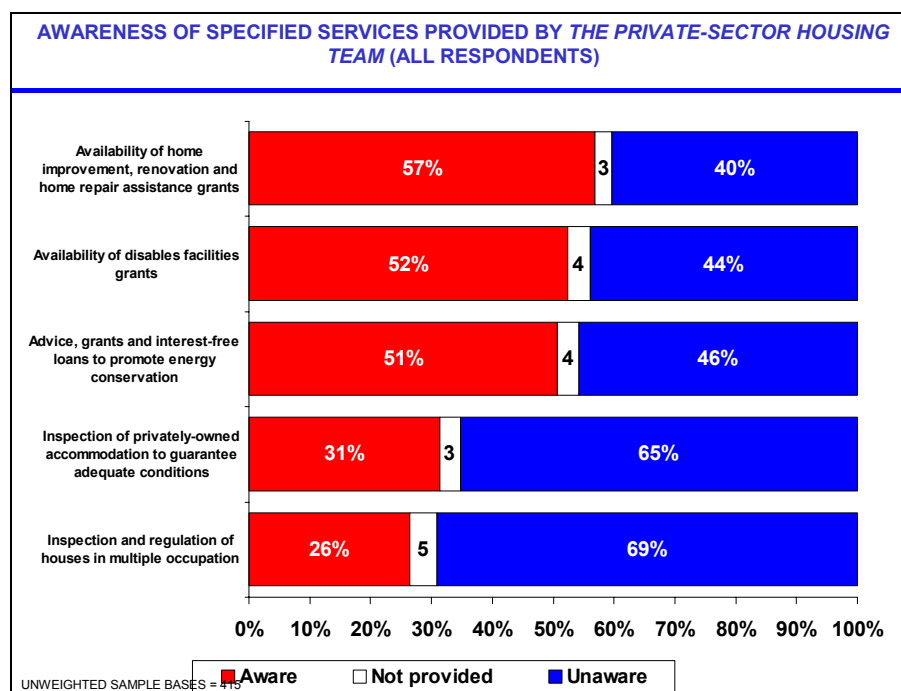


4.2 SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING TEAM

Awareness of individual services

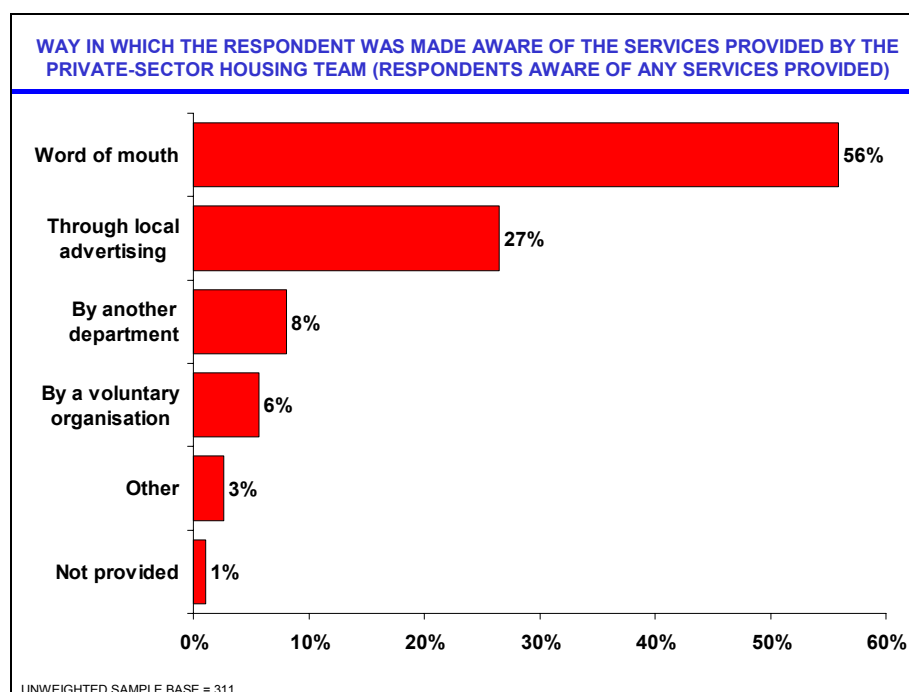
4.2.1 All respondents were asked whether they were aware of five specified services provided by the Council's Private Sector Housing Team. In all, three-quarters of respondents are aware of at least one of the services, with the at least one-half indicating awareness of three of the five services: the availability of home

improvement and home repair assistance grants; the availability of disabled facilities grants; and initiatives to promote energy conservation.



Advertising and raising awareness of services

4.2.2 The majority of those who are aware of any of the services provided by the Private Sector Housing Team became aware of the service(s) through word of mouth. Further, over one-quarter became aware through local advertising.



4.2.3 All respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of ten specified media as ways to promote the services of the Private Sector Housing Team to potential

users in the future. The largest proportion, over nine in ten (91%) rate newspapers as a very or fairly effective way to advertise the services, whilst the majority rate the following in similar terms: *Herefordshire Matters* (70%); direct mailing (69%); word of mouth (68%); local radio (65%); and *Info in Herefordshire* (62%).

4.2.4 Conversely, four media are considered by the majority to be of limited or no effectiveness, these being the Internet (62%); relevant agencies (50%); local Councillors or Parish Clerks (55%); and the Yellow Pages (52%).

PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF SPECIFIED MEDIA AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING TEAM SERVICES (ALL RESPONDENTS)							
	Very effective	Fairly effective	Total effective	Of limited effectiveness	Not at all effective	Total ineffective	Not provided
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Local newspapers	46	45	91	7	1	7	2
Herefordshire Matters	24	47	70	16	6	22	8
Direct mailing	39	30	69	16	8	24	7
Word of mouth	28	40	68	21	5	26	6
Local radio	26	39	65	24	5	29	6
Info in Herefordshire	15	47	62	21	5	27	11
Yellow Pages	9	29	38	36	16	52	10
Local Councillor/Parish Clerk	7	29	36	37	18	55	9
Agency	5	31	35	38	12	50	15
Internet	7	19	26	48	14	62	12
Unweighted bases = 415							

Importance of individual services

4.2.5 All respondents were further asked to rate the importance of seven services provided by the Private Sector Housing Team. Overall, all aspects of the work carried out by this unit is seen as valuable by the sample, with at least four in five rating each of the seven services as fairly or very important.

4.2.6 Particularly important is the adaptation of properties to allow disabled residents to remain in their own homes (96% rating fairly/very important); the improvement of

fire precautions within multi-occupancy buildings (95%), and the promotion of energy efficiency improvements to reduce fuel bills and pollution (93%).

4.2.7 The proportions of respondents rating any aspect of the Team’s work as being of limited or no importance is small, although at least one in ten do consider the repair of privately-rented properties (11%), the renovation of empty property for private renting (11%), and/or making owner-occupied properties fit to live in (10%) to be of limited or no importance.

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIED MEDIA AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING TEAM (ALL RESPONDENTS)							
	Very important	Fairly important	Important	Of limited importance	Of very little importance	Unimportant	Not provided
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Adaptation of properties to allow disabled persons to remain in their own homes	70	27	96	1	<0.5	1	2
Improving fire precautions within multi-occupancy properties	71	24	95	1	1	2	3
Promoting energy efficiency improvements for reducing fuel bills and pollution	57	37	93	3	<0.5	4	3
Improving home security	42	47	89	6	2	8	3
Making owner-occupied property fit to live in	58	29	87	7	3	10	3
Renovating empty property for private renting	47	39	85	9	2	11	4
Ensuring repair of privately-rented unfit properties	45	39	84	10	2	11	5
Unweighted bases = 415							

4.3 PRIORITIES IN COUNCIL GRANT ALLOCATION

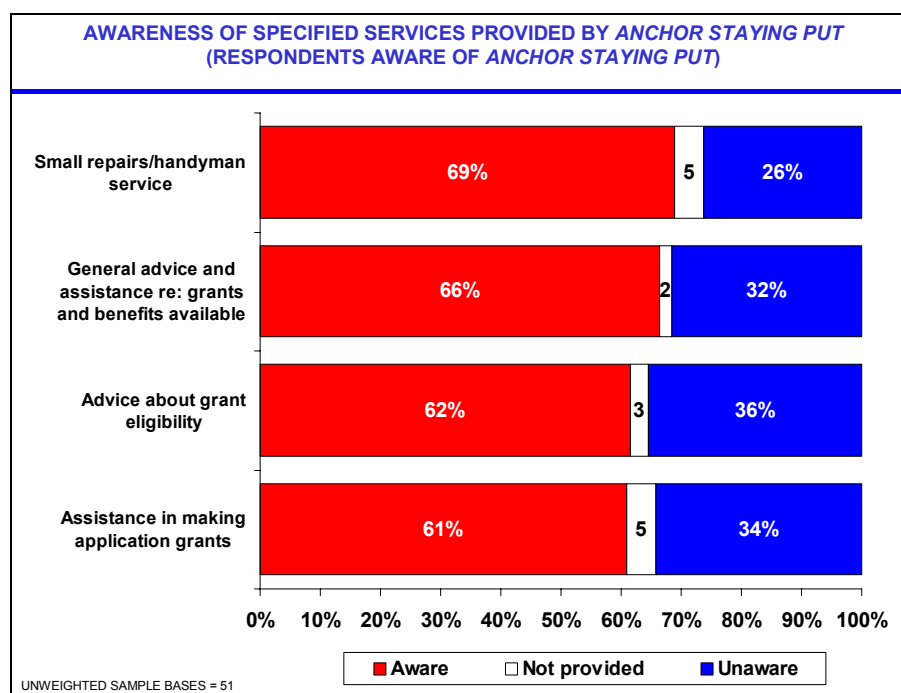
4.3.1 When allocating grants for housing maintenance or repairs, over nine in ten respondents (95%) consider it important for the Council to prioritise people with disabilities. Further, at least four in five highlight those from low-income households who are *not* in receipt of benefits (86%), and residents over the age of 60 (84%) as those that the Council should prioritise.

4.3.2 Conversely, the majority of respondents mention that it is of little or no importance for the Council to prioritise all landlords (74%), landlords who have one or two properties to let (71%), and/or anyone who requires housing repair work (51%).

PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE OF THE COUNCIL GIVING PRIORITY TO SPECIFIED GROUPS WHEN ALLOCATING GRANTS FOR HOME IMPROVEMENTS (ALL RESPONDENTS)							
	Very important	Fairly important	Important	Of limited importance	Of very little importance	Unimportant	Not provided
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
People with disabilities	65	30	95	2	<0.5	2	3
Low-income households not in receipt of income-related benefits	41	45	86	9	1	11	4
Anyone over the age of 60	41	43	84	12	2	14	2
Young families and those with dependent children	28	48	76	17	3	20	4
Low-income households in receipt of income-related benefits	26	48	74	20	3	23	4
Anyone who requires repair work	13	34	46	38	13	51	3
Landlords with just one or two properties to rent	3	22	25	49	23	71	4
All landlords	3	19	21	45	29	74	5
Unweighted bases = 415							

4.4 ANCHOR STAYING PUT

- 4.4.1 One in eight respondents (13%) have heard of *Anchor Staying Put*.
- 4.4.2 Of those respondents who have heard of *Anchor Staying Put*, over two-thirds are aware that they provide a small repairs or handyman service. A slightly smaller proportion are similarly aware that they provide general advice and assistance with regards to benefits and other help available.



- 4.4.3 Of those aware of *Anchor Staying Put*, almost three-quarters (74%) would find any of the services mentioned above useful to access in the future. In contrast, almost one-quarter (24%) would not find these services useful, whilst a small proportion (2%) fail to provide a response.

4.5 THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY CENTRE

- 4.5.1 A large minority of respondents (45%) have heard of the *Energy Efficiency Centre*. In contrast, 55% have not heard of this, whilst a small proportion (<0.5%) fail to provide a response.

5.0 SAFETY CAMERA UNIT

5.0.1 All respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with seven specified statements regarding the safety cameras installed on Herefordshire roads. All ratings are given on a five-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree.

5.0.2 Over four in five respondents (83%) agree that the use of safety cameras should be supported as a means to reduce casualties on the roads. Further, almost four in five (79%) agree that the primary aim of the cameras is to save lives. Generally, the perception of safety cameras is positive – few respondents (12%) think that there are too many cameras in the local area, whilst three-quarters (75%) do agree that fewer accidents are likely to occur where these cameras are installed.

AGREEMENT WITH SPECIFIED STATEMENTS REGARDING SAFETY CAMERAS (ALL RESPONDENTS)								
	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not provided
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
The use of safety cameras should be supported as a means to reduce casualties	56	27	83	10	3	3	6	1
The primary aim of safety cameras is to save lives	55	24	79	7	7	5	12	2
Dangerous drivers are more likely to get caught	45	31	76	11	6	5	11	3
Cameras are meant to encourage drivers to keep to the limits, not punish them	51	25	76	9	8	6	14	1
Fewer accidents are likely to happen where cameras are installed	43	32	75	13	8	2	10	2
Cameras are the best way of making money out of motorists	34	24	57	22	9	9	18	3
There are too many safety cameras in the local area	5	7	12	41	23	21	44	3
Unweighted bases = 415								