

Roberta Baker

From: Roots, Jane [jroots@csu.edu.au]
Sent: Saturday, 14 May 2011 11:37 PM
To: Indigo Shire
Cc: Shay Simpson
Subject: Comments on Council Plan 2011-14

To whom it may concern:

Overall, I think this proposed Council Plan is more succinct and focussed than the previous Plan and has kept /progressed on many of the objectives and actions that are of relevance (to me at any rate!).

I have three very brief comments

- It wasn't clear if there is an Economic Development Strategy already. The previous Council Plan had a Strategy/Goal under 3.3 to implement an Economic Development Strategy. There is now an action to implement an Economic Development Action Plan – is this the same thing? A 'wider Economic Development Strategy' is mentioned in another action further down. The hierarchy of Strategy & Action Plan wasn't clear to me.
- Under 4.3 protect & enhance the Shire's Natural environment, it would be good to see some reference to continuing to support the protection and enhancement of native vegetation through existing programs etc, such as partnerships with Trust for Nature and DSE conservation programs - linking in with support for private conservation (i.e rate rebates for covenants etc), as well as recognising and supporting the Shire's role and partnerships with DSE re: native vegetation protection related to stat planning permits and enforcement. I see this as an important part of promoting community understanding & involvement...
- Under 4.4 to include 'conservation' in the roadside management plan and perhaps add 'protection of significant roadside vegetation' in addition to enhanced weed control. This might include signage where appropriate.

Just a few thoughts.

Thank you

Jane

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18/05/2011



2011 Community Satisfaction Survey

Report

May 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year's survey indicates that two-thirds of respondents feel Council's overall performance in the last 12 months has been at an acceptable or high standard. Underpinning this result, as indicated by respondents, is recognition of Council's improved communication and engagement processes, higher levels of customer service and quicker response to issues. There is still room for improvement with about a third of respondents indicating some dissatisfaction with Council's overall performance.

More than 80 per cent of respondents said Council provided adequate information to the community, with two thirds of respondents preferring information via the Council's newsletter, followed by articles in local media and community forums.

About a third of respondents indicated the best way for Council to support local businesses in Indigo was through developing marketing initiatives to increase tourism, and another third felt Council should continue to attract more businesses to the Shire.

Improving pathways and extending rail trails rated highly with respondents, reflecting ongoing concerns. Respondents indicated a high level of involvement with their community and wanted increased recognition and support of volunteers.

Natural environment and landscape, community spirit, the rural lifestyle and heritage continued to be important aspects of why people loved living in Indigo Shire. Over 40 per cent of respondents rated highly the need for better weed management.

In the town planning area, there was a slight decrease in the percentage of people who believe this area needs a lot of improvement, although this continues to be an area for improvement.

Fifty nine per cent of respondents felt they had had adequate input into the planning and development of their local area. 174 of the survey respondents have identified that they would be happy to participate in further discussion about the survey results.

The survey indicates positive trends in many areas of Council's delivery of services. Council will need to maintain its focus on these areas, while placing a greater emphasis on those areas identified for improvement.

Introduction

This report is a summary of the results gathered during the 2011 Indigo Community Survey that was conducted between February and March 2011. The original Indigo Community Survey was conducted in 2009 as part of a community engagement process to help Council formulate the Indigo Shire Council Plan 2009-12. In addition to the survey, which was designed to gather residents' ideas, a series of community-driven 'dinner table conversations' in the five major towns was also conducted. This process, designed and driven by the community, shared a Local Government Professionals (LGPro) award in 2009. The award is recognition of the valuable contribution residents made to the Council Plan process. The theme of that award, *A Place at the Table*, was taken into other community engagement processes, in particular Community Forums after monthly Council Meetings. During 2010, the numbers of people attending Community Forums has almost doubled. Council's Community Strengthening Project is being rolled out across the Shire and is having a direct positive impact as more people become involved.

Last year in 2010, Council conducted a follow-up survey, which was also repeated this year with minor adjustments to reflect input from last year's survey. Council received 673 responses to the 2011 survey, more than twice as many as in 2010. Surveys were included in the February mailout of the *Indigo Informer* newsletter, and were available online via Survey Monkey. There were 562 hard copies returned, and 111 responses via Survey Monkey.

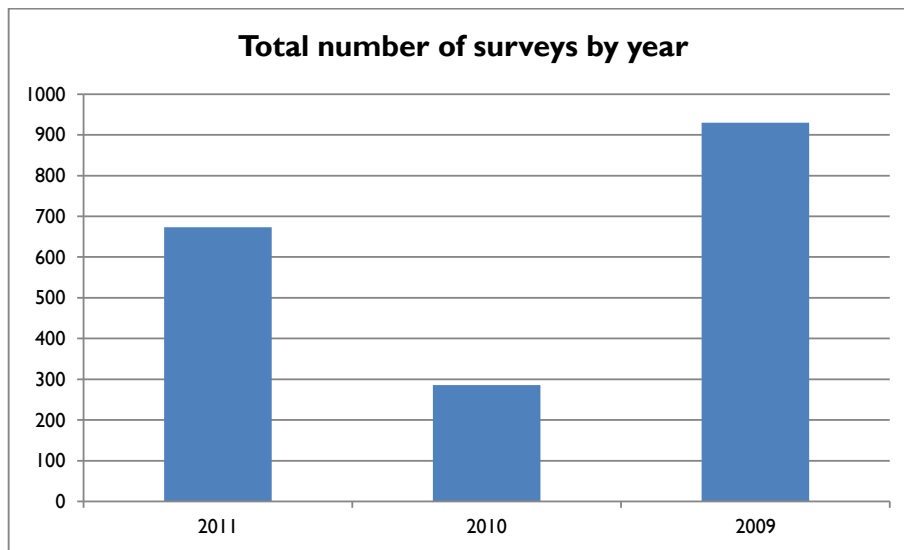


Figure 1: Indigo Community Survey 2011 – Number of responses compared with 2009 and 2010

Each section of this summary report incorporates the most essential information gathered in the survey responses.

A feature of this report is that it compares the results with the 2009 and 2010 Indigo Community Surveys. This gives Council an insight into how the Indigo community's perception has changed over the last two years and how, in many cases, priorities have remained the same.

In general, the survey indicates positive trends in many areas of Council's communication and delivery of key services. However, the need for further improvement has also been expressed.

Demographics

Of the 673 respondents, 54% were aged between 50 and 70 years old. This age bracket also attracted the highest response rate in previous years. Only 12% of the survey respondents were under the age of 40.

60% of respondents (similar to previous years) and 40% were male.

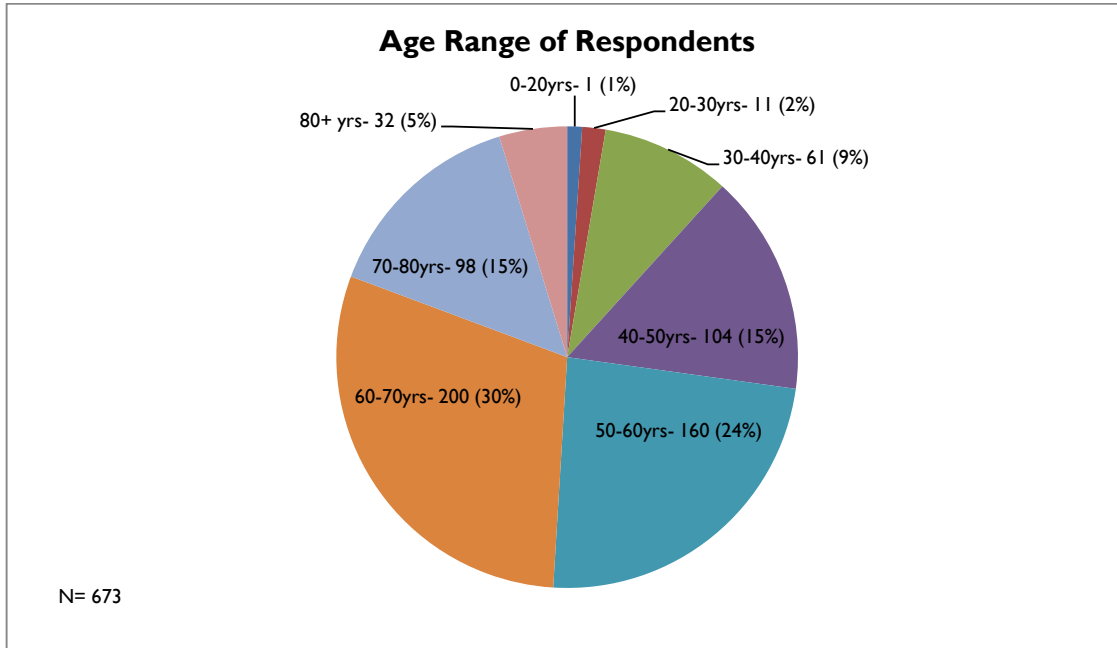


Figure 2: Age breakdown of survey respondents- 2011

Many Shire communities were represented in the survey. 340 (51%) of the responses came from the Beechworth/Stanley area, which is similar to the previous surveys.

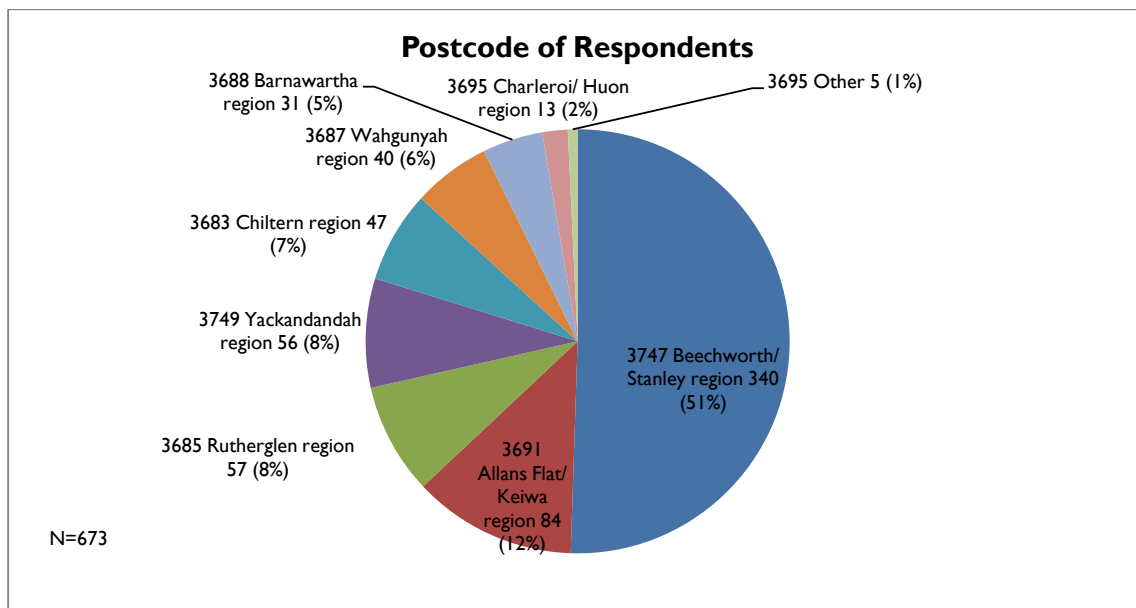


Figure 3: Respondents postcodes - 2011

What do you like?

Respondents were asked what they liked most about Indigo. *Natural environment and landscape, community spirit, the rural lifestyle and heritage* continued to be important aspects of why people loved living in Indigo Shire.

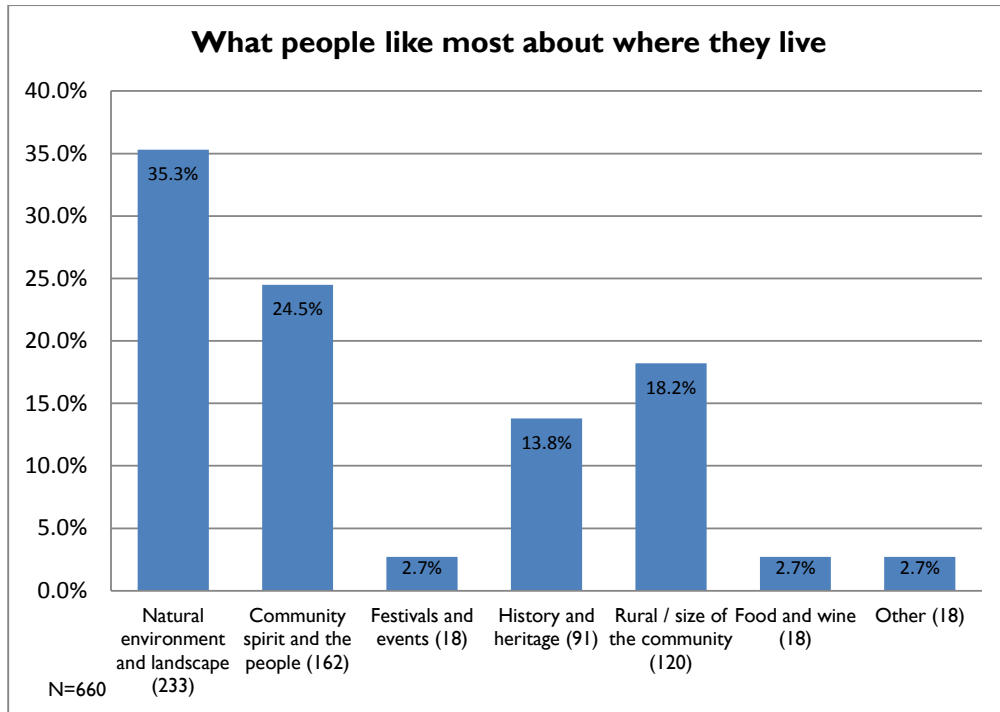


Figure 4: What people like best about living in Indigo by % - 2011

As in 2009 (29%) and 2010 (33%), the *Natural environment and landscape* is what residents like most about living in Indigo in 2011 with a 35% (233) response. Similarly, *Community spirit and the people* is the second highest characteristic being selected at 24.5% (162) in 2011, (28% in 2010 and 12.5% in 2009).

Council Performance and Improvement

Respondents were asked how they thought Indigo Shire Council was performing in the areas of communication, innovation, addressing issues and customer service. As in previous years, the majority of residents *agree* with Council's performance in the areas raised in this question.

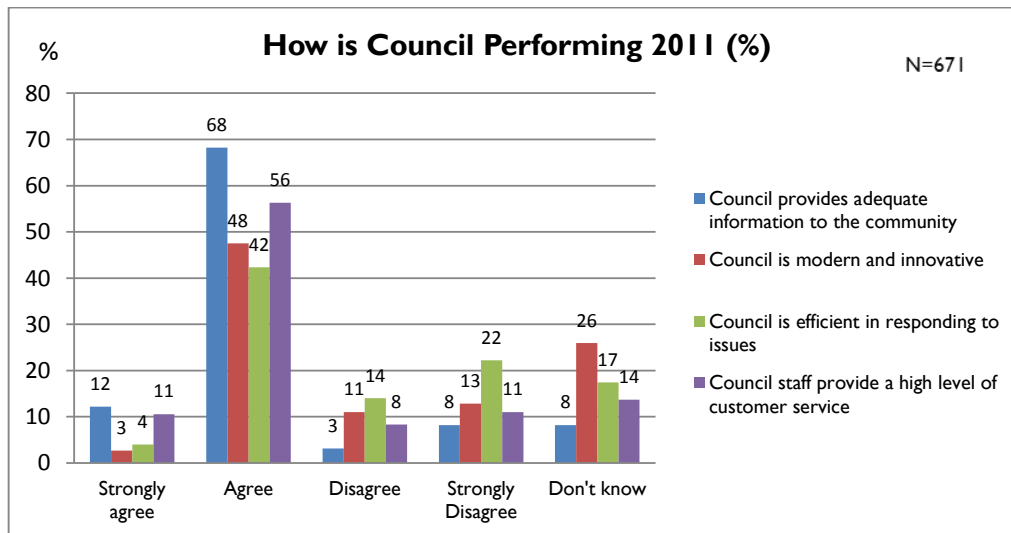


Figure 5: Overall performance across the 4 questions - 2011

The scale used in the same questions between 2009, 2010 and 2011 was slightly different and a direct comparison cannot be made between the three years. The strongest performing area is Council provides adequate information to the community with 80% (540 respondents) selecting strongly agree or agree.

Dealings with Council

A total of 245 (38%) respondents said their dealings with Council had improved over the last 12 months, a slight increase in percentage terms on the 2010 results (36%). 206 (32%) said no, 196 (30%) had no contact and 26 did not answer this question.

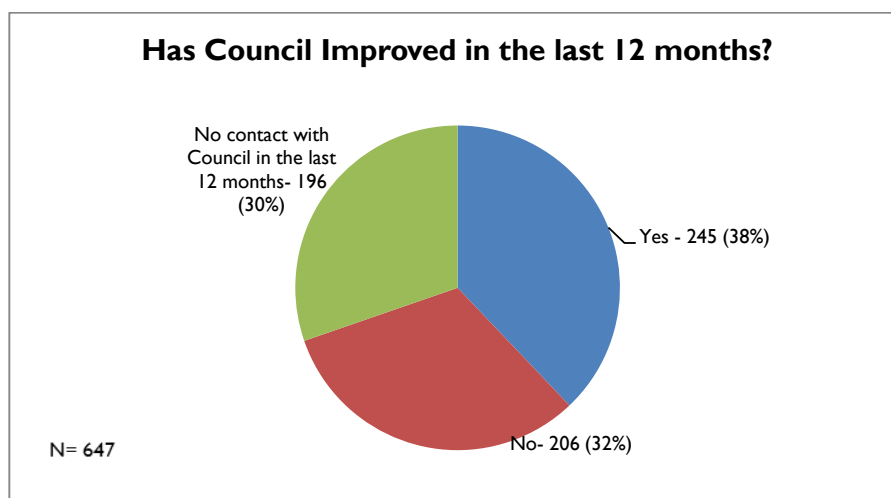


Figure 6: Council improvement by percentage – 2011

There were 299 additional comments in response to this question. Of these comments, 16 (6%) said it was the same and 131 (44%) provided positive comments that included, “A wonderful ‘can do’, cooperative attitude and pleasant manner across the board. Well done” And “When I moved back into the area they were very helpful in assisting me to settle back into the region.” A range of positive comments was also received on the way Council staff had responded to the floods, including the public forums to discuss the issues. On a negative note, 85 or (28%) provided comments that response times to phone calls and emails were longer than expected.

Communication

Respondents were asked to select the best way in which Council could communicate with them. The *Information with rates notices/ Indigo Informer* were ranked the highest with 393 (61%) respondents indicating it was the most effective means of communication. This was followed by providing *information in the local newspapers* 120 (19%) and *community forums* 65 (10%).

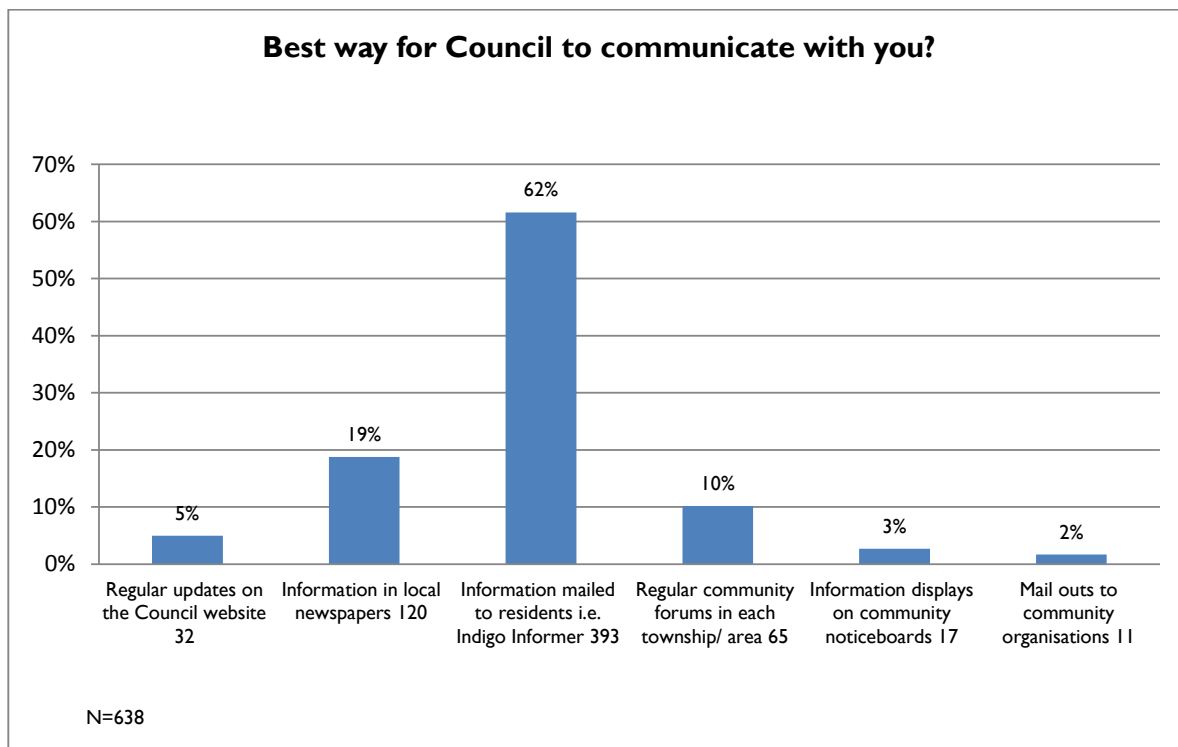


Figure 7: The best way for Council to communicate by % - 2011

Mailouts of the *Indigo Informer* was the most effective communication tool in 2009 as well. Additional comments in this section suggested that Council could make better use of email and Facebook and that Council should continue to use a range of communication tools.

Council website

The survey results showed that respondents do not yet see the Council website as a major form of communication; in Figure 7 above, only 5% said it was the best way for Council to communicate with them. 241 (44%) do not visit the Council's website. A total of 241 (37%) said they used the website to gather information but 124 (19%) did not have access to the internet.

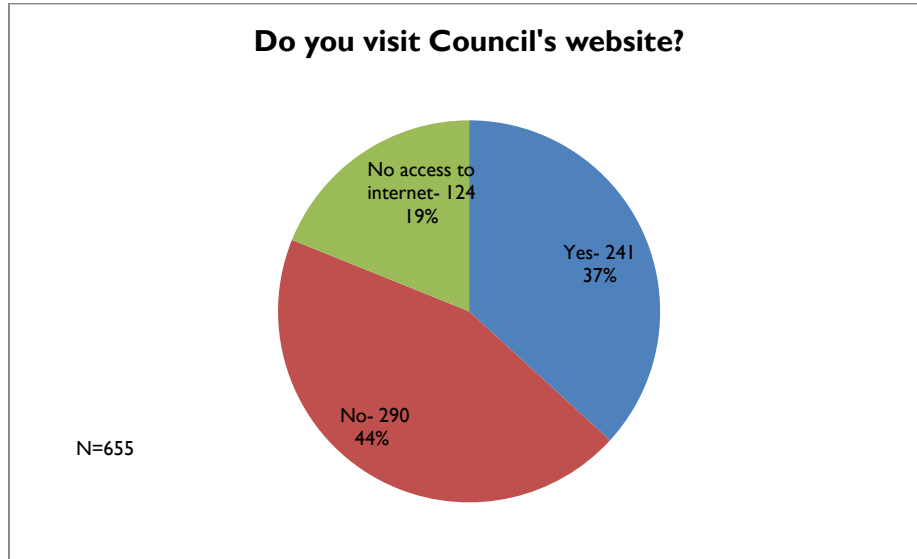


Figure 8: Use of website by % - 2011

Council Services

Respondents were asked to rank their level of satisfaction with the delivery of the following services:

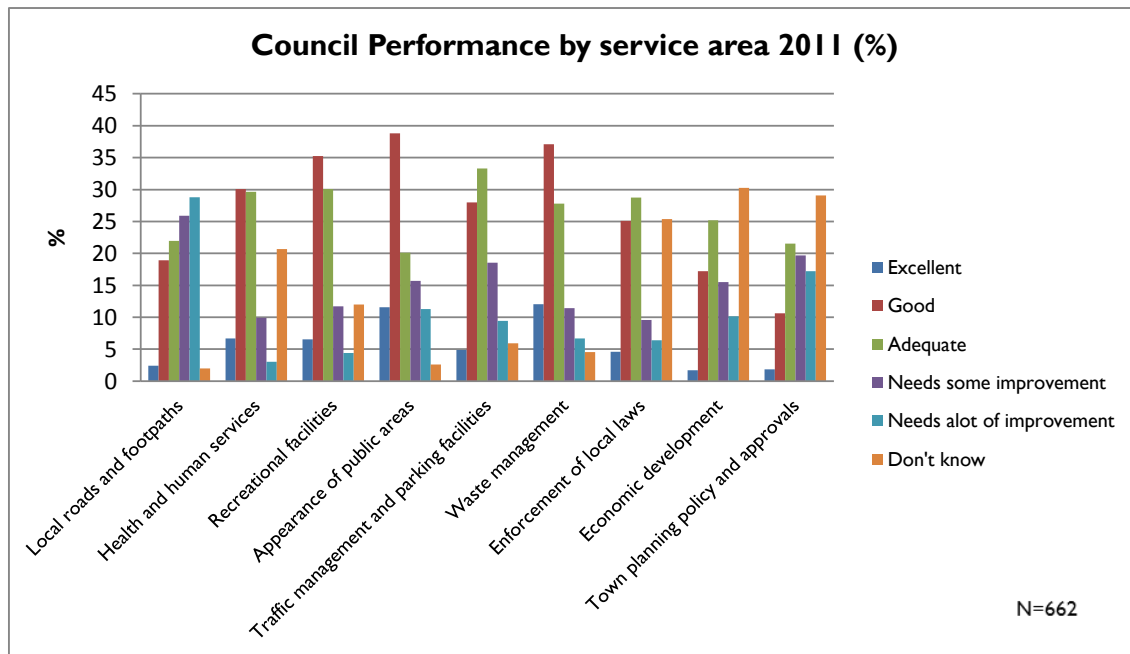


Figure 9: Council performance by service area - 2011

The following graphs compare the three annual Council surveys by service area. All of the results in the following graphs are presented as a percentage which also includes the labels provided within the columns.

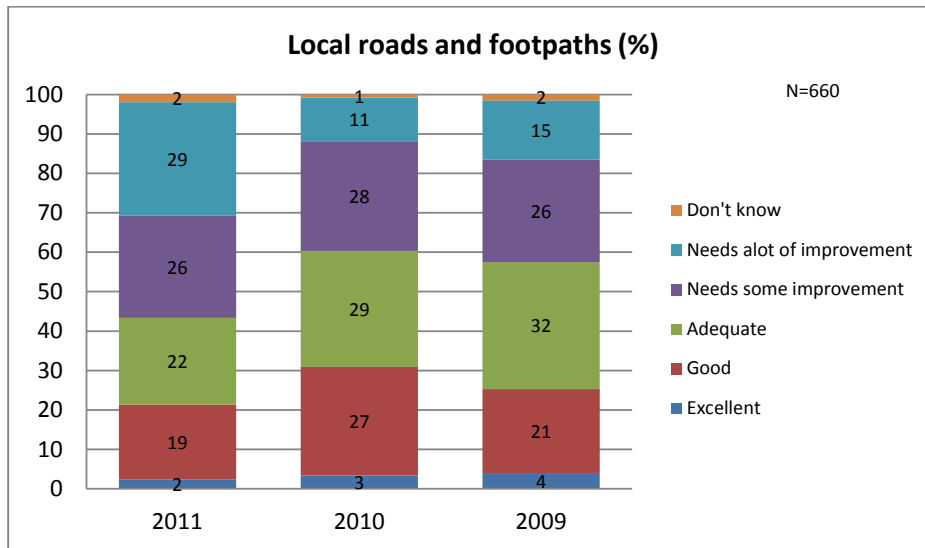


Figure 10: Feedback about local roads and footpaths- comparison by year

Results for *Local roads and footpaths* indicate that satisfaction has declined since 2009 and 55% said in 2011 said that there is *need for some or a lot of improvement*. Only 19% said that the service provided was *good*. Some of the additional comments touched on the recent flooding and the damage caused during the storms last year.

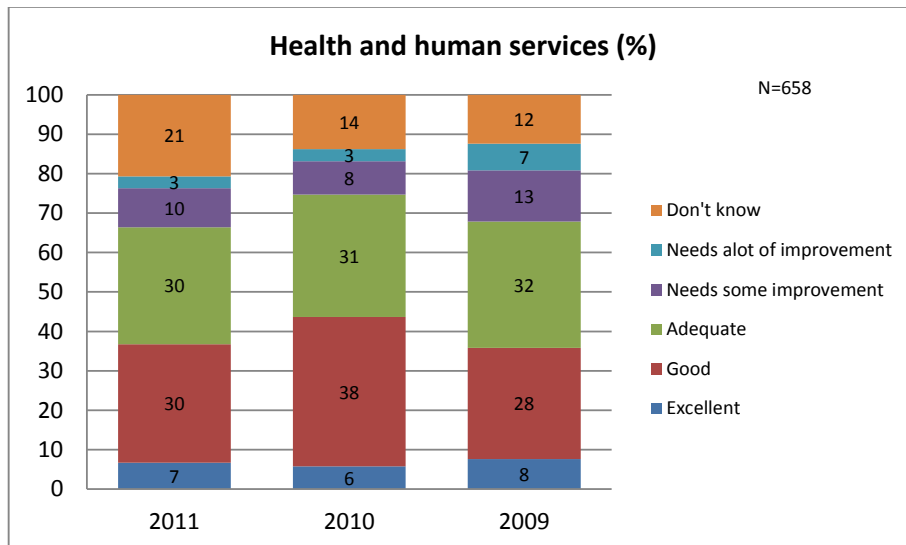


Figure 11: Feedback about health and human services- comparison by year

In 2011, 60% believe the service is either good or adequate which is a slight decrease from 69% in 2010. While 21% in 2011 said they did not know.

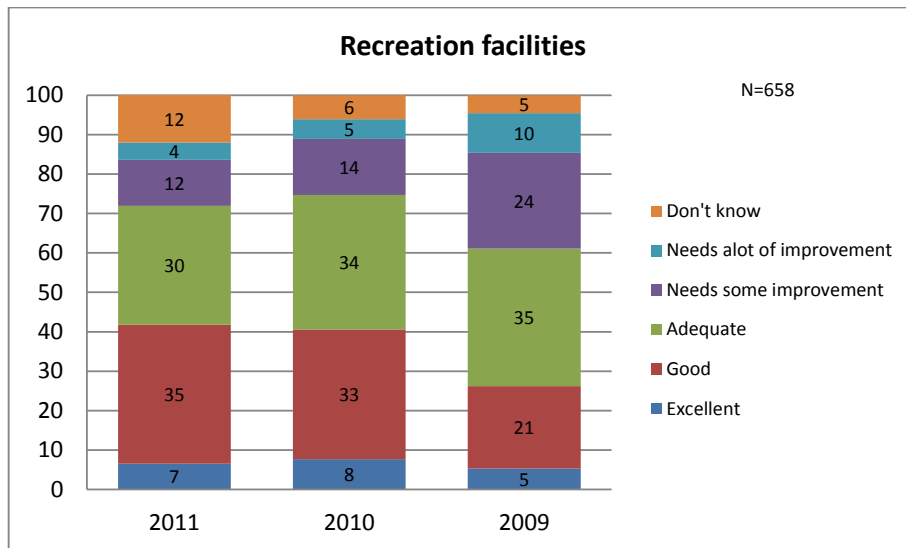


Figure 12: Feedback about recreation facilities- comparison by year

Responses in relation to the *good* and *adequate* attributes is relatively stable, with 65% in 2011 and 67% in 2010, with a higher 12% of people indicating they did not know in 2011.

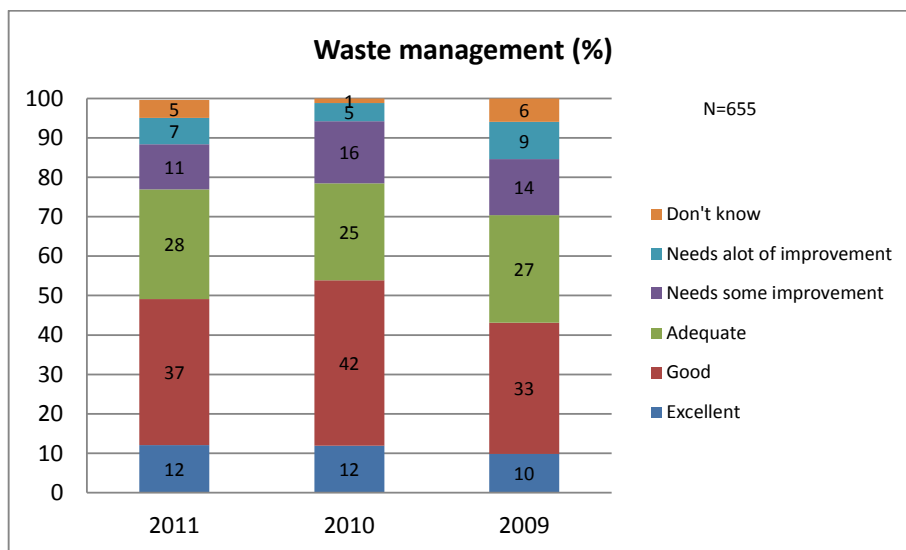


Figure 13: Feedback about waste management- comparison by year

The results for Waste management remain fairly stable. There were negative comments about the lack of hard waste collections, which has been commented on each year, and that tip fees are too high. In 2011, 77% rated the service as adequate or better.

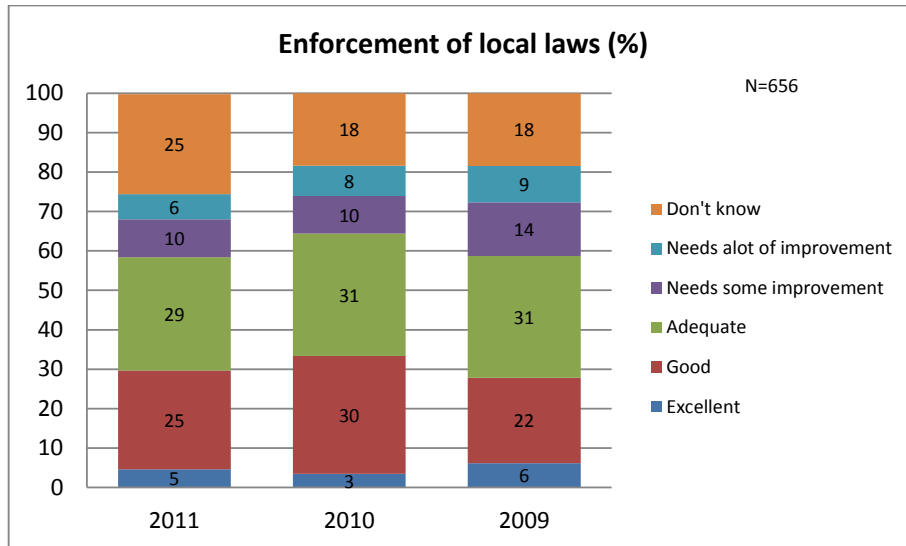


Figure 14: Feedback about enforcement of local laws- comparison by year

Results for Enforcement of Local Laws showed a slight contraction in the combined *good* and *adequate* attributes, combined results in 2011 was 54% where in 2010 it was 61%. There was a higher percentage (25%) of *Don't know* responses.

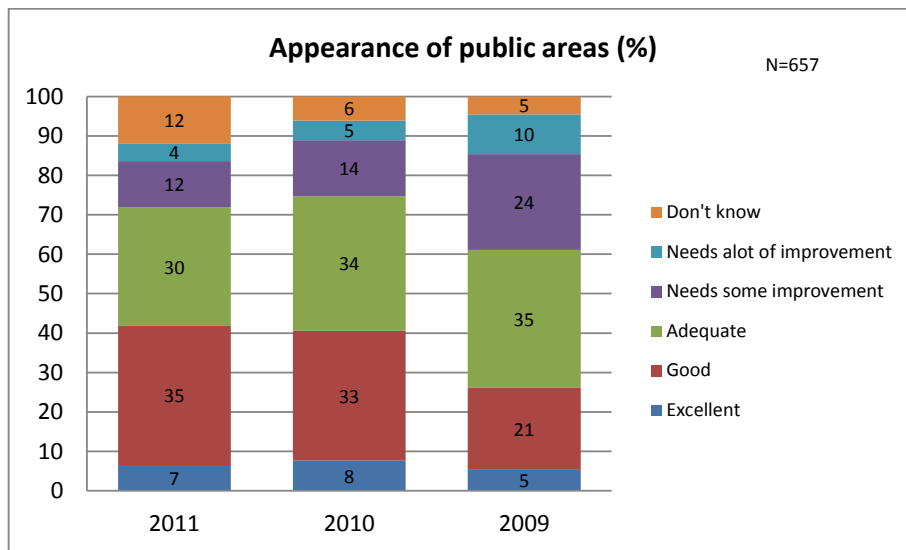


Figure 15: Feedback about appearance of public areas- comparison by year

72% of respondents rated the appearance of public areas as *adequate* or *better*, a slight decrease on 2010 where it was 75%. However, there was a reduction in the % of people who rated this area in need of some or a lot of improvement, down to 16% combined percentage in 2011 as compared with 19% in 2010 and 34% in 2009.

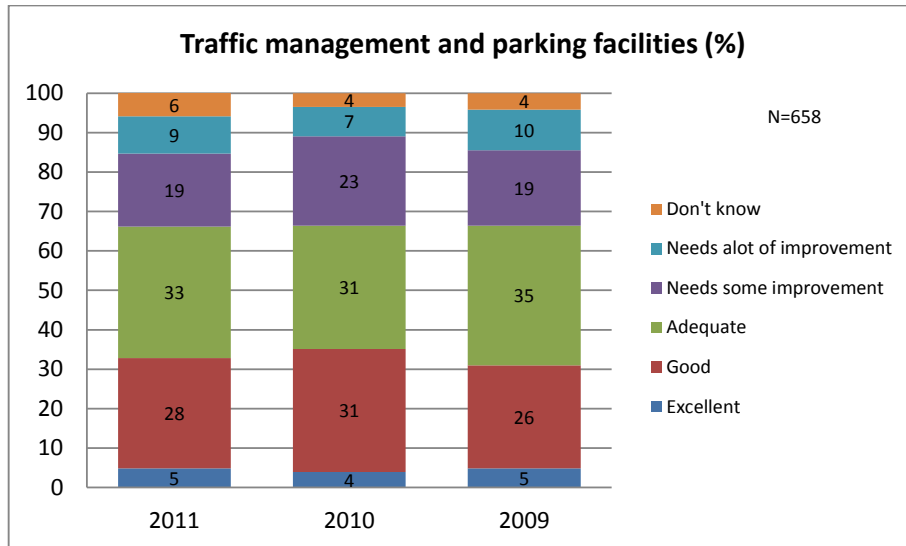


Figure 16: Feedback about traffic management and parking facilities- comparison by year

Results have been consistent across the three surveys, for traffic management and parking facilities.

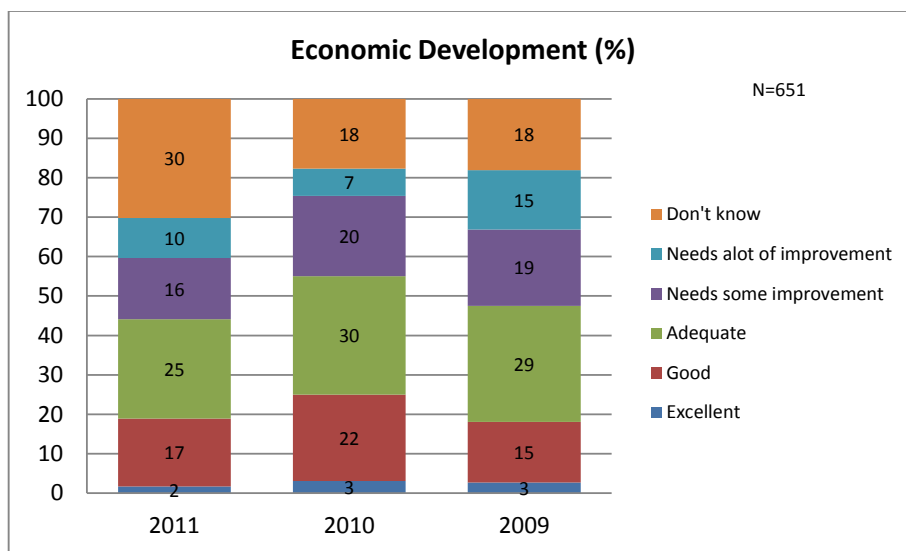


Figure 17: Feedback about economic development- comparison by year

There was a decrease in satisfaction where 44% rated economic development as adequate or better in 2011 as compared with 55% in 2010 and 47% in 2009. There was a higher percentage (30%) of *don't know* responses from previous years.

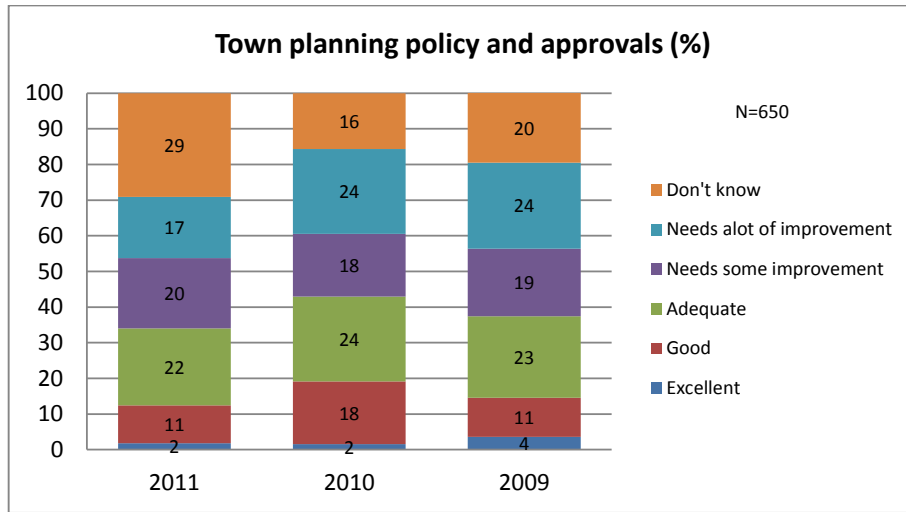


Figure 18: Feedback about town planning policy and approvals- comparison by year

There is some variance between the three surveys. There is a marked increase in the percentage of people who answered *don't know* (29%), with a slight contraction 17% in 2011 as compared with 24% in previous years, in the percentage of people who believe this area *needs a lot of improvement*.

Overall Council performance

In this survey we asked a new question, "Overall, across all areas of responsibility in the last 12 months, how do you feel Council has performed?"

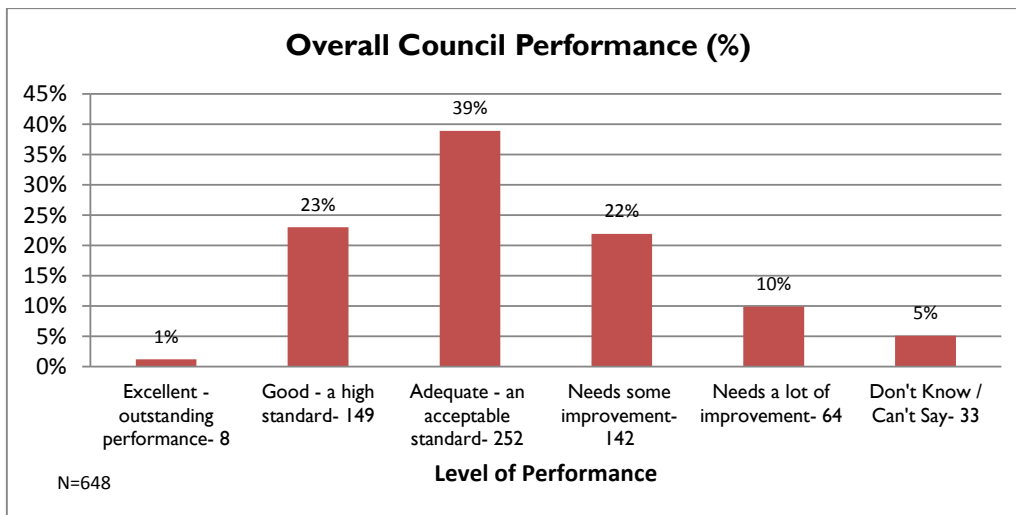


Figure 19: Overall Council performance - 2011

409 (63%) of respondents said that Council was providing an *adequate, good or excellent* service. 33 (5%) said they don't know and 142 (22%) and 64 (32%) thought this area *needs some improvement* or a *lot of improvement*. There were 221 additional comments, which were wide ranging, including:

- More outdoor staff
- Better representation of all towns, not just Beechworth
- Better drainage and infrastructure
- Building and planning procedures too difficult or slow

Economic Development

Respondents were asked how Council could best support local business.

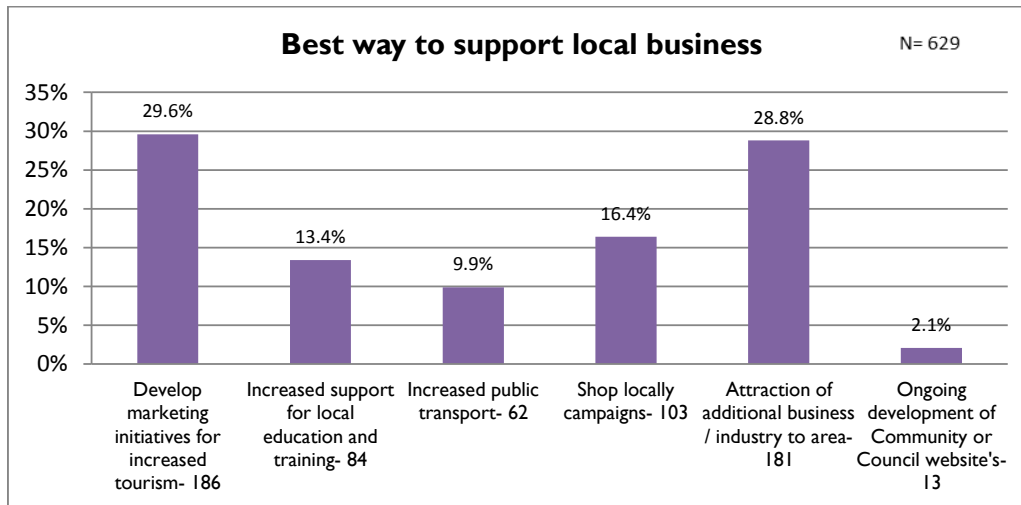


Figure 20: The best way to support local business by % - 2011

The results were a little different to the two previous surveys, where the response rate for each method was similar. In the 2011 survey, there was an increase in the percentage of residents who would like increased marketing initiatives for tourism and the attraction of additional business/ industry to the local area.

Key characteristics

Respondents were asked what they would like to see preserved and enhanced in Indigo:

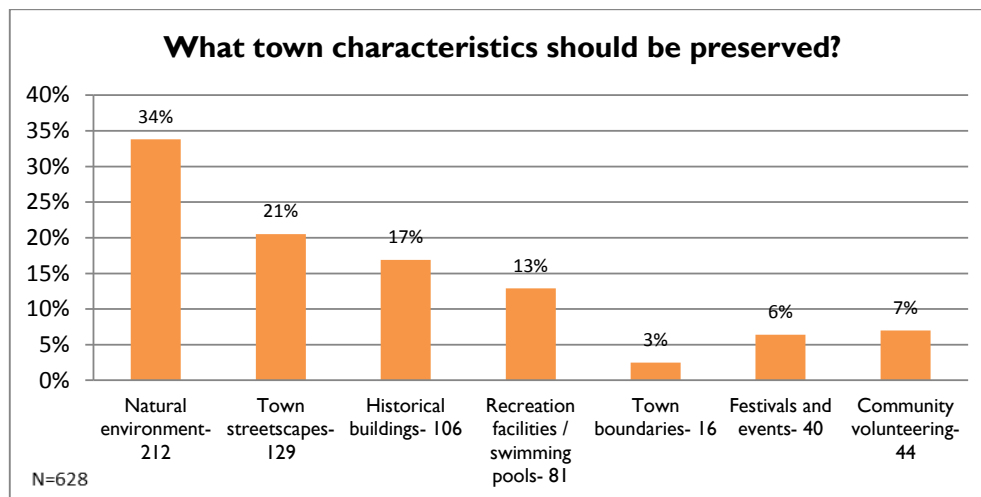


Figure 21: Town characteristics that need to be preserved by % - 2011

As is the case in the *What do you like about where you live* question and the two previous surveys, *Natural environment* is ranked the highest here with 212 (34%) followed by *Town Streetscapes* with 129 (21%). In this instance, the community wants to preserve and enhance what they believe is an important characteristic that makes them want to live in Indigo and attract tourists visit.

Pathways

Walking trails and cycling paths were identified as an important priority for the community in the 2009 survey. In 2010 a specific question was designed to identify the specific pathway options. In 2011, respondents were asked again to select the most important pathway priority:

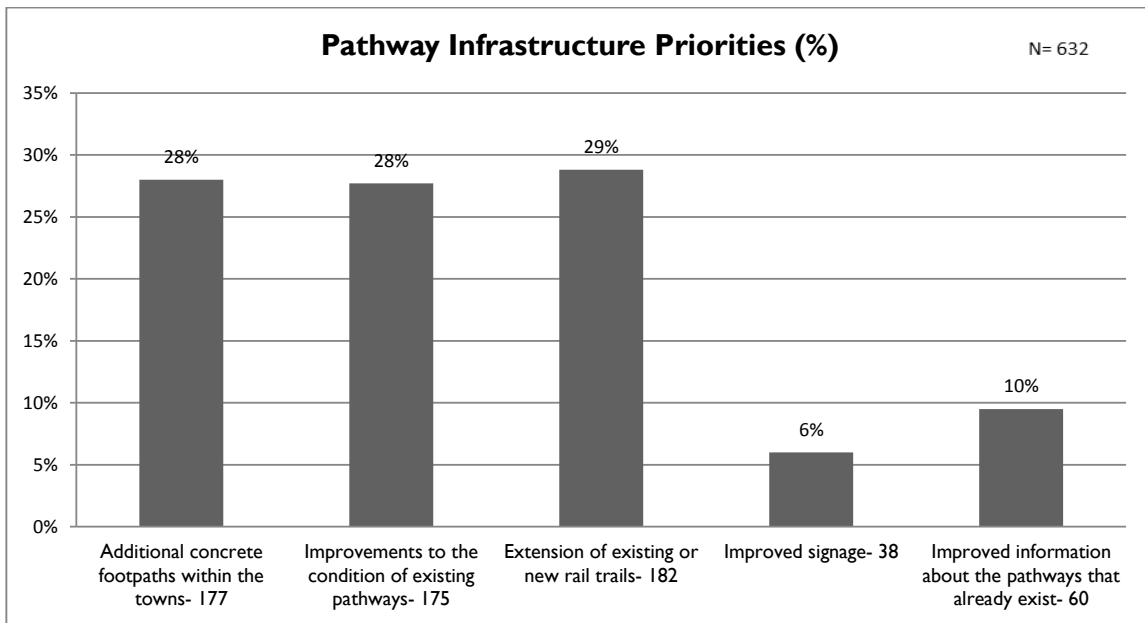


Figure 22: Pathway infrastructure projects by % - 2011

The results in 2010 were fairly consistent for all pathway priorities, however this year signage and information was not rated as highly. Additional comments included some strong comments about specific missing footpaths within towns and also the condition of existing footpaths.

Environment

In 2011, 333 (53%) selected yes which is a slight decrease on 2010 by percentage where 56% selected yes. Respondents continue to believe Council is environmentally aware and proactive in protecting the natural environment, although 214 (34%) said they were unsure.

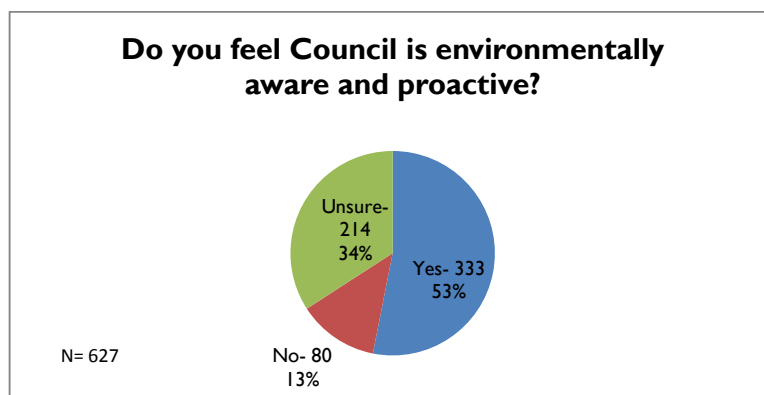


Figure 23: Council is environmentally aware and proactive

A number of environmental initiatives were identified in previous surveys. This year, respondents were asked to select their most important initiative.

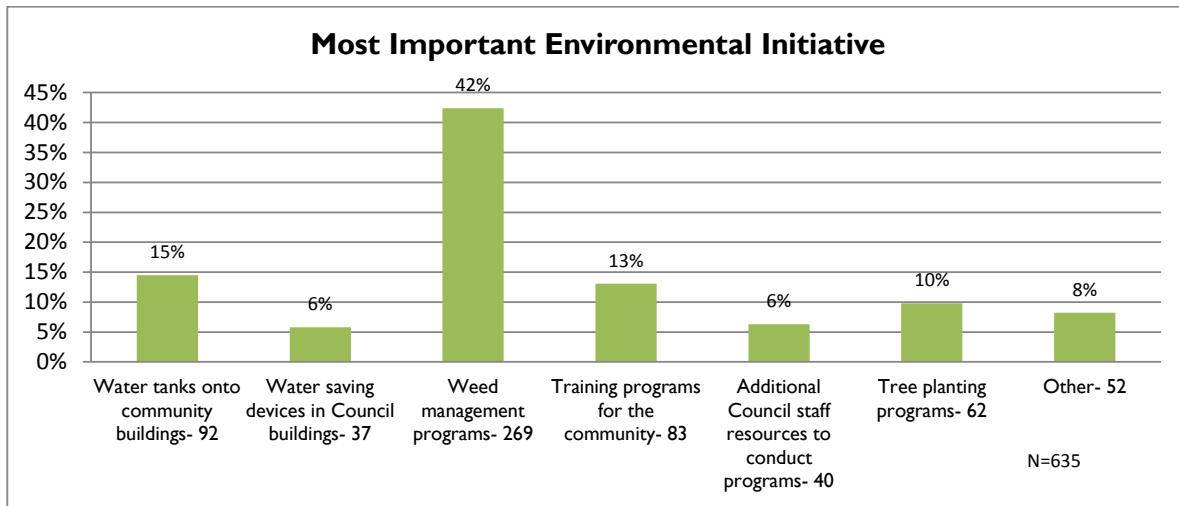


Figure 24: The most important environmental initiatives by % - 2011

In the 2010 survey, respondents identified *Water tanks on community buildings* as the most important priority, followed by *Weed management* and *Water saving devices in Council buildings*. The most important priority in the 2011 survey is the implementation of *weed management programs* with 269 responses (42%).

Community participation

Respondents were asked to answer a series of questions on their participation in the community.

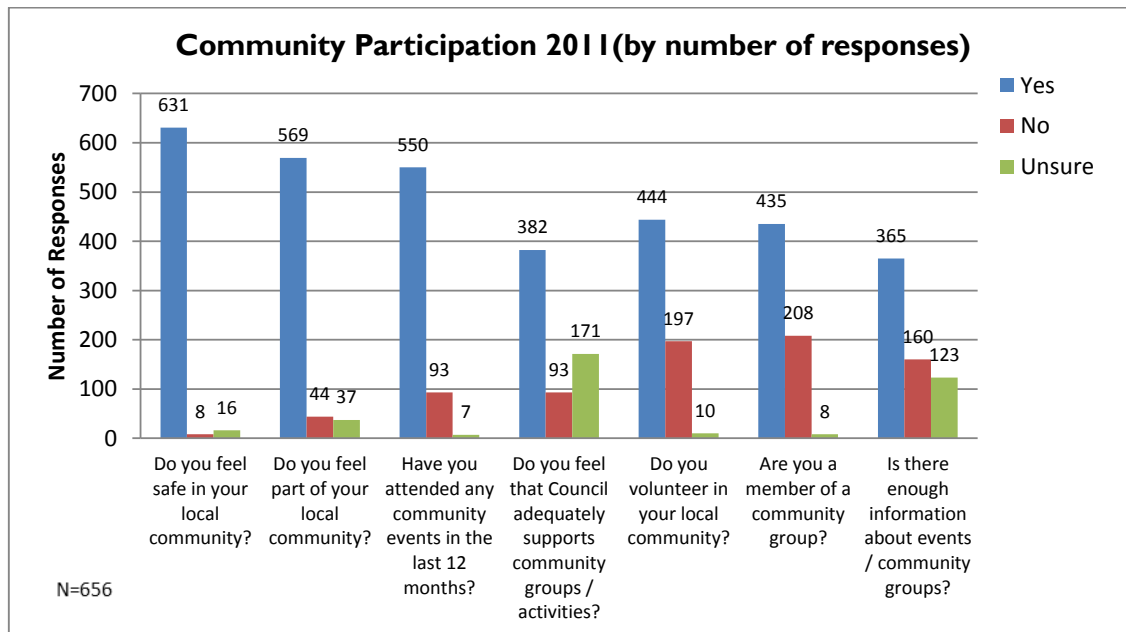


Figure 25: Community participation - 2011

To compare with the 2010 survey results, the graph of results has been included below.

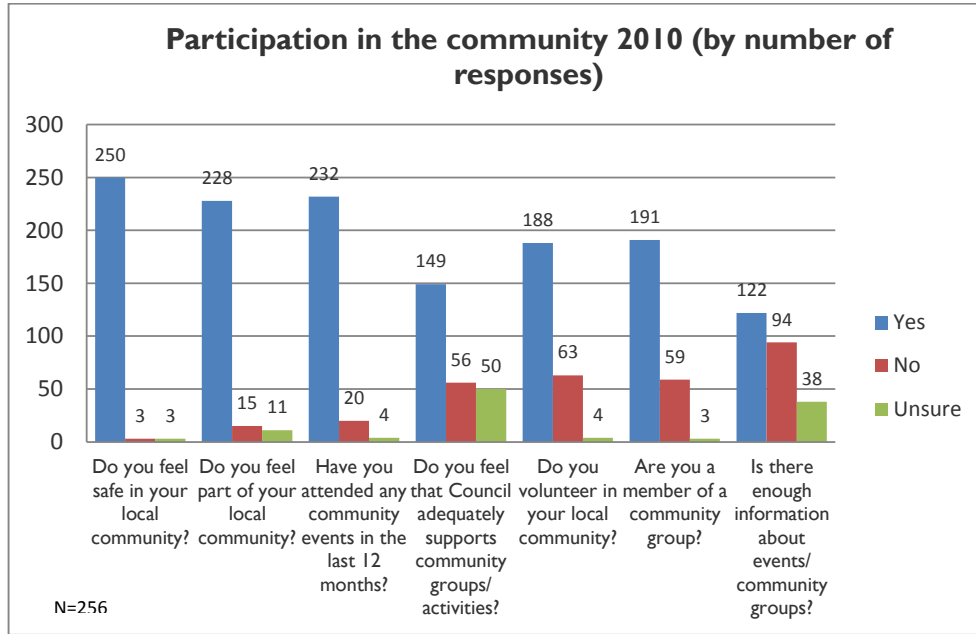


Figure 26: Community participation - 2010

Generally, the results across the two years are similar, and follow similar results in the 2009 survey.

Best strategy to encourage community participation

183 (29%) respondents indicated the need to *increase the recognition of volunteers in the community* as the best way to encourage participation in the community. In 2010, respondents also ranked this as their first priority. In 2009, this strategy was ranked fourth at just over 11%. This year, 158 (25%) people ranked *Maintaining an electronic community directory* next with 125 (20%) choosing *Conducting information sessions about volunteering options* after that.

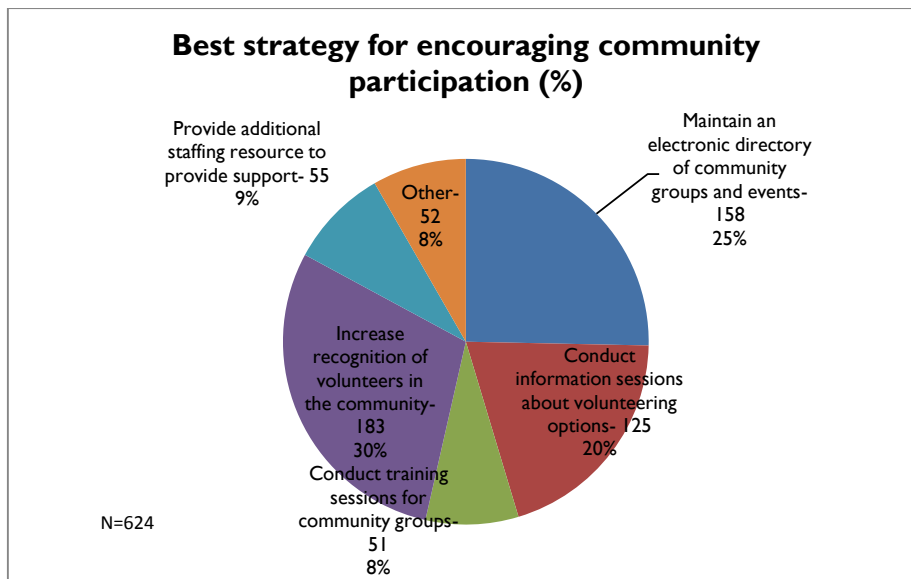


Figure 27: The best strategies for improving community participation by % - 2011

Additional comments from respondents suggest ways to recognise volunteers. Comments also include the need to circulate information in hard copy format and via the post or newspapers, as people do not have access to the internet. The Council's Community Strengthening Project was mentioned in the comments as a positive program.

Culture and Heritage

Culture and Heritage has been identified in previous surveys as fundamental to the Indigo community. Respondents were asked to identify the best way to retain culture and heritage elements in their community. Of most importance is the *town streetscapes* (28%) and *protection of the historical buildings* (24%).

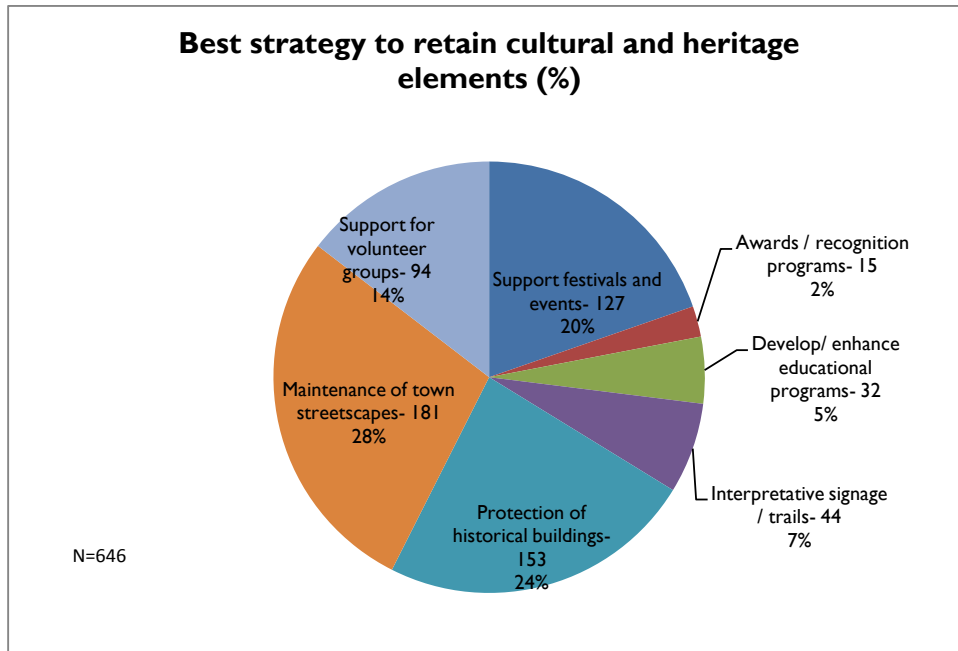


Figure 28: The best strategies for retaining cultural and heritage elements by % - 2011

Input into your local area

A new question was incorporated into the survey this year, *In the last 12 months, do you feel that you have had adequate opportunity to have input into the planning for and development of your local area?*

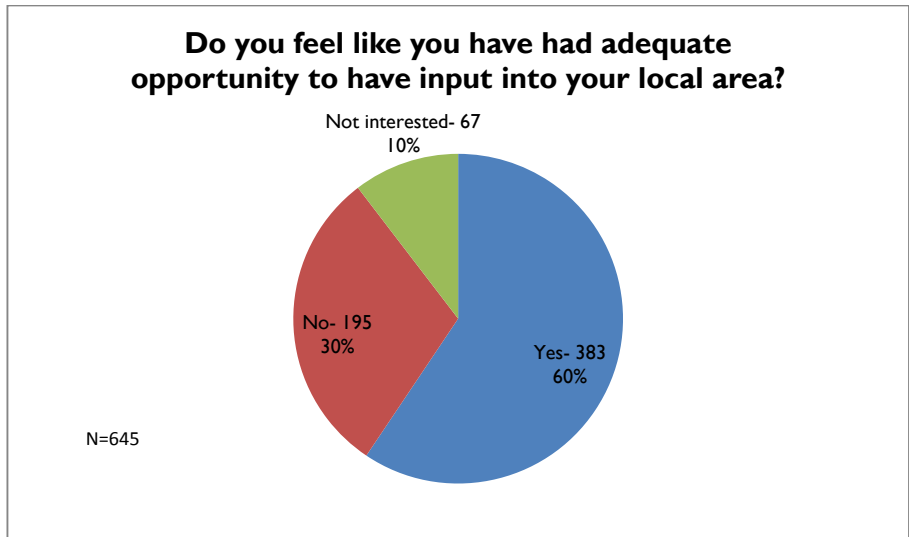


Figure 29: Community input by % - 2011

Following the graph for input into your local area, 383 respondents (59%) felt they have had *adequate* opportunity to provide input. Additional comments include that it is important to feed information back to the community about action taken as a result of forum discussions and also the results of the annual Community Survey.