

BUDGET PRIORITIES 2009/2010

Results from Recent Surveys

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Table of Contents | 2 |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| 1.1 Background | 3 |
| 1.2 Panel make-up | 3 |
| 2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 5 |
| 2.1 Wiltshire Place Survey | 5 |
| 2.2 Wiltshire People's Voice | 5 |
| 2.3 Budget Consultation Events | 5 |
| 3 RESULTS | 6 |
| 3.1 Wiltshire Place Survey | 6 |
| 3.1.1 Most Important | 6 |
| 3.1.2 Most Needs Improving | 8 |
| 3.1.3 Satisfaction with Council Services | 11 |
| 3.1.4 Providing Value for Money | 12 |
| 3.2 Wiltshire People's Voice | 14 |
| 3.2.1 Satisfaction with Services | 14 |
| 3.2.2 Spending More or Less on Council Services | 16 |
| 3.2.3 Spending More or Less on Council Services – Scoring | 18 |
| 3.3 Budget Consultation Events | 20 |
| 4 CONCLUSIONS | 22 |

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The following report looks in detail at the results of a number of recent consultations which have looked into public attitudes towards Council services, gathered priorities for improvements and consulted on changes in spending on those services. Results are gathered from the Wiltshire Place Survey 2008, the People's Voice December 2008 survey and from a series of budget consultation events held throughout Wiltshire in autumn 2008.

The Wiltshire Place Survey was carried out on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government as a way of collecting performance data on a number of partner organisations including county and district councils, fire, police and health services. The survey ran from October to mid-December 2008 and collected over 3,500 responses from Wiltshire residents.

The People's Voice is a panel of around 3,850 Wiltshire residents. This panel is sent questionnaires 3 or 4 times per year looking at subjects based on services provided by a number of different partner organisations, including county and district councils, fire, police and health. The December '08 survey asked about satisfaction with a detailed list of services to be provided by the new Wiltshire Council then went on to ask about priorities for spending on the same list of services.

Wiltshire County Council Finance Team annually hold a series of events where members of the public, parish councils and other organisations are invited to listen to presentations about the council budget for the forthcoming year and take part in consultation exercises to help decide priorities for the new budget. This year, attendees were asked to fill out a voting card giving their priorities for where they would like to see more money being spent on council services. These voting cards were also distributed at a number of other public events and to other organisations and groups over the autumn.

1.2 Panel make-up

The Wiltshire Place Survey was mailed to 3,500 Wiltshire residents at random. As required by central government, 2 reminders were sent to those non-respondents. After these 2 reminders 1,782 responses were received. It is these results that will be submitted to government. As a way of boosting this number and to allow sufficient detail within each Community Area, a further 6,000 questionnaires were posted out at random to a different sample of Wiltshire residents. This sample did not follow the above methodology and no reminders were sent to them. Results from this in-house sample will not be submitted to government but will be used for internal monitoring only. By mid-December, when this survey closed, a total of 3,557 responses were received from both samples. Results quoted in this report are from the two samples combined,

therefore figures quoted here may be different from those given as Performance Indicators, etc given in future reports.

The People's Voice panel consisted of 3,817 people as at December 2008. Panellists are from all community areas in Wiltshire. The aim is to have around 200 active panellists per community area. The survey was sent out during the first week of December 2008. By the 7th of January 2009, when the survey data was received, 1,958 responses had been received. This gave a response rate of 51.3%, which is commonly received from People's Voice panellists and is higher than many other surveys achieve.

Approximately 142 people attended the 7 different budget consultations and returned voting cards. Several hundred cards were further distributed around the county at other public events to a range of organisations and groups. In total 616 voting cards were received from a wide range of organisations and age groups living in all parts of Wiltshire.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Wiltshire Place Survey

Results from the Wiltshire Place Survey showed the attributes that are most important in making somewhere a good place to live where most commonly chosen to be:

- The level of crime (57.2% of respondents choosing this)
- Health services (56.8% of respondents choosing this)
- Access to nature (40.8% of respondents choosing this)

Still thinking about the same list of attributes, respondents said that those most in need of improvement in their local area were:

- Road & pavement repairs (51.8% of respondents choosing this)
- Activities for teenagers (46.9% of respondents choosing this)
- The level of traffic congestion (39.9% of respondents choosing this)

When asked how satisfied they were with council services, the highest levels of satisfaction were for:

- Refuse collection (77.3% saying satisfied)
- Local tips / household recycling centres (76.5% saying satisfied)
- Libraries (75.9% saying satisfied)

Thinking about Wiltshire County Council and their local district council:

- 31.6% agree that they provide good value for money

2.2 Wiltshire People's Voice

Results from the People's Voice survey of December 2008 show that the council services that receive the greatest levels of public satisfaction are:

- Public libraries (83.2% saying satisfied)
- Household refuse collection (78.4% saying satisfied)
- Recycling centres and waste disposal (74.6% saying satisfied)

The services that received the highest levels of dissatisfaction were:

- Maintenance of existing roads (69.4% saying dissatisfied)
- Traffic management (39.2% saying dissatisfied)
- New roads and road improvements (37.9% saying dissatisfied)

The services that people want to spend more on are:

- Maintenance of existing roads (72.0% saying spend more)
- Adult social care services for older people (48.4% saying spend more)
- Community safety & reduction in anti-social behaviour (44.4% saying spend more)

2.3 Budget Consultation Events

Having collated over 600 voting cards via budget consultation evenings and other events, budget priorities were given as:

- Schools & other services for children
- Social Services
- Community safety

3 RESULTS

3.1 Wiltshire Place Survey

3.1.1 Most Important

The Wiltshire Place Survey asked respondents to think about the things they thought were most important in making somewhere a good place to live. They were asked to choose their 5 most important attributes from a long list provided. The chart below shows the proportion of respondents choosing each

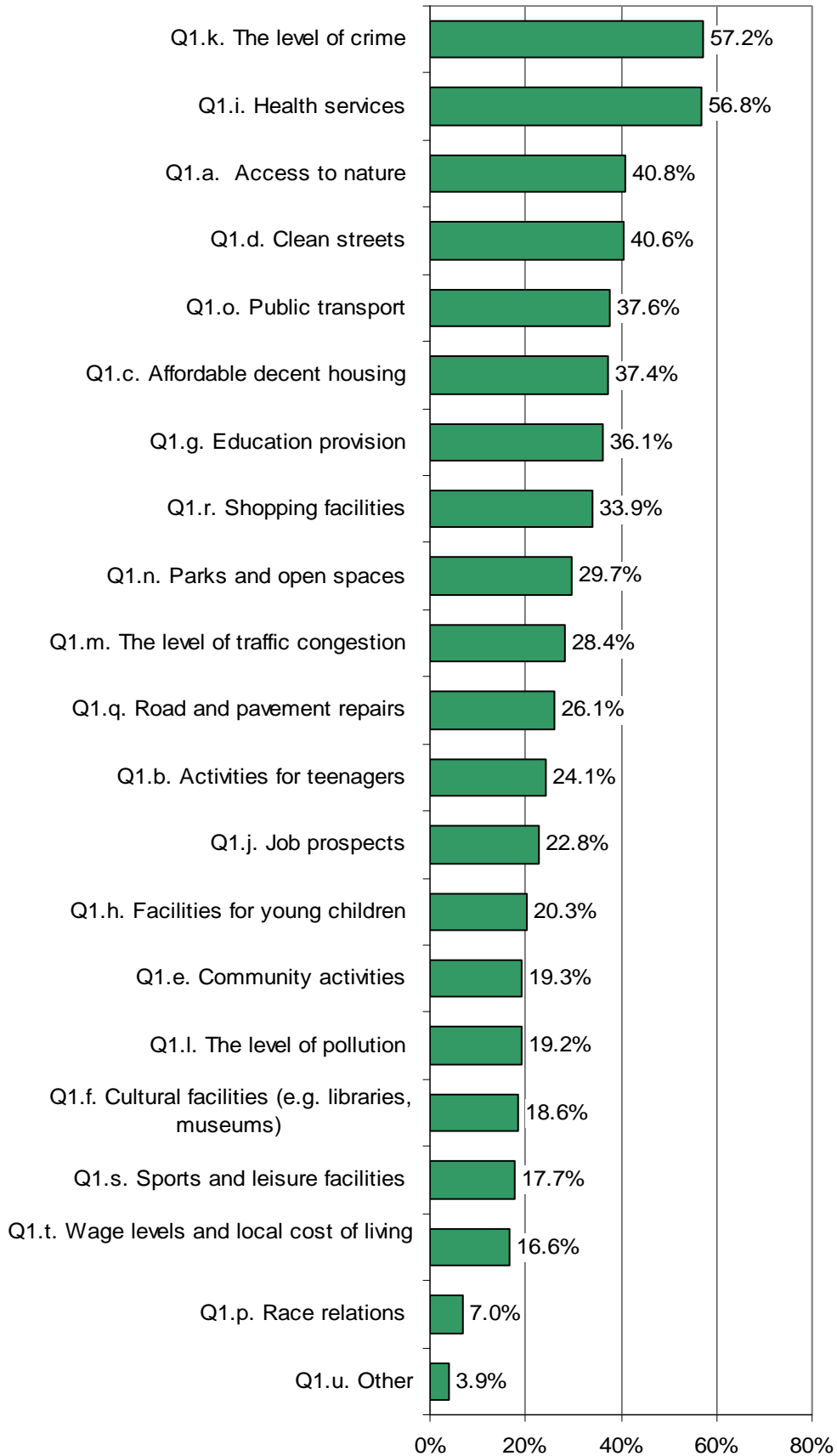
From this survey, we can see that the 3 things most commonly thought to be most important in making somewhere a good place to live are:

- The level of crime (57.2%)
- Health services (56.8%)
- Access to nature (40.8%)

The 3 attributes that are shown to be the least important in making somewhere a good place to live are:

- Race relations (7.0%)
- Wage levels & local cost of living (16.6%)
- Sports & leisure facilities (17.7%)

Q1. Most Important in making Somewhere a Good Place to Live



3.1.2 Most Needs Improving

The next question in the survey asked respondents to think about the same list of attributes and to choose the five which most need improvement in their local area. The chart below shows the proportions of respondents choosing each.

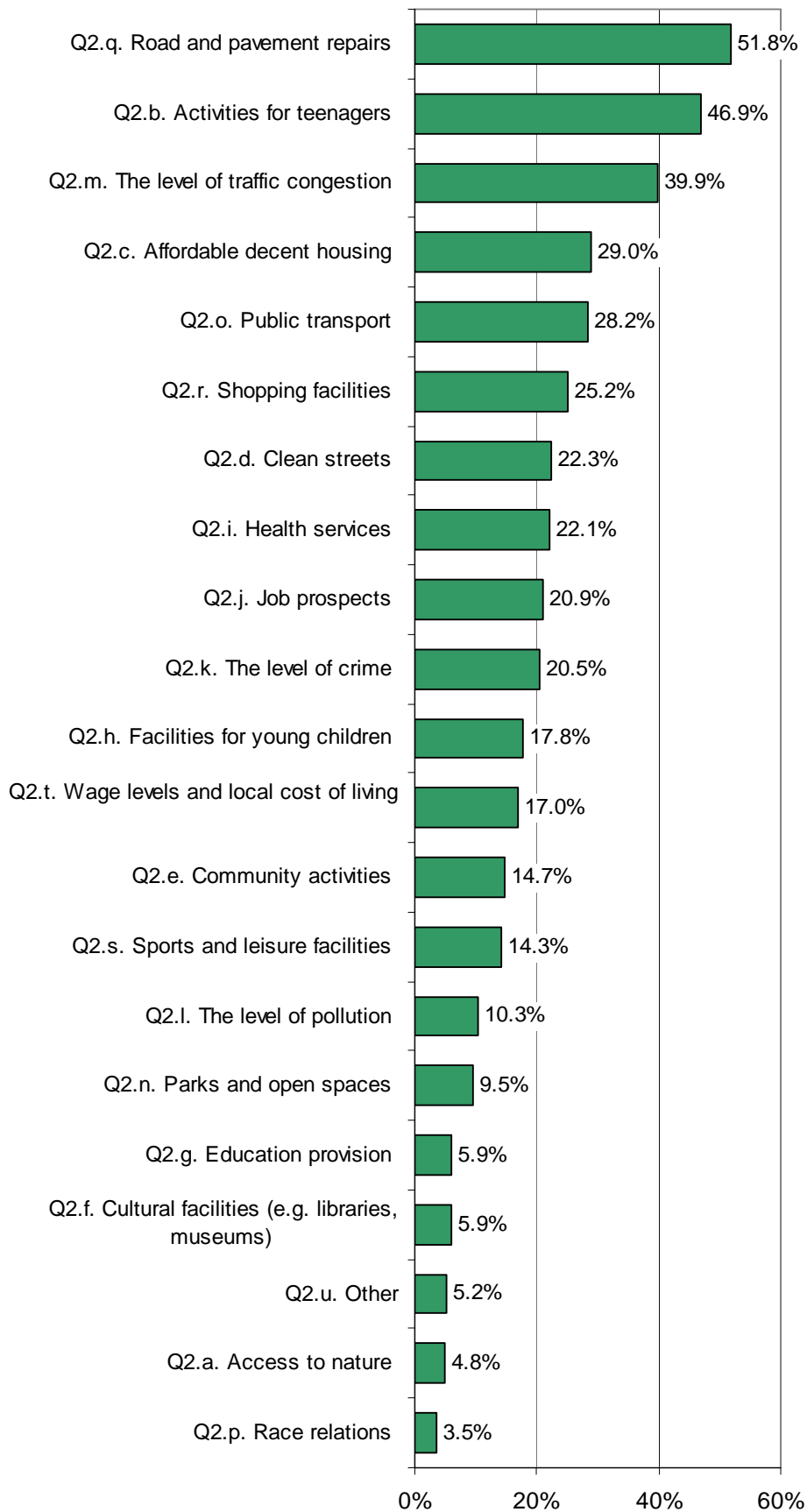
The services that are most commonly seen to most need improvements are:

- Road & pavement repairs (51.8%)
- Activities for teenagers (46.9%)
- The level of traffic congestion (39.9%)

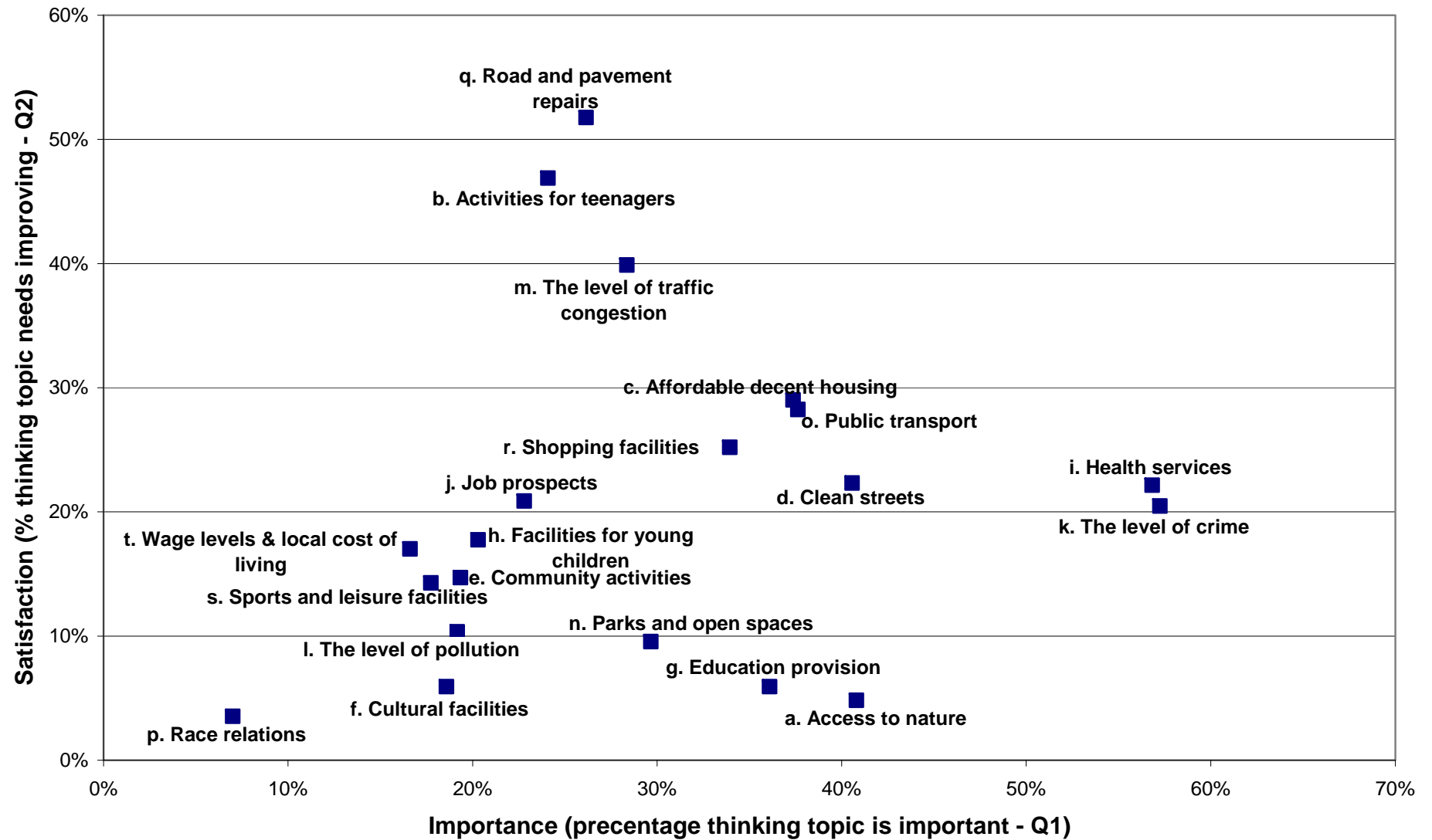
The services that are least commonly seen to need improvements are:

- Race relations (3.5%)
- Access to nature (4.8%)
- Cultural facilities (e.g. libraries & museums) (5.9%)

Q2. Most Needs Improving in this Local Area



The chart below combines the results of Questions 1 and 2 into a scatter graph:



Services or attributes that are closer to the top right hand corner are the ones that respondents feel are most important for their local area and most need improving.

Looking at this chart shows that whilst respondents feel that attributes such as health services and the level of crime are important in making somewhere a good place to live, they are only in medium need of improvement, showing residents are fairly satisfied with them. On the other hand, road & pavement repairs and activities for teenagers are of fairly low importance to the local area, but are given a high priority for improvement, which implies low levels of satisfaction. Finally, access to nature was rated the third most important attribute in making somewhere a good place to live yet is given one of the lowest priorities for improvement, showing residents are currently satisfied with standards in their local area.

3.1.3 Satisfaction with Council Services

Question 8 of the Wiltshire Place Survey asked “how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with each of the following services?”. The chart below shows the levels of satisfaction (Very satisfied + Satisfied) with each of the services currently provided by Wiltshire County Council or the local district council.

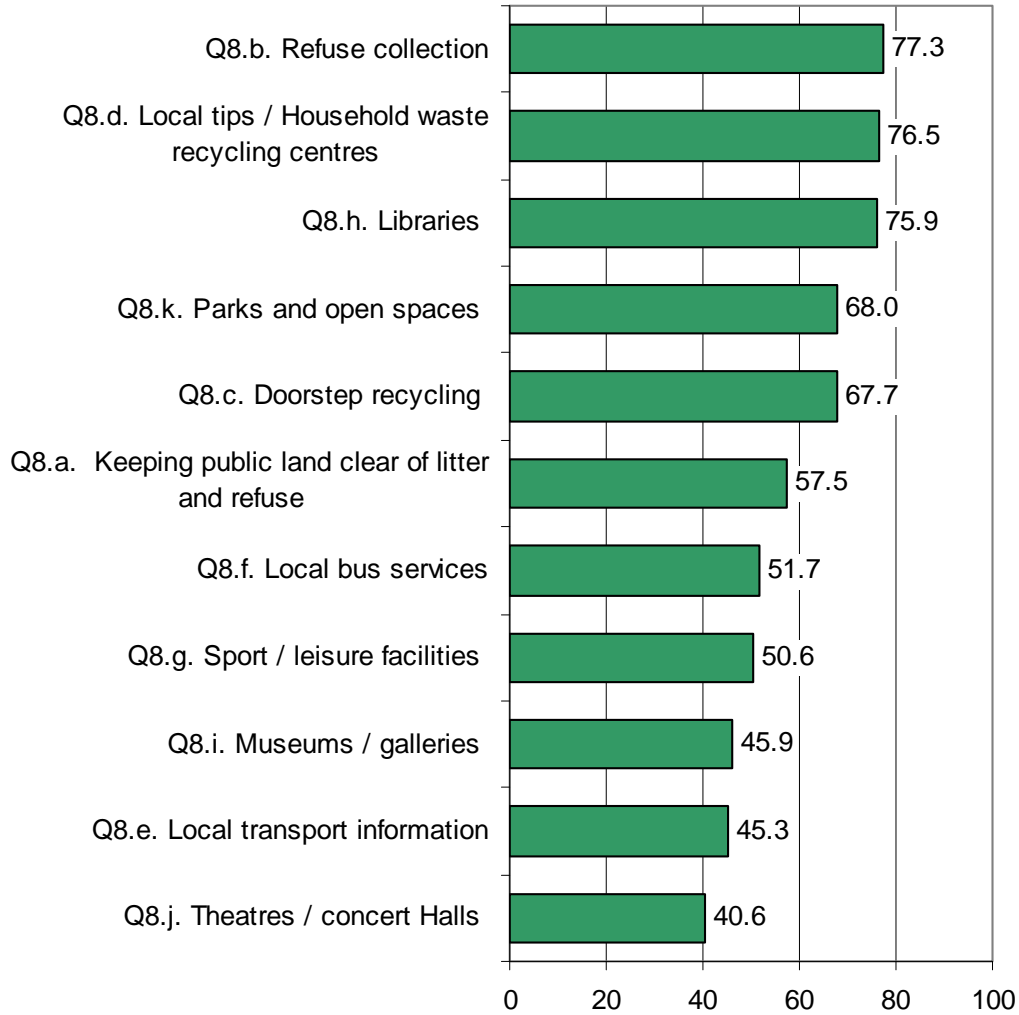
The greatest levels of satisfaction are with the following services:

- Refuse collection (77.3%)
- Local tips / household recycling centres (76.5%)
- Libraries (75.9%)

The services that received the lowest levels of satisfaction from respondents were:

- Theatres / concert halls (40.6%)
- Local transport information (45.3%)
- Museums / galleries (45.9%)

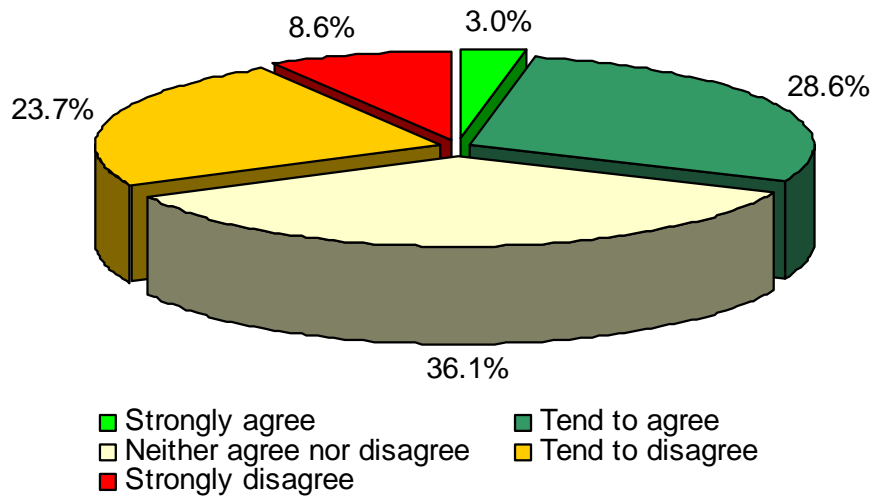
Q8. How satisfied are you with each of the following services?



3.1.4 Providing Value for Money

The final question from the Place Survey looked at here asked respondents whether they thought Wiltshire County Council and their local district council provide value for money. Overall, 31.6% of respondents agreed (Strongly agreed + Agreed) that the councils provided good value for money. Slightly more respondents disagreed with the statement (32.3%). It should be noted that at 36.1%, the greatest proportion of respondents stated “neither agree nor disagree”:

Q10. To what extent do you agree that your councils provide value for money?



Reports looking at the full results of the Wiltshire Place Survey in greater detail will be available from the Corporate Research team in due course and will be made available on the Wiltshire & Swindon Intelligence Network.

3.2 Wiltshire People's Voice

3.2.1 Satisfaction with Services

The first question of the People's Voice survey asked panellists to think about a long list of services to be provided by the new Wiltshire Council and to state how satisfied they are with each of them. This list was split up into the new Service Departments which will be operating those services. This was to make it easier for respondents to follow and see how the new council will operate.

The chart below shows the different levels of satisfaction with these services:

We can see that the services receiving the highest levels of satisfaction were:

- Public libraries (83.2%)
- Household refuse collection (78.4%)
- Recycling centres and waste disposal (not collection) (74.6%)

Those with the lowest levels of satisfaction were:

- Services for vulnerable children and families (15.3%)
- Maintenance of existing roads (16.5%)
- Services for young people (17.6%)

Giving a low level of satisfaction with a service does not necessarily mean that residents are *dissatisfied* with it. An example of this is "Services for vulnerable children and families" – only 15% of respondents say they are satisfied with it. However, just 10.8% say they are actually dissatisfied with the service. The vast majority in this case said "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied".

The services which received the greatest levels of dissatisfaction were:

- Maintenance of existing roads (69.4%)
- Traffic management (39.2%)
- New roads and road improvements (37.9%)

Q1. How satisfied are you with the following services?



3.2.2 Spending More or Less on Council Services

The second question of the survey asked panellists to think about the same list of Wiltshire Council services and asked if the Council should spend more, the same or less on each of them

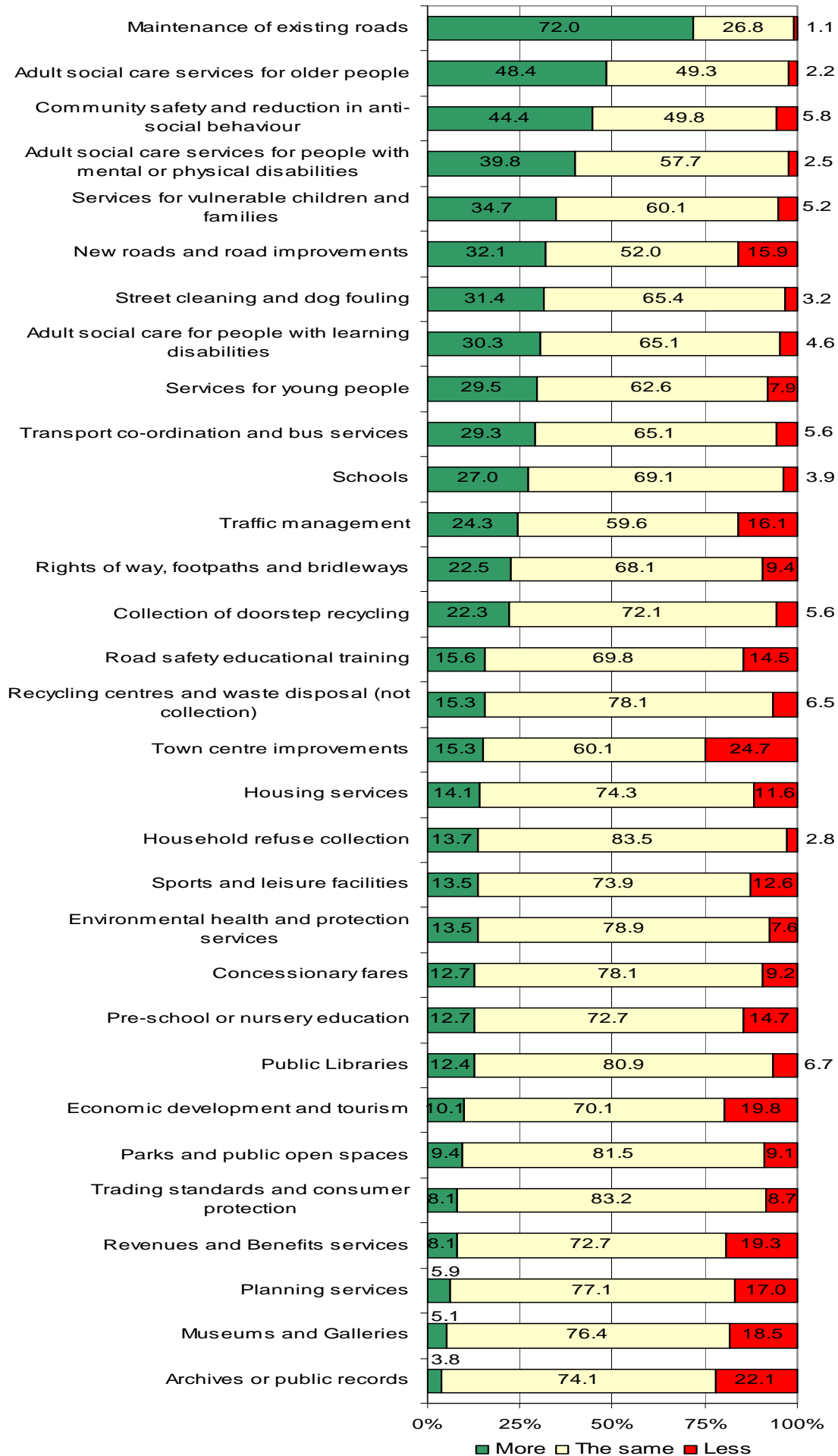
It can clearly be seen that the services which respondents most frequently say they want more money spent on are:

- Maintenance of existing roads (72.0% saying spend more)
- Adult social care services for older people (48.4%)
- Community safety and reduction in anti-social behaviour (44.4%)

The services that respondents most commonly say they would like less money spent on are:

- Town centre improvements (24.7% saying spend less)
- Archives or public records (22.1%)
- Economic development and tourism (19.8%)

Q2. Spend More, the Same or Less?



3.2.3 Spending More or Less on Council Services – Scoring

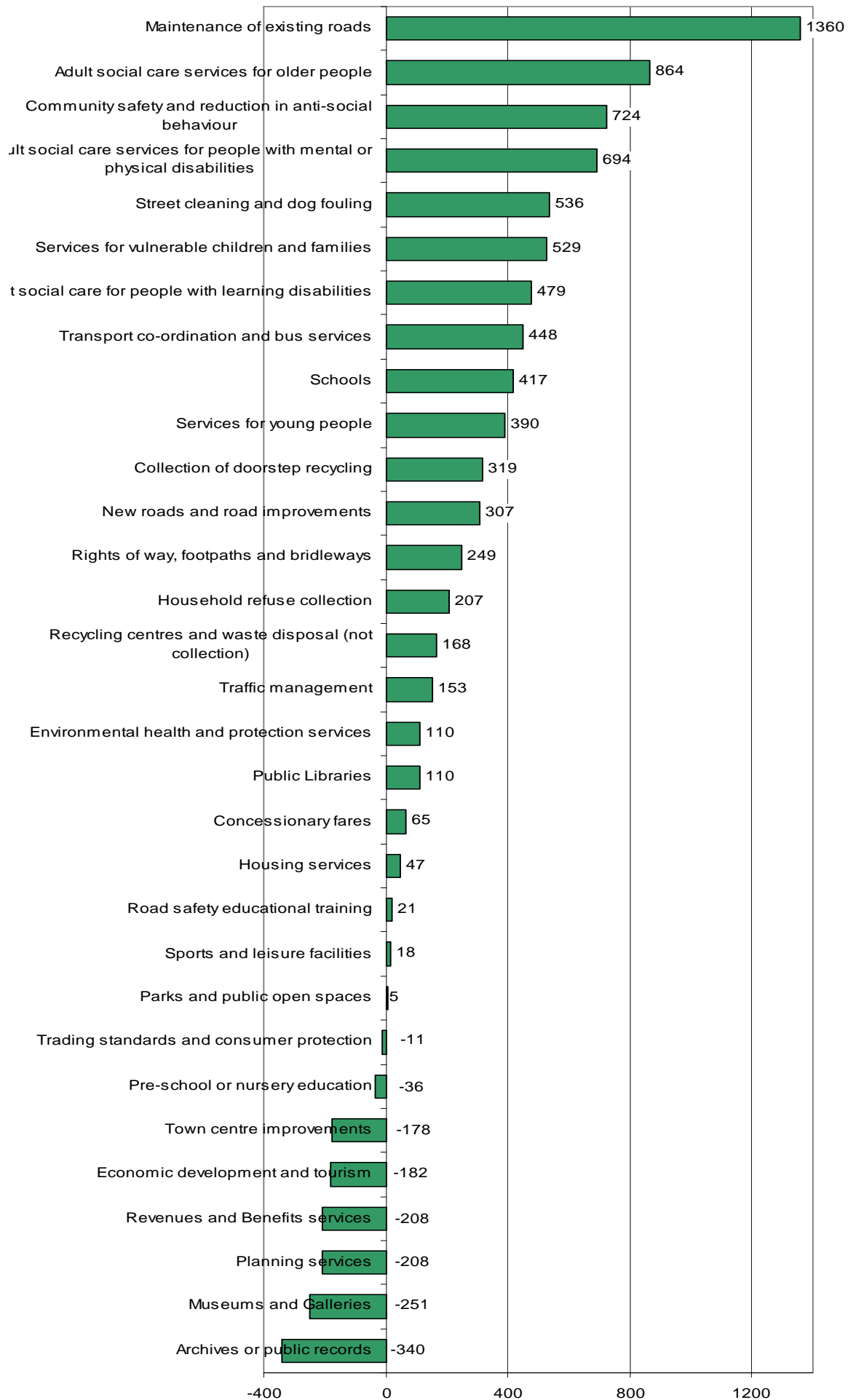
This section of the report uses a scoring system to analyse the results looking at whether more, the same or less should be spent on services. Where a respondent has said “spend more” on a service, this is given a score of +1; if they said “spend less”; this gets a score of -1. The scores from every respondent for each service are then added together and a final score for that service achieved. The service that gets the greatest score is the one with more people thinking it should have more money spent on it than think less money should be spent.

The results of this analysis back up those seen in the frequencies given above. They clearly show that more spending on maintenance of existing roads is a key priority for those that responded to the survey with aspects of social services also scoring very highly. Community safety and anti-social behaviour reduction are also priorities.

Archives or public records scored the least amount of points on spending with a -340 score after subtracting the *less spending* from the *more*.

A detailed report looking at all the questions contained in the December People’s Voice report will be produced by the Corporate Research team in due course which will include greater analysis. This document will be made available on the Wiltshire & Swindon Intelligence Network.

Q2. Spend More or Less - overall score



3.3 Budget Consultation Events

During the latter part of October and November 2008, seven Parish Meet & Greet events were held to allow people the opportunity to take part in the consultation on the One Council budget for the financial year 2009/2010. The public were also able to show their opinion on the importance of various services by filling out a "What matters to you?" voting card. The Chief Executive, Dr Keith Robinson, and the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jane Scott, were also at the meetings to discuss with people any concerns they may have about the budget. Approximately 142 people attended the Meet & Greet events in total.

The "What matters to you?" voting cards were given out by Community Planners across Wiltshire and either handed back or posted to us.

Voting cards were also distributed to young people who attended the Local Democracy Week events around Wiltshire as well as to the young people taking part in the 11 Million Takeover Day.

Older people attending a "slipper exchange" event also filled out several voting cards to get the views from this group of residents and their carers.

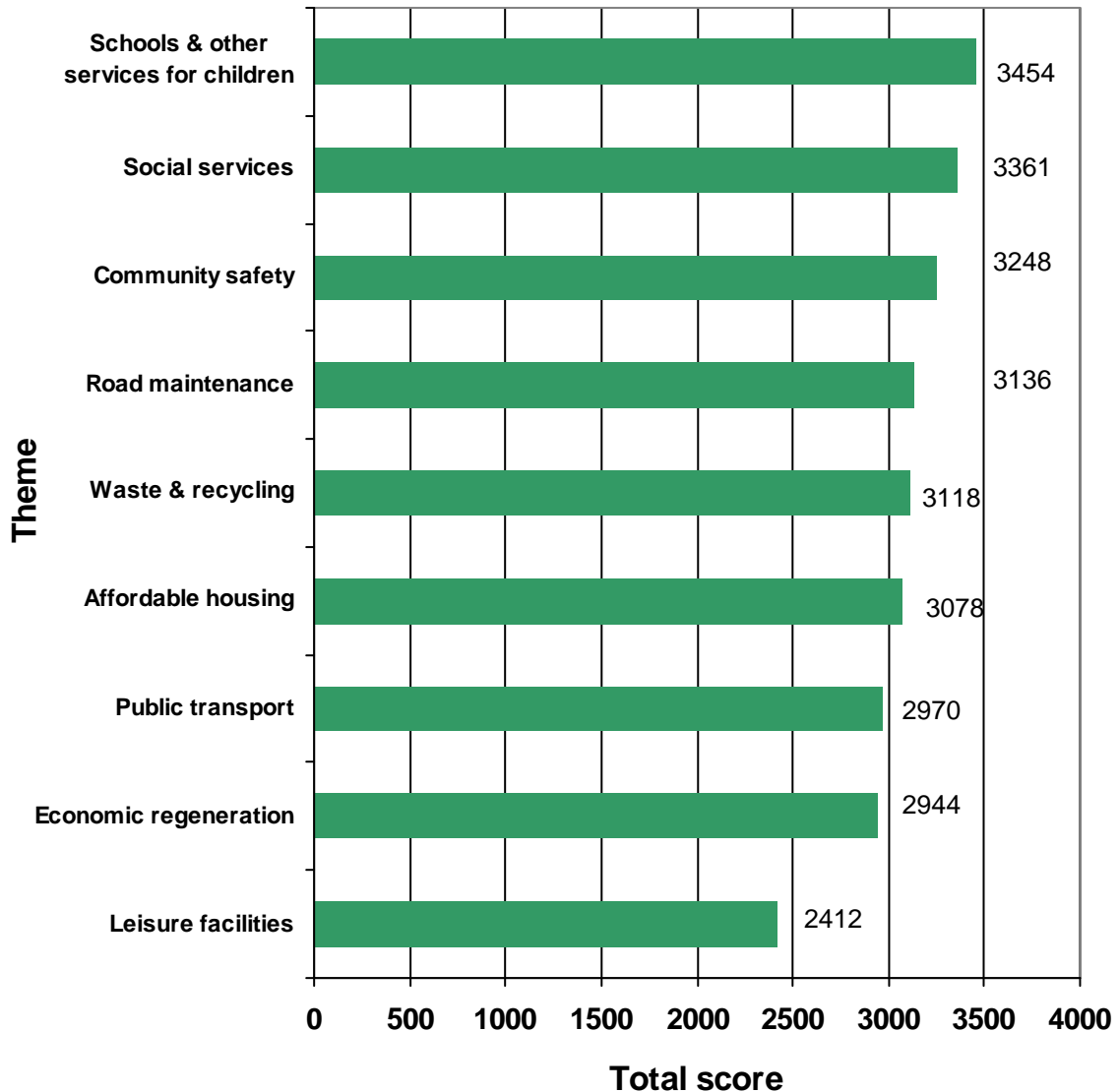
The voting cards themselves listed council services into 9 themes. Residents were asked to assign a priority to each of these themes by giving it a number from 1 to 9, where 1 was the greatest priority for spending and 9 was the lowest priority.

In order to see which of the nine themes the public felt were of most importance a value was attached to each rank to create an overall score. For example if someone ranked something as their top priority then the point value would be 9, second priority would be 8, third priority would be 7 and so on. The scores for the overall graph were then calculated by adding the point value for each to create an overall score.

When the results from all events, consultations and mail outs were collated, the services given the highest priorities were:

- Schools & other services for children (Score: 3454)
- Social Services (Score: 3361)
- Community safety (Score: 3248)

What matters to you? Scores - Overall



The graph above shows the total scores of all nine ranks together to create an ordered list of priorities across all the events. While Schools & other services for schools came top, it is interesting to note that, the theme the most number of people ranked as their top priority was Road maintenance with 17.14% however the overall scoring system lowers it to the 4th highest scoring priority. It is interesting to note that 11.65% of people also ranked Road maintenance as the lowest priority. The theme that had the most overall votes for lowest priority was Leisure facilities with 20.87% of people ranking it ninth in the priority list.

A full report detailing the results from all voting cards received has already been produced and is available on the Wiltshire & Swindon Intelligence Network at : <http://www.intelligenenetwork.org.uk/library.aspx?library=832>

4 CONCLUSIONS

The results from these three different consultation exercises produce some varied and interesting results.

The Wiltshire Place Survey showed that local residents see levels of crime, health services and access to nature as being the most important attributes for making somewhere a good place to live. However, these are not given a correspondingly high priority for improvement, so it would seem residents are currently satisfied with these things in their local area. The things shown to most need improvement were road & pavement repairs, activities for teenagers and the level of traffic congestion.

Q8 of the Place Survey asked more directly about respondents' satisfaction with council services. At this question, the highest levels of satisfaction went to refuse collection, local tips & recycling centres and to libraries. The services that received the highest levels of dissatisfaction were theatres / concert halls, keeping public land clear of litter & refuse and local bus services.

In the final question from the Place Survey looked at here, just under one third of respondents, 31.6%, said they agreed that Wiltshire County Council and their local district council provide value for money. This was a smaller proportion than disagreed with the statement or said "neither agree nor disagree".

The recent People's Voice survey gave similar results to those seen for the Place Survey. Although a different list of services was used in this question compared to that used in the Place Survey, the three services with the greatest levels of satisfaction were the same, albeit in a different order. They were given as public libraries, household refuse collection and recycling centres & waste disposal (not collection). The services that received the highest levels of dissatisfaction were maintenance of existing roads, traffic management and new roads & road improvements.

When asked to give their priorities for increased spending on services, People's Voice panellists wanted more to be spent on maintenance of existing roads, adult social care services for older people and community safety & reduction in anti-social behaviour. These coincide with some of the services that received the lowest levels of satisfaction.

Results from the Budget Consultations Events and the voting cards gave similar results as well. Services receiving the highest scores were schools & other services for children, social services and community safety. Also of note is that more people gave road maintenance their highest priority than any other service, although subsequent votes (other people giving road maintenance a lower priority) moved this service down the overall ranking.