



# 2023 Governance Review Community Engagement Report

June 19, 2023



# Governance Review Summary

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Council approves the following direction

THAT Council support the detailed review of the Council Governance Structure in principle and that the following recommendations be presented as alternative governance model of the Standing Committee System to the current Portfolio System; and

FURTHER THAT, since both systems and their variations are in use by municipalities in Ontario, the public survey would clearly summarize and compare the two main alternatives and be reviewed by a newly formed Governance Review Working Group and with input from all Council members. The approved public survey would be sent for public engagement for initial presentation and feedback with the following proposals:

1. Standing Committee System described in the Staff Report and with recommended variations which would replace the current Committee of the Whole System into four (4) Standing Committees and/or mix of Standing Committees and a Committee of the Whole and a Regular Council Meeting happening each month with each Standing Committee having a specific mandate based on the previous coordinator meeting system which includes the combination of participation of all Council Members and three (3) Council Members on the recommended Standing Committees Types. It is anticipated the total number of Standing Committee and Council meetings each month will not exceed four.
2. Council maintains the Statutory Local Boards and Advisory Committees being, the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Heritage Advisory Committee, and others which may be mandated from time to time. Council may enact Citizen Advisory Committees to Council and consider the creation of Task Forces and Ad Hoc Committees based on the Council Strategic Plan with a specific mandate to achieve Council goals and initiatives during the Council Term with an end term and expiry no longer than twelve (12) to eighteen (18) months, or at the end of their mandated purpose.
3. FURTHER THAT the following question be added to the Governance Review Survey regarding the introduction of Town Hall Meetings.

# Community Engagement at-a-Glance

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Following the Governance Review introductory report to Council on April 24, staff launched a project page for the Governance Review on EngageCobourg.ca

## Community Engagement Opportunities:

- Survey
- Forum
- Governance Review Open House – May 17

## Engagement Statistics:

 **388 “Aware”** (Individuals who visited the Engage Cobourg project page)

 **273 “Informed”** (Individuals who read the content but did not participate)

 **123 “Engaged”** (Individuals who completed the survey or forum)

Survey and forum were available from April 25 to May 29, 2023

# Communications Efforts



## Marketing and Communications Efforts

- x2 Public Notices
- x2 Email notifications to Engage Cobourg registered users
- x3 posts to Town of Cobourg Ad Block in Northumberland News
- Today's Northumberland Digital Ad
- Cover of HelloCobourg! Newsletter - May 2023
- Social Media posts and reminders (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram)

### Town Seeks Community Insight for Governance Review Program

The Town of Cobourg is currently conducting a review of its governance by-laws and policies. As part of this review, Council is seeking resident input regarding what is working well and where improvements could be made, particularly on transparency, accountability and how residents are able to participate in municipal decision making. We want to hear from you!

- Take the survey and provide comments in the forum at [www.EngageCobourg.ca](http://www.EngageCobourg.ca)



# Governance Review Open House

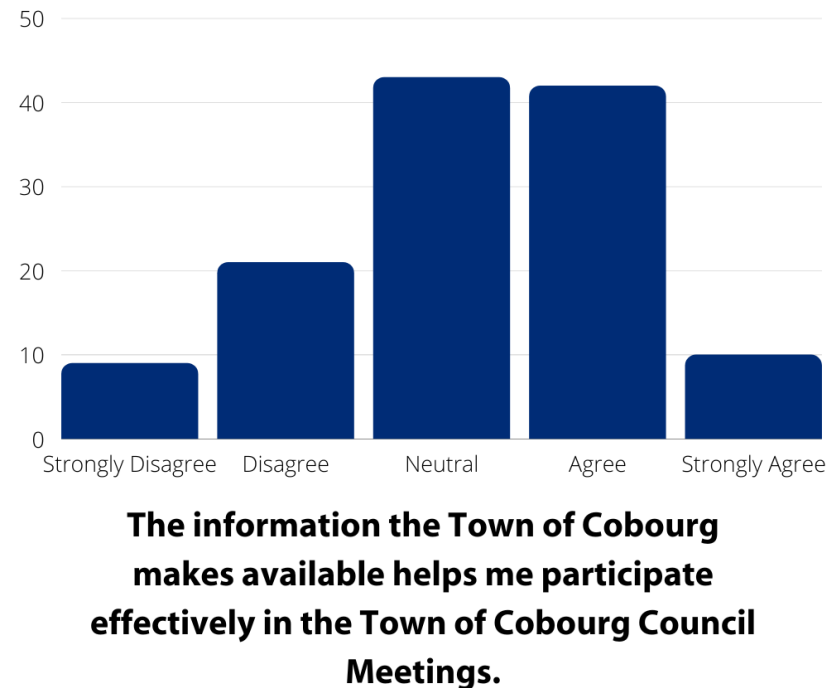
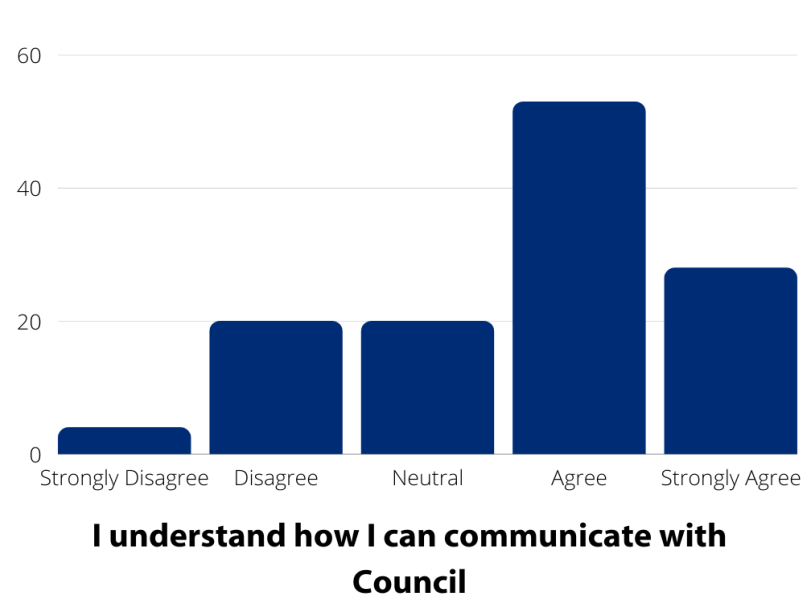
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The Municipal Clerk hosted an Open House in Council Chambers on May 17<sup>th</sup> 2023 from 6:30 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.

- Purpose of the Open House was to hold an informal forum for residents to seek clarification on the current Council Governance model, and to provide information and answer questions on the proposed option.
  - 12 residents attended the Open House to ask questions and seek clarification from Staff on Governance;
  - Various comments and concerns were voiced on the removal of some Advisory Committees, comments on direct public participatory engagement options, and the risk of not having all members of Council on each meeting of Council.

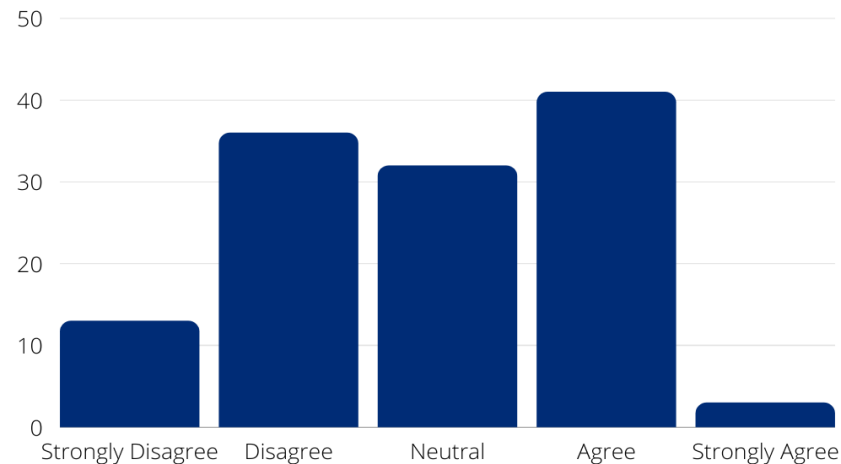
# Survey Responses

**Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement:**



# Survey Responses

Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement:



**The Town does a good job on effectively engaging residents on items upcoming to Council and decisions that may affect me.**

# Comments and Recommendations:

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Meaningful engagement is in-person, on-going and collaborative. Community priorities need to be identified and interested and relevant stakeholders engaged on an ongoing basis.

delegations to council are either received for information or rarely referred to staff for report and generally nothing happens.

Leveraging social media to a higher level would assist in the sharing of communication. Encouraging discourse as well as posting informational posts would lead to increased citizen engagement.

provide outcomes from surveys, so we understand if and how feedback from community members has been used to implement changes.



# Comments and Recommendations:

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Need to find a way to get a larger number of residents involved in community matters rather than just listening to those that are the loudest.

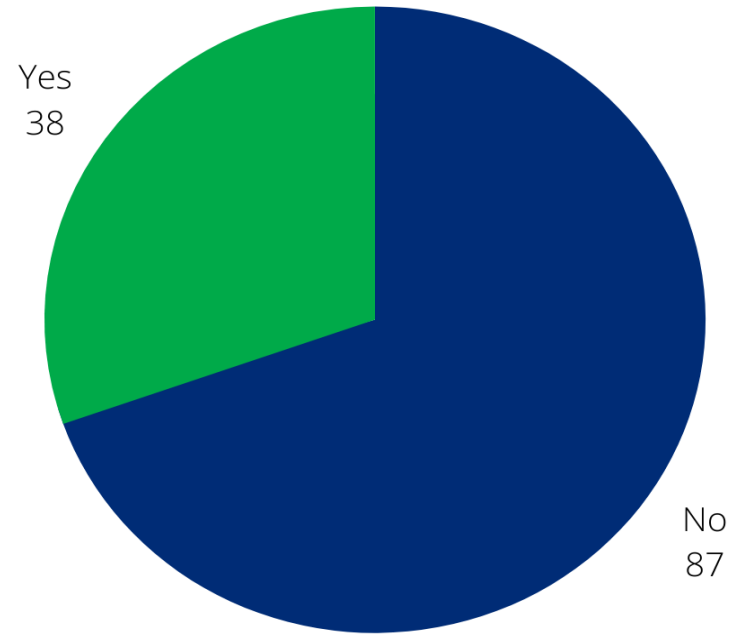
An online form for residents to put a correspondence onto the committee agenda.

A weekly overview of decisions, explained in layman terms on both social media and the website would be useful. Not many understand how to access this information.

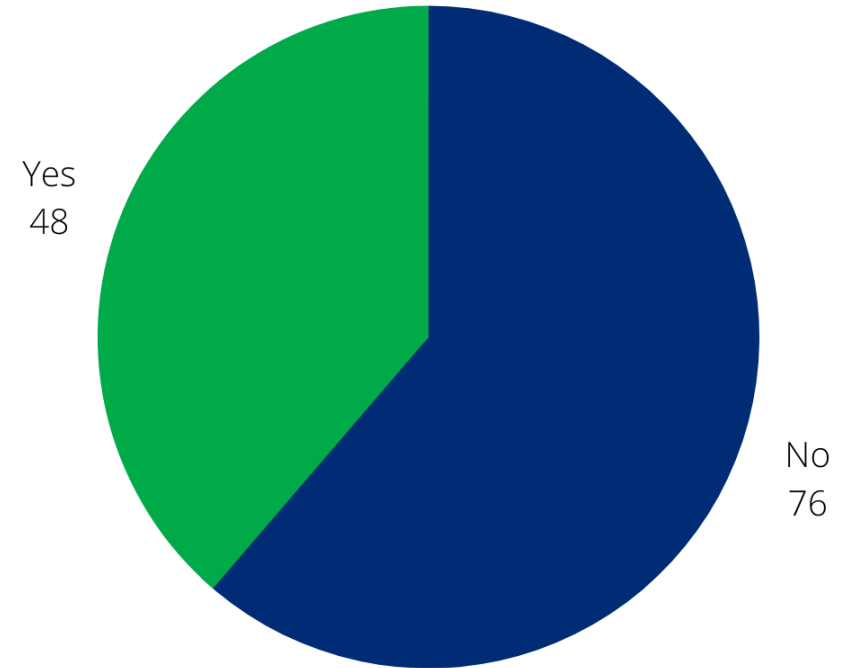
timelines are often too short for comments or participation particularly when there is only one date to participate.

# Survey Responses

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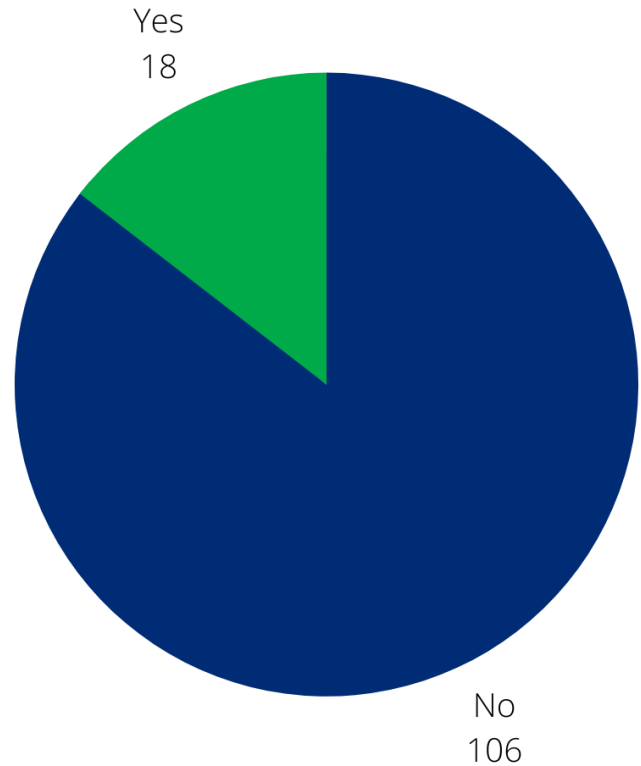
**Have you personally appeared before the  
Town of Cobourg Council?**



**Have you personally sent in  
correspondence to be received by Council?**

# Survey Responses

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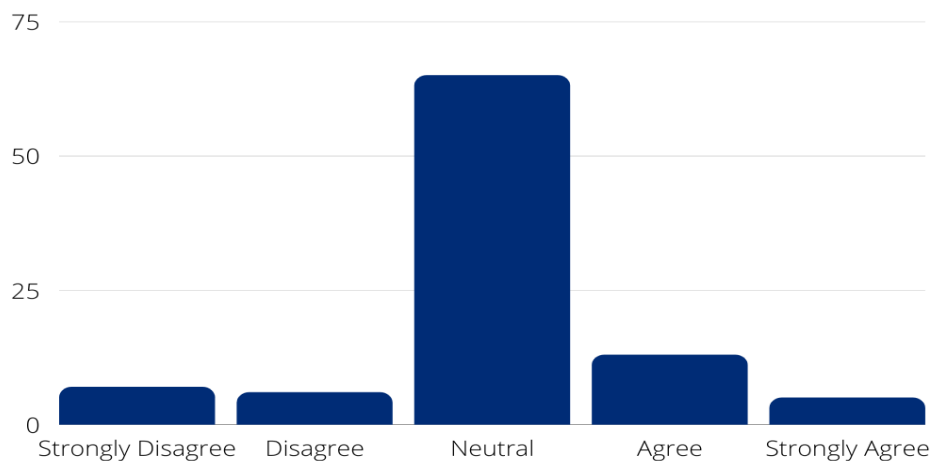


**Have you personally appeared to speak  
before a Town Advisory Committee?**

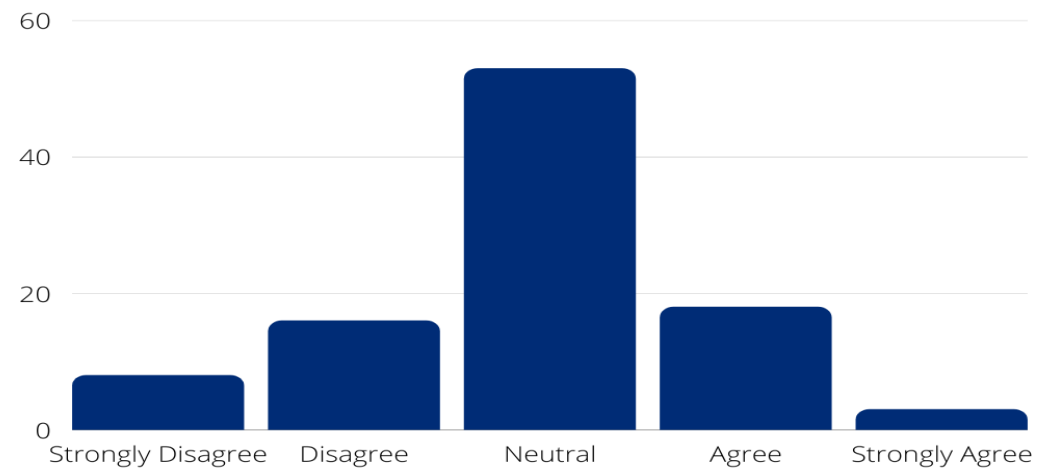


# Survey Responses

**Q: Please review the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.**



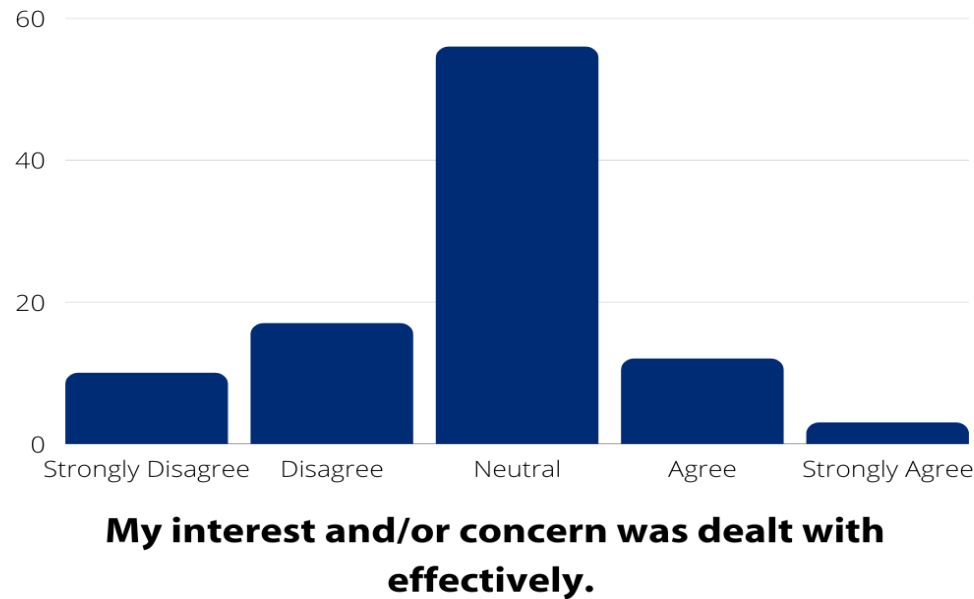
**My experience in appearing before Council was constructive and worth my time.**



**I believe my interests and concerns were heard and given consideration.**

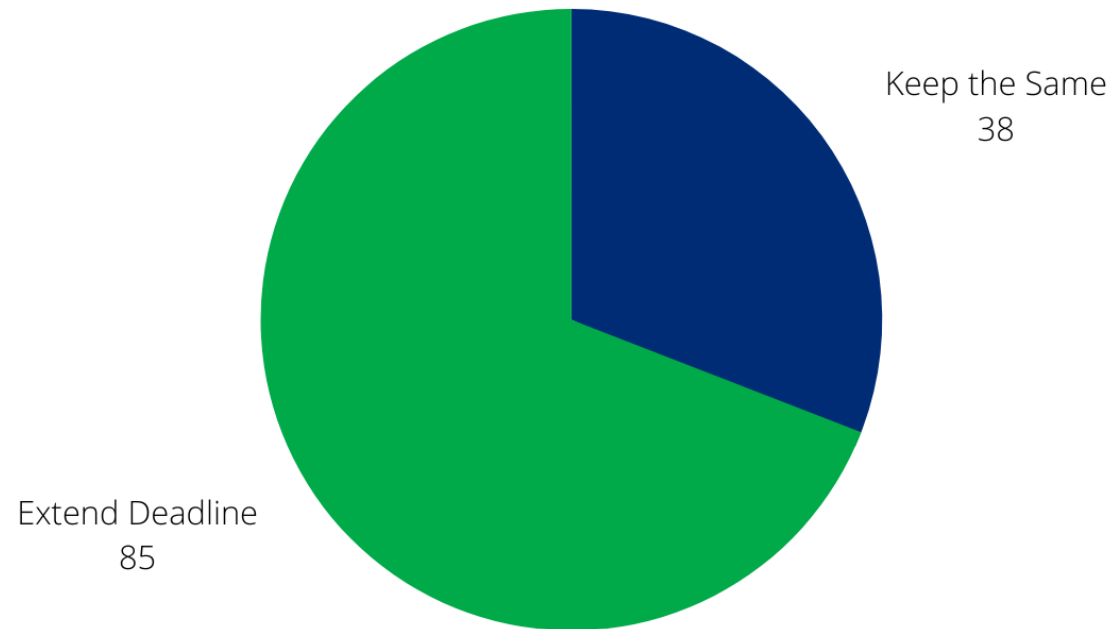
# Survey Responses

Q: Please review the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.



# Survey Responses

**Q: Do you believe the deadline to request a delegation to Council should remain the same (1pm on Friday before meeting) or should Council receive requests up until the start of the meeting?**





# Comments and Recommendations:

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I like the suggestion that each department have a specific date where their concerns/activities are discussed/reported and that way the delegations can pertain to the specific department. (and the meetings won't be excruciatingly long)

Agenda items are dealt with immediately following the presentation so individuals do not need to stay.

Council should know ahead of time what will be presented to them so they can research any related information.

# Comments and Recommendations:

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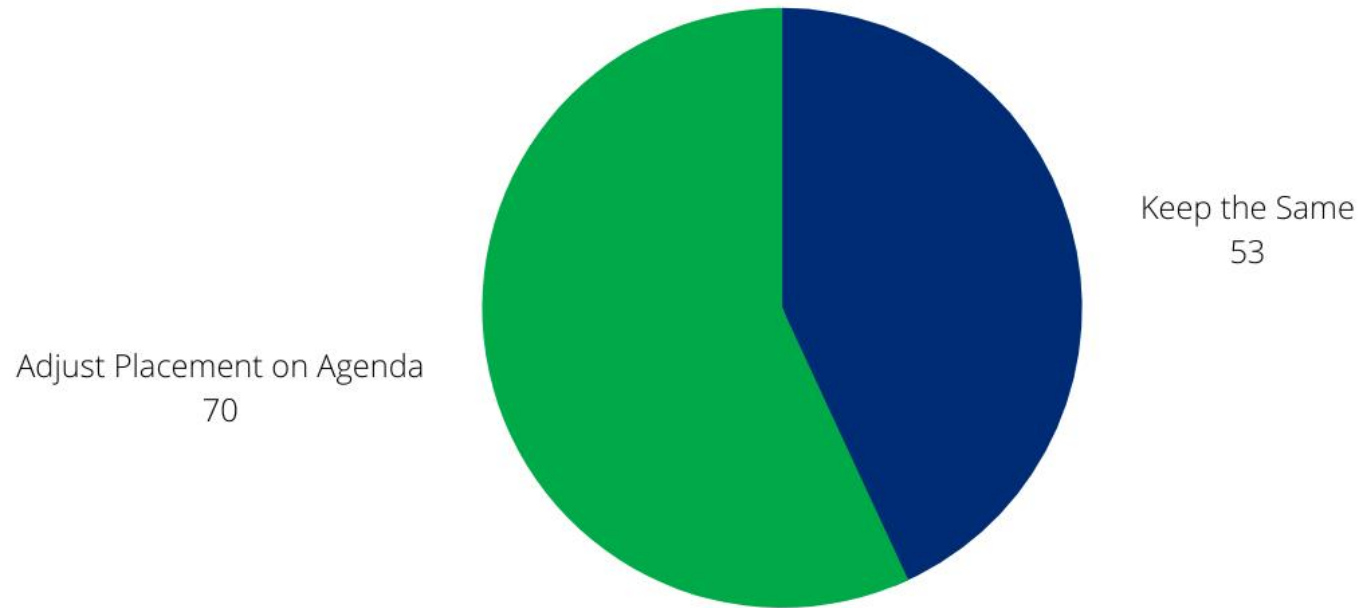
**I found that only being able to answer questions somewhat frustrating when there was discussion among the councillors and it became clear that some councillors misunderstood the message.**

**Information about the process of being a delegate is hard to find and confusing.**

**Delegations on the same topic should be made aware of others, to avoid overlap where possible.**

# Survey Responses

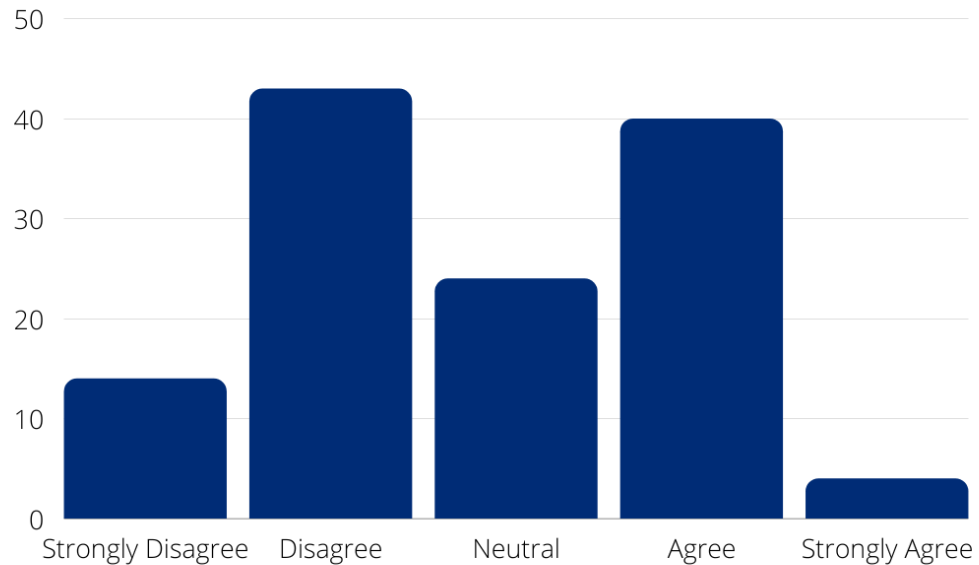
**Q: Should the timing of delegations remain the same or should delegations relating to a specific agenda item take place at the beginning of that discussion by Council?**



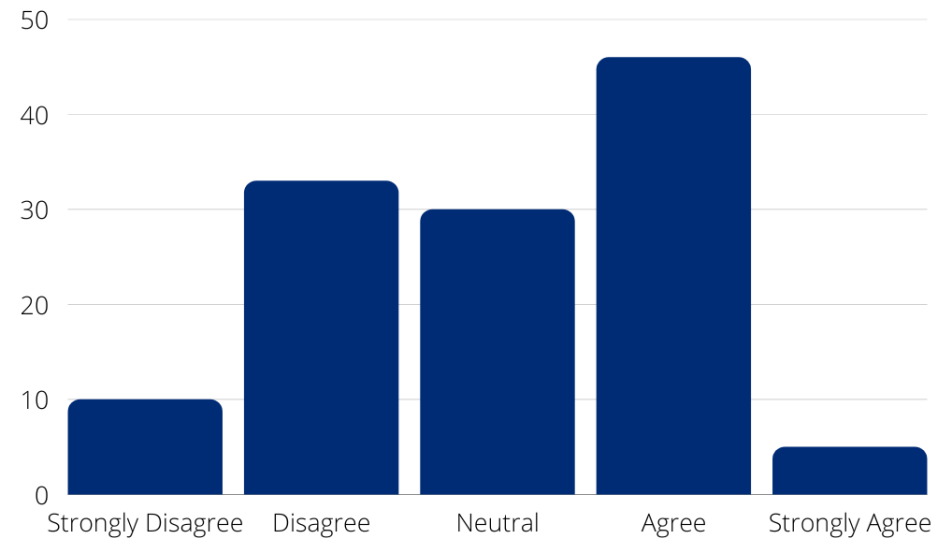


# Survey Responses

Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.



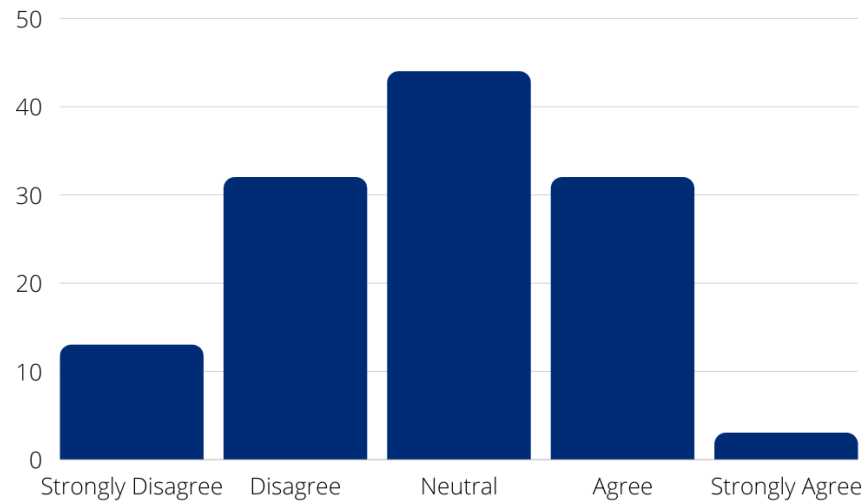
**Information on issues that are being considered by Council are easy to find.**



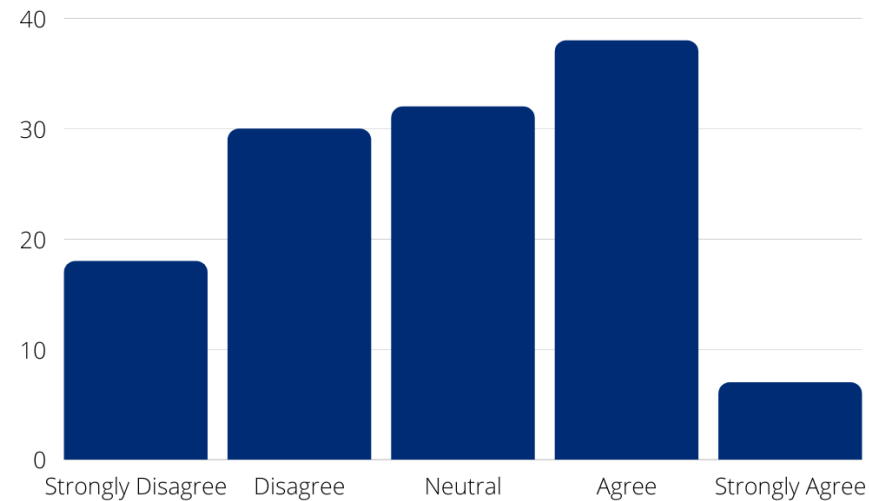
**The information on issues that are being considered by Council is useful and easy to understand.**

# Survey Responses

Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.



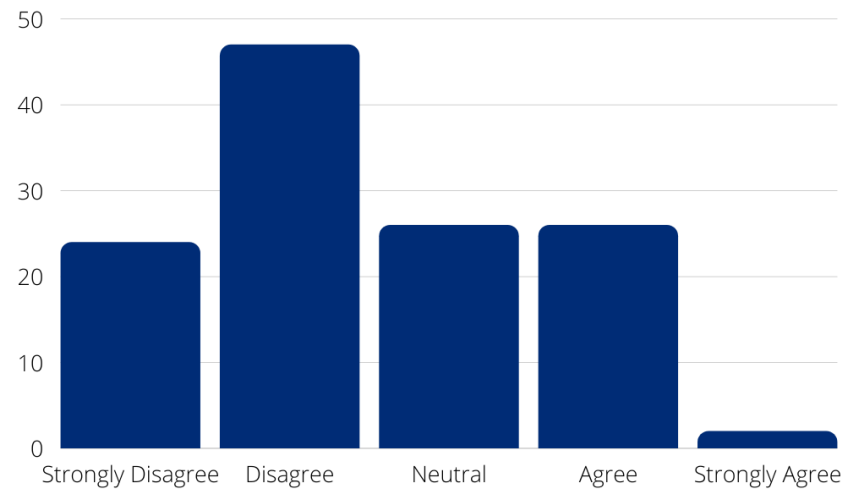
**I believe Council provides effective oversight of the Town performance, relating to timelines and efficient reporting from staff on items to the council floor.**



**I believe Council provides efficient reports and engagement on the Town's budget and finances throughout the year.**

# Survey Responses

Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.

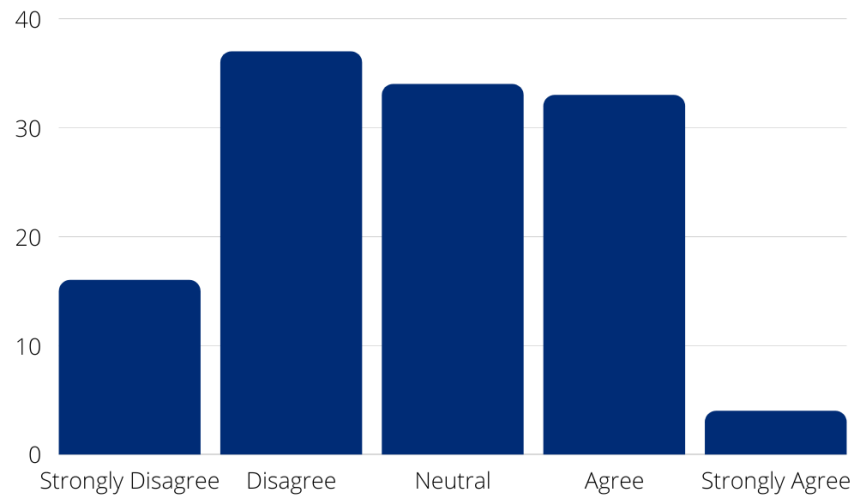


**All council related information and news on decisions and final minutes, by-laws and policies are easy to find.**

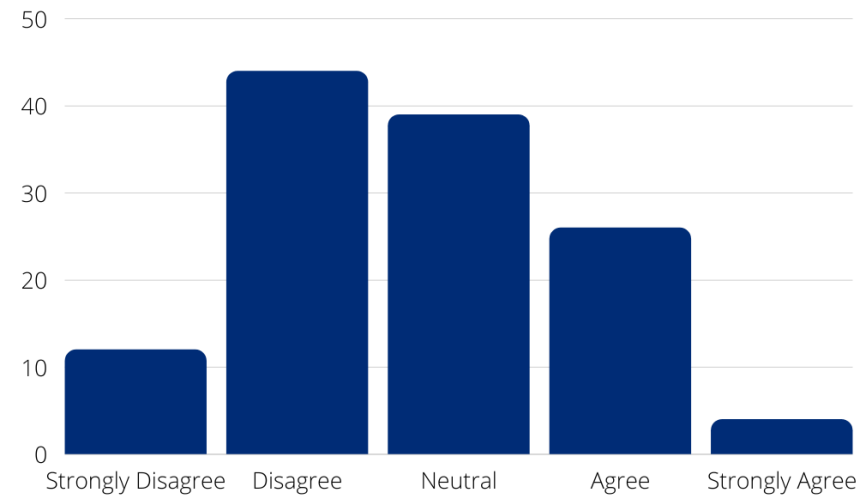


# Survey Responses

Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.



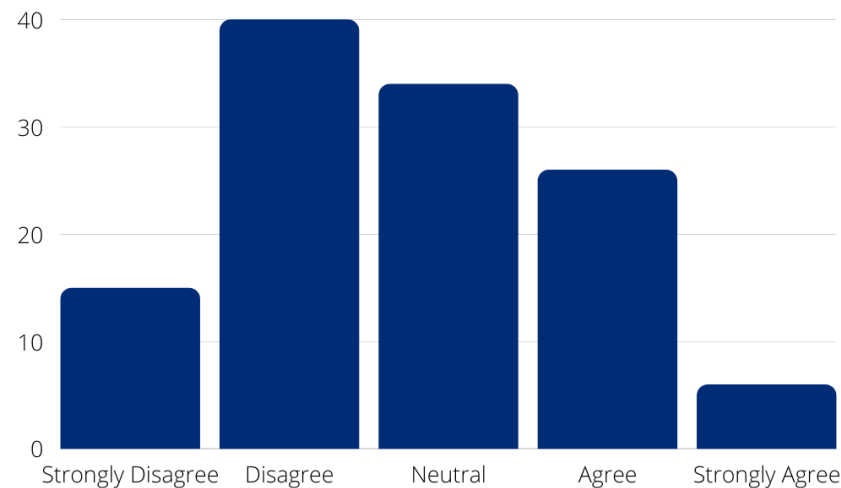
**Matters to be considered by Council are dealt with in a timely way.**



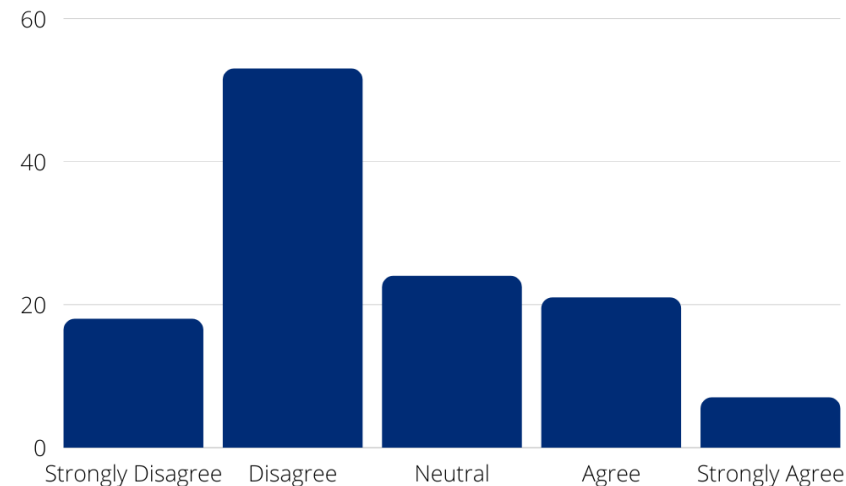
**Matters to be considered by Council are dealt with effectively.**

# Survey Responses

Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.



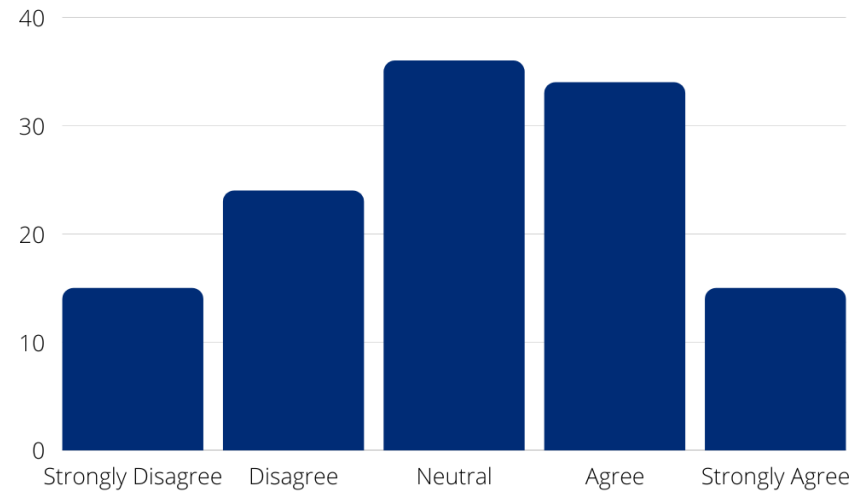
**Council ensures that the Town addresses resident priorities through delivering Council Strategic plan goals and objectives.**



**Council ensures that the Town is focused on the right items.**

# Survey Responses

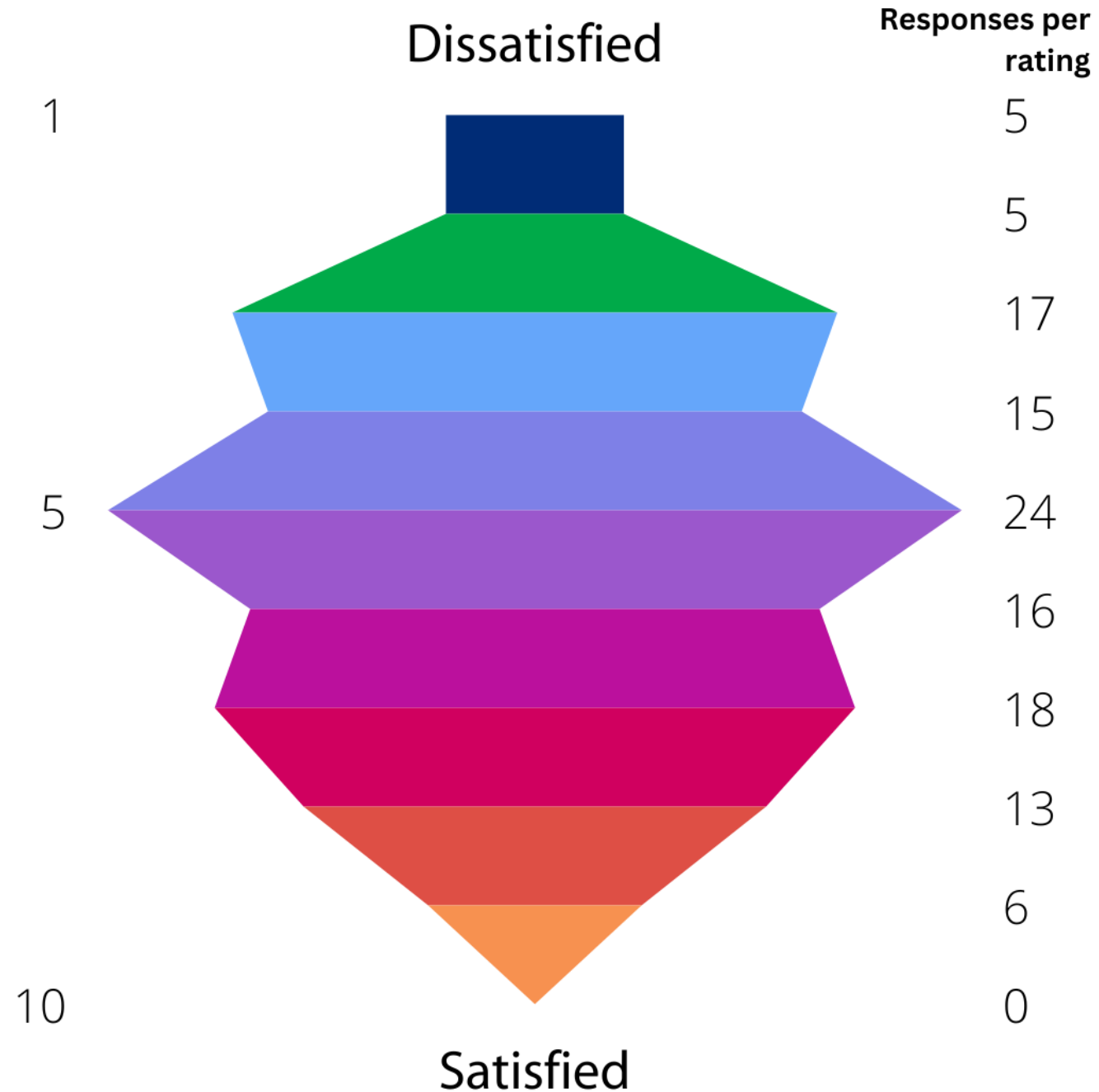
Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.



**I believe Council overall makes decisions  
based on what they believe is in the best  
interest of the community.**

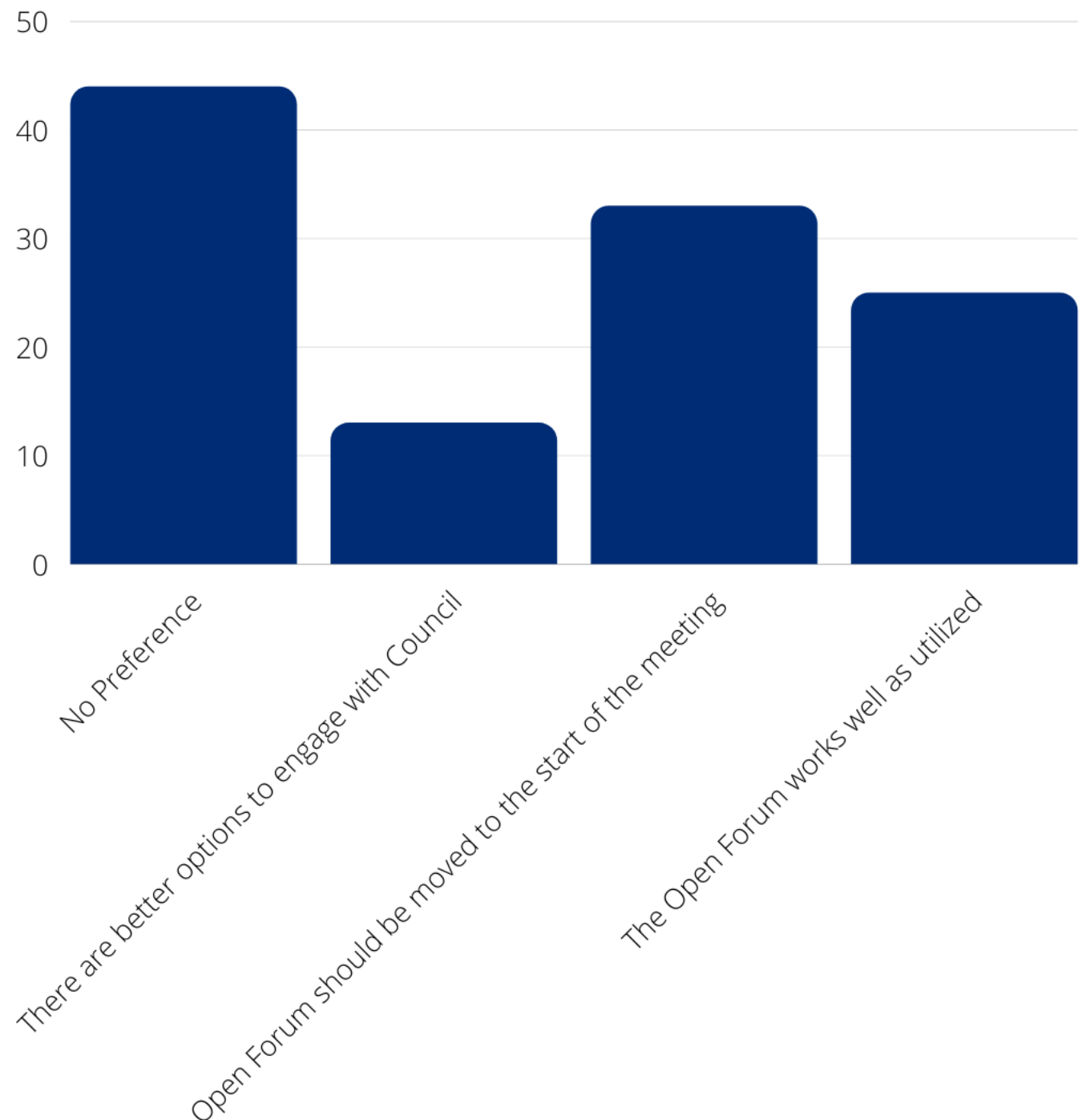
# Survey Responses

Q: On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, overall, how satisfied are you with the governance of the Town?



# Survey Responses

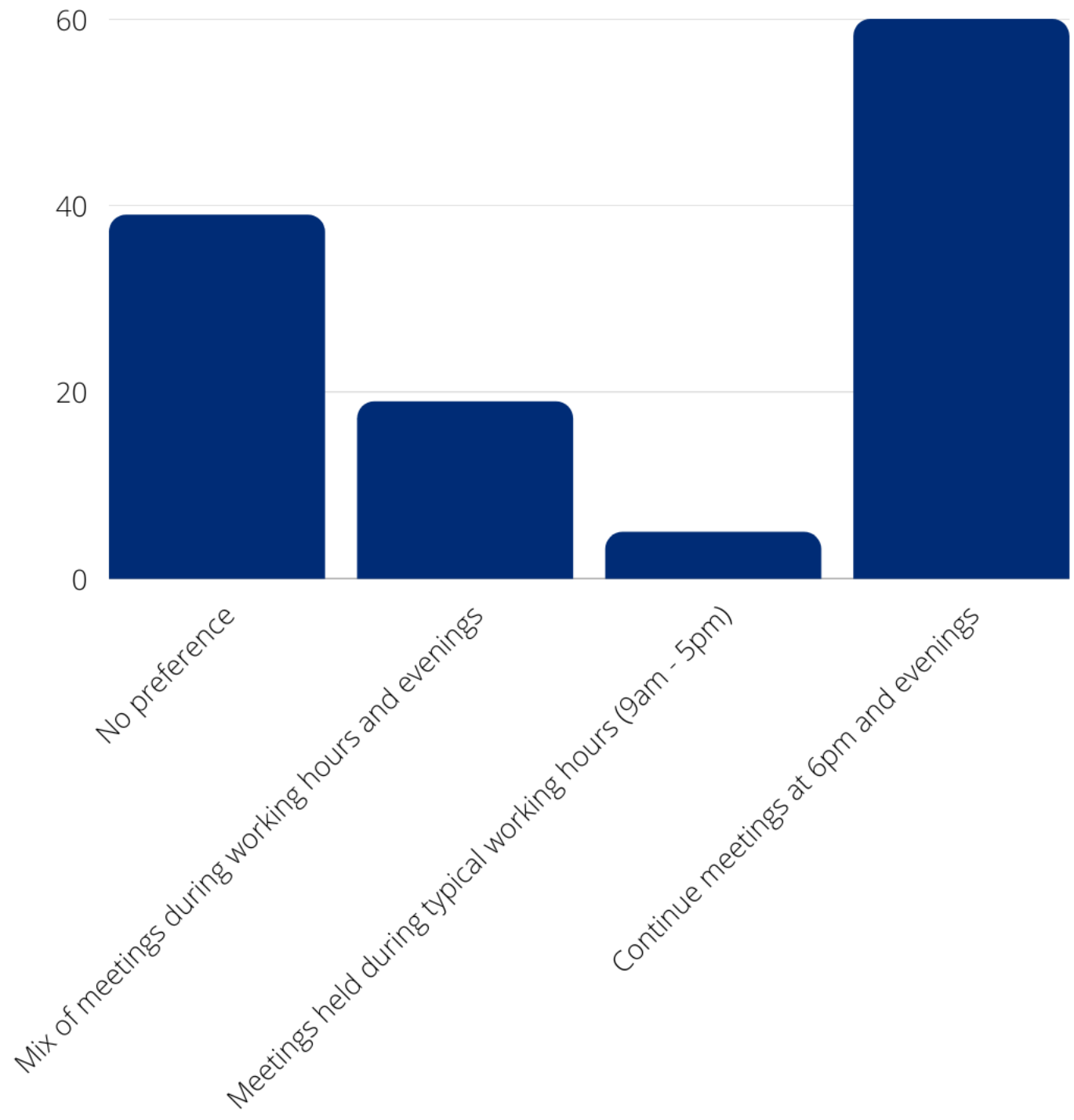
Q: Please choose one of the following statements that best describes your opinion of the Open Forum:





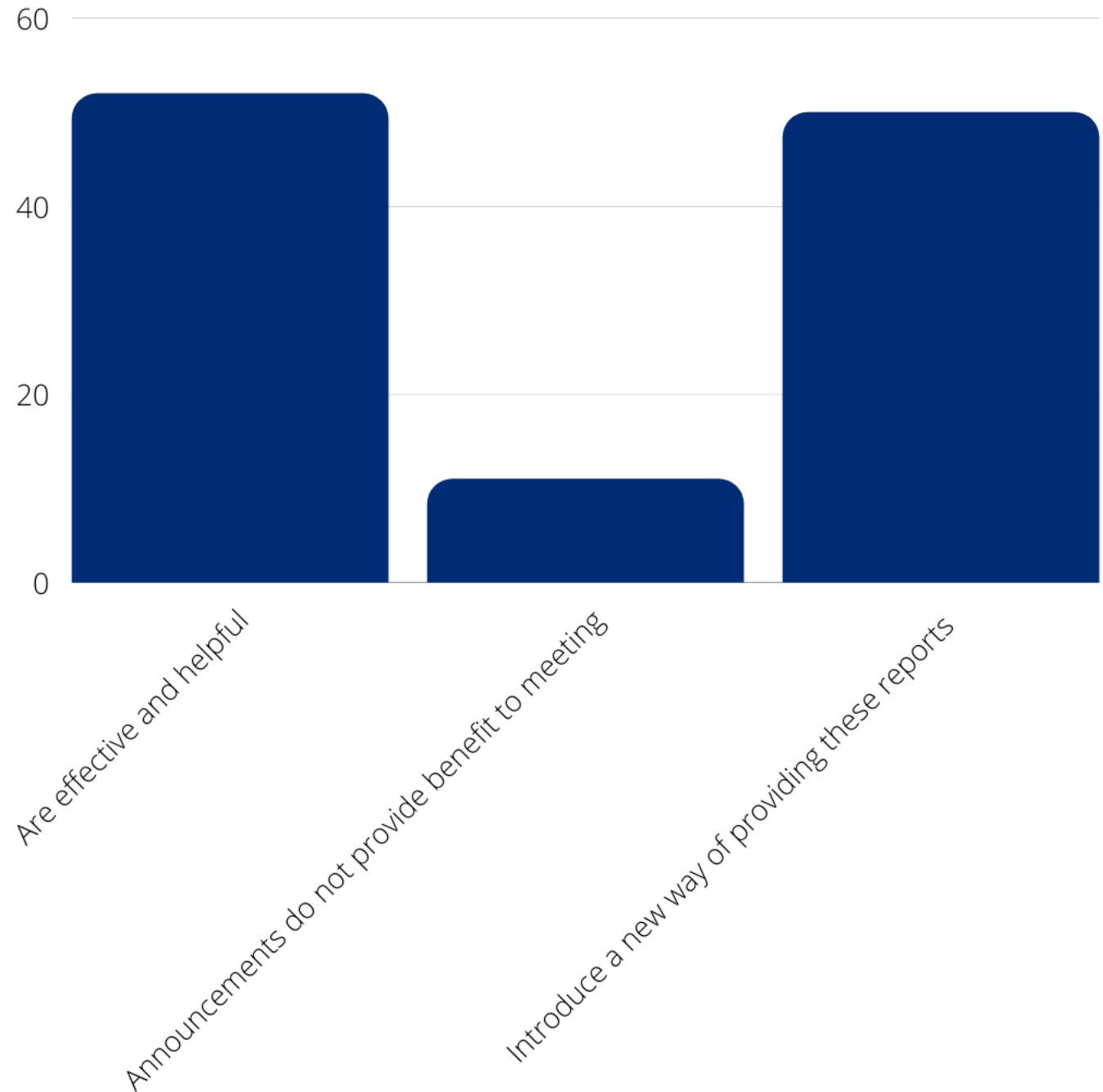
# Survey Responses

**Q: Please select the following meeting times that you feel appropriate for Council to schedule their Standing Committees or Committee of the Whole meetings?**



# Survey Responses

**Q: Please choose one of the following statements that best describes your opinion of the Council Announcements made at the end of Regular Council Meetings.**



# Comments and Recommendations:

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It would be great if decisions made by Council could be summarized in a digestible way...This could easily be relayed in the Mayor's email and on social media.

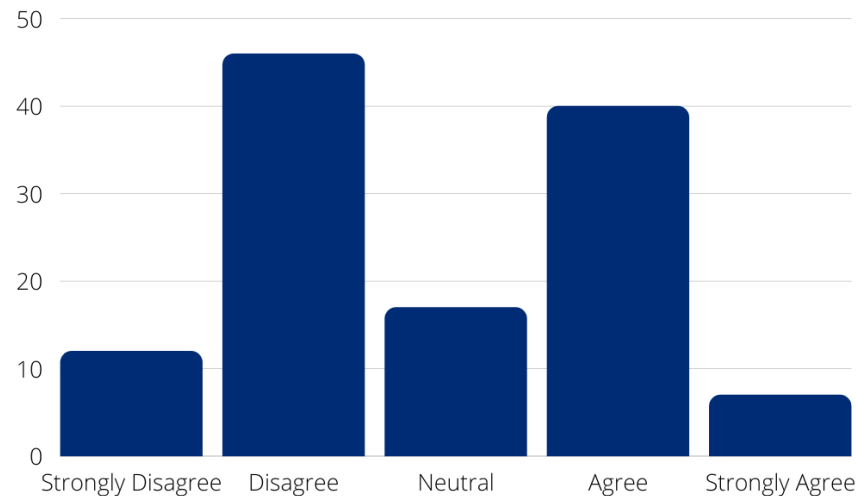
More public meetings outside council chambers to address key issues.

Information needs to be posted in plain English on the town's website (not PDF attachments)....  
instruct staff to write reports in plain english,

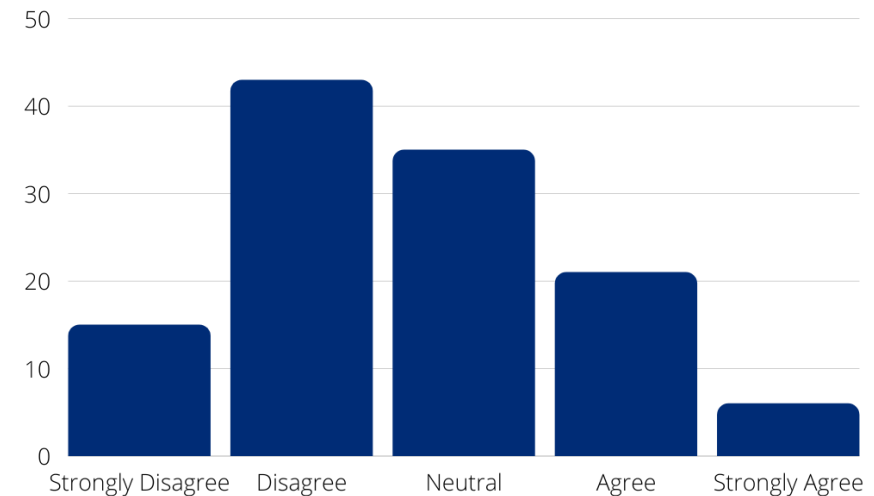
User friendly Council Progress Reports (once or twice a year) would be more helpful.

# Survey Responses

Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.



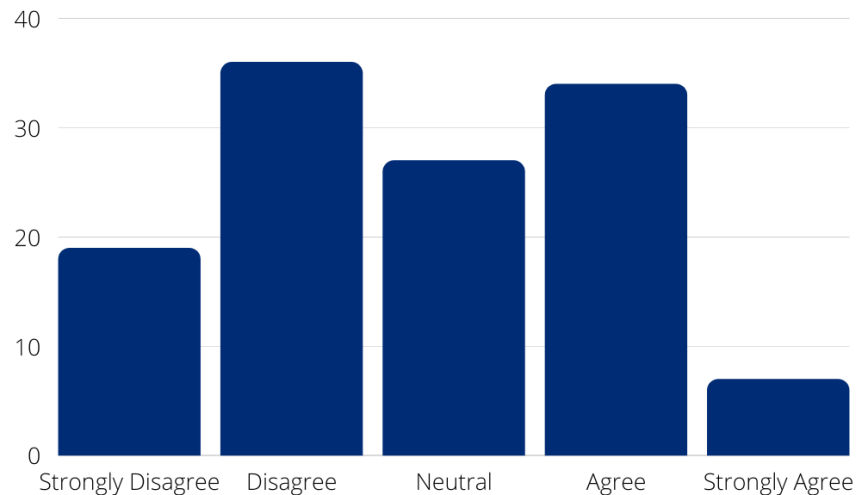
**Inclusivity: Residents have a fair and reasonable opportunity to participate in decision making.**



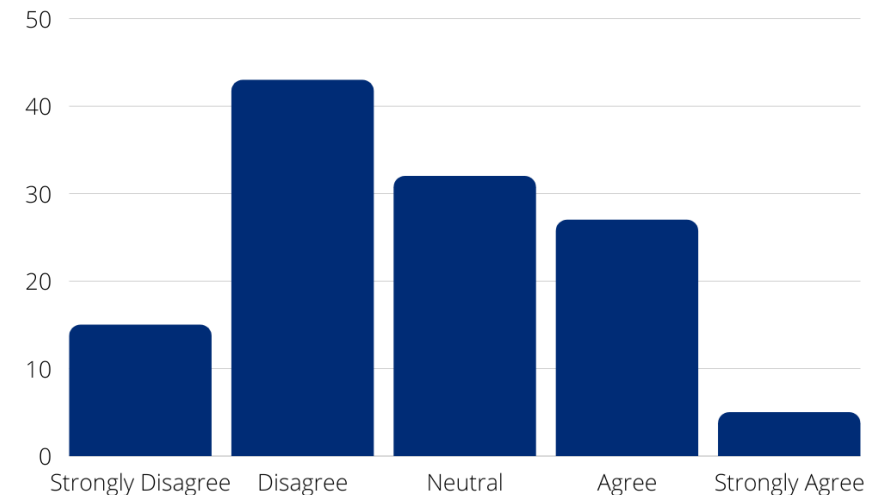
**Transparency: Information is openly available and easy to access and understand.**

# Survey Responses

Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.



**Accountability: I trust Council's oversight and responsibility for the process and the performance of the Town and services.**

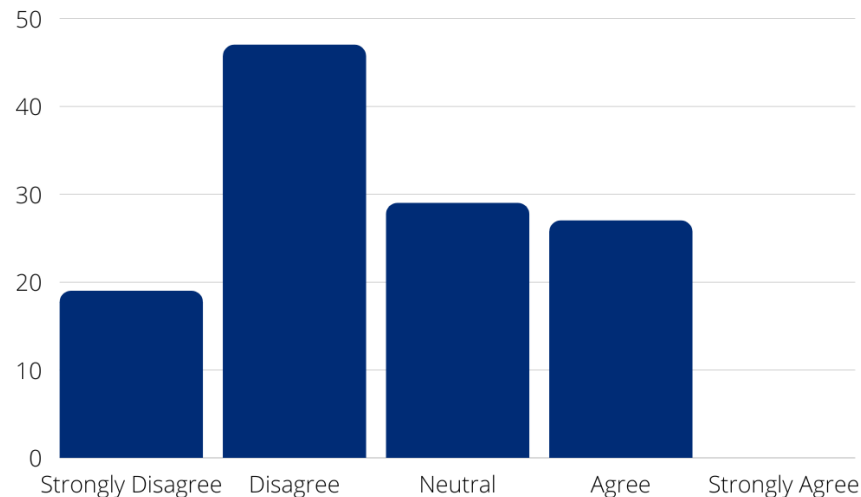


**Efficiency: I believe that Council conducts the operations of the Town in a timely manner, effectively using resources and in accordance with the Council Strategic Plan.**

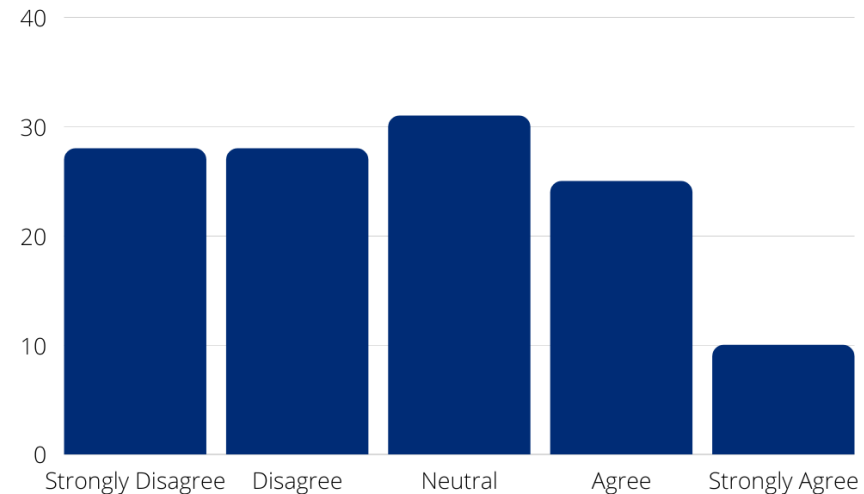


# Survey Responses

Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.



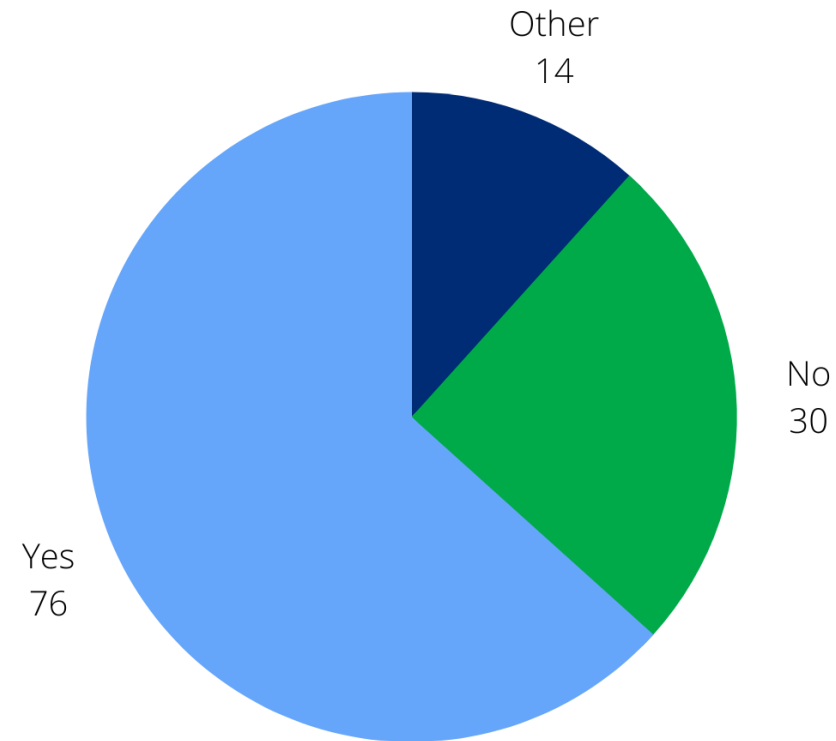
**Effectiveness: I believe that Council is doing a good job at achieving desired results and addressing resident priorities.**



**Impartiality: I trust that the decisions of Council are unbiased and made based on the best interest of the Town.**

# Survey Responses

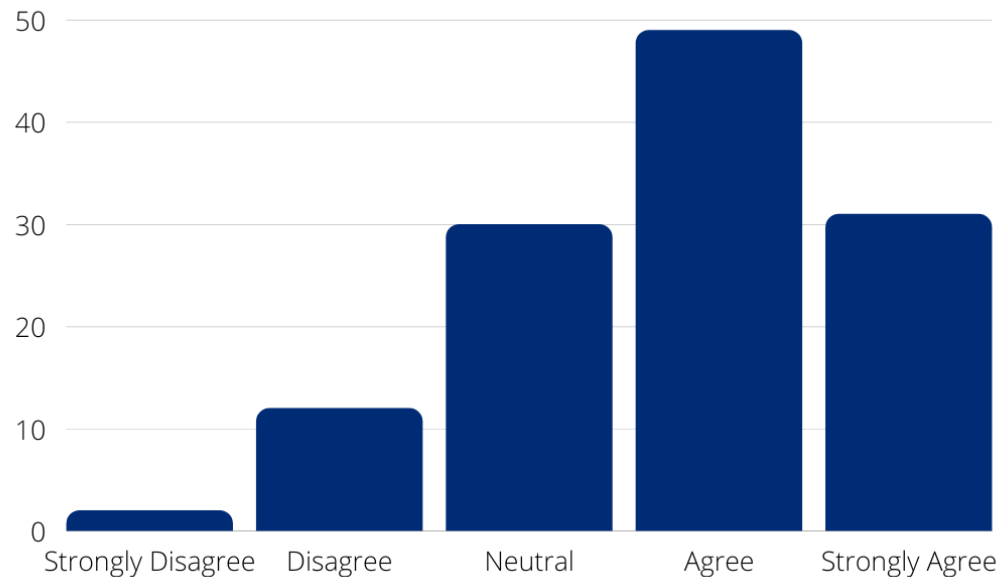
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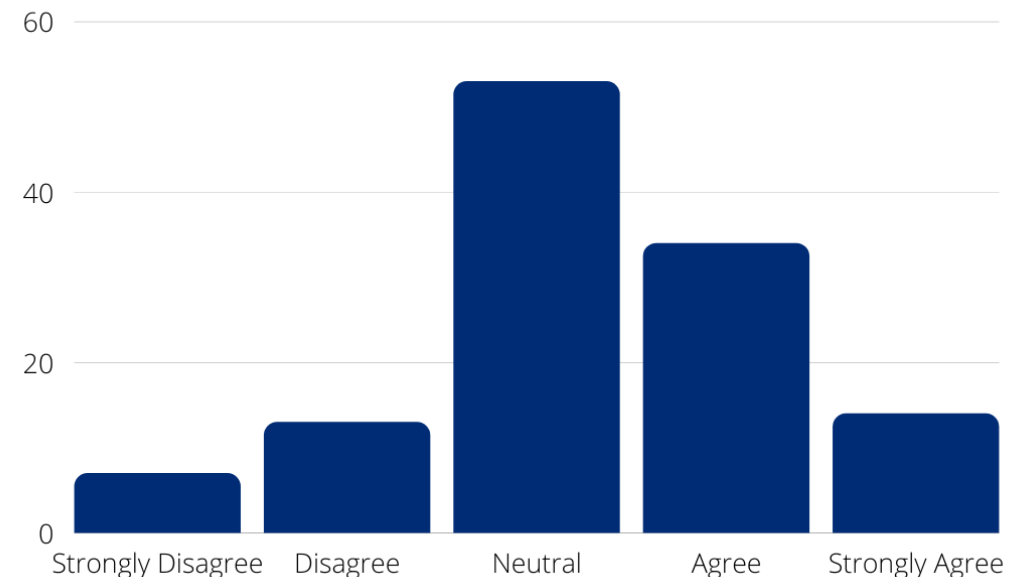
**Would you support a change in the Town's governance structure?**

# Survey Responses

Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.



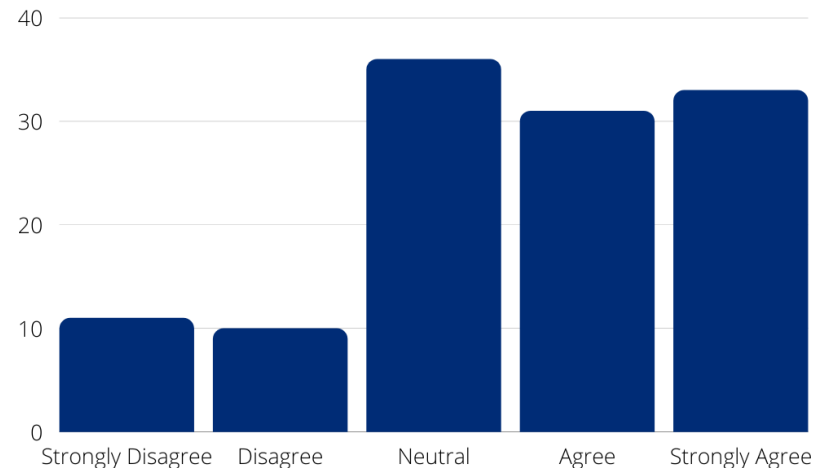
**I feel Advisory Committees provide a value to Council decision making.**



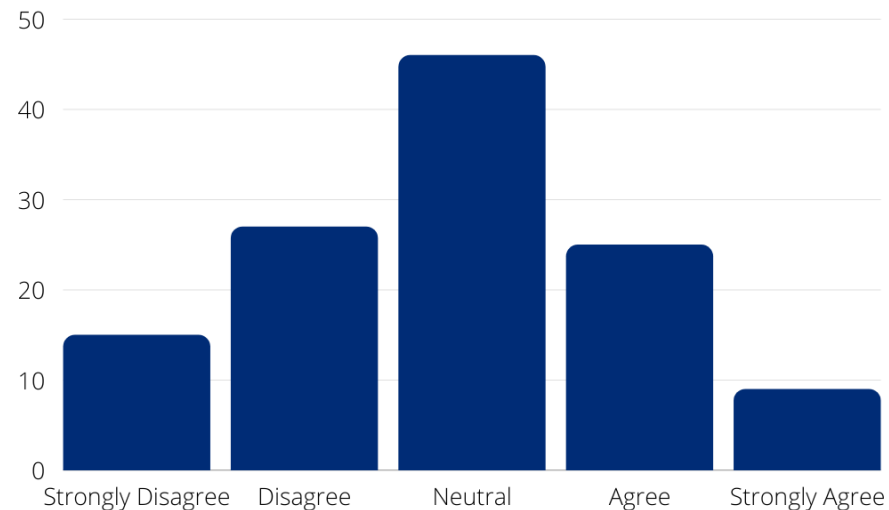
**I would be more inclined to join a Committee of Council if the meetings were less formal.**

# Survey Responses

Q: Please review each of the following statements and select your level of agreement or disagreement.



**I would sit on an Advisory Committee of Council if the term of appointment was 12 to 18 months to accomplish a specific task asked of Council.**



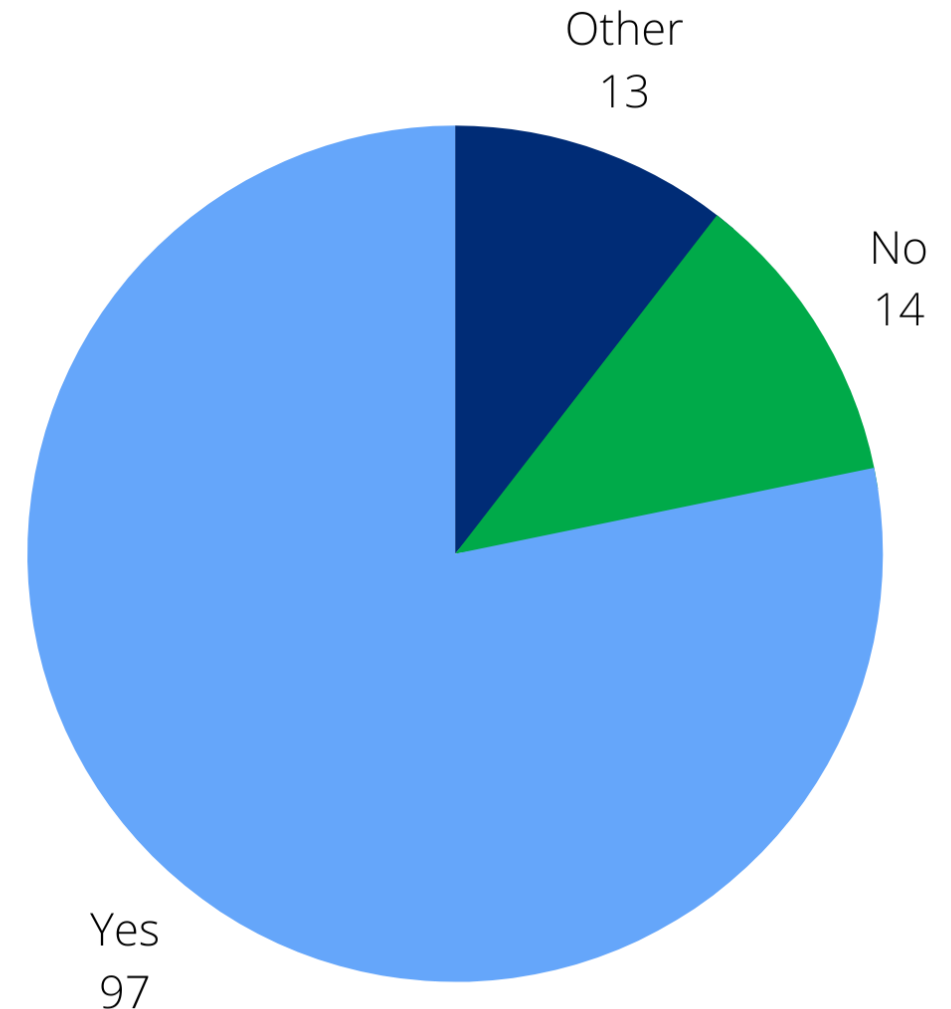
**Advisory Committees current structures are too complex and intimidating to be a member of.**

# Survey Responses

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**Q: Would you like Council to consider hosting regular Town Hall meetings throughout the calendar year?**  
(For example, 3 - 4 times per year)

**Note:** The structure and composition of the Town Hall meetings is to be determined.





# Survey Responses

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## “Other” responses regarding Town Hall meetings

Town Halls are important as vehicles for updating the community on progress and challenges related to the implementation of the strategic plan. They should be offered twice a year, structured and widely publicized.

I would support Town Hall meetings but they need to have a format so they do not become a platform for complaints and disagreements

I would only want Town Hall meetings if they were specific to a single topic

I would like to see more informal opportunities to interact with members of council

# NEXT STEPS

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- ✓ Listen and gather feedback from residents at todays Public Meeting
- ✓ Continue to draft the various amendments and updated to policies and the Procedural By-law
- ✓ Meet with the Governance Review Working Group to review and prepare final drafts for full Council Review



# THANK YOU

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Questions or feedback?

Contact the Legislative Services Division



[clerk@cobourg.ca](mailto:clerk@cobourg.ca)



905-372-4301