

Rural Services Network
1st Sounding Board Survey
Parish Council Responses

'The impacts of austerity measures on local services'

320 Parish Councillors responded to the survey on the impacts of austerity measures on local services.

Q1. Compared to 3 years ago how would you rate current public services?

Much Better	0.32%
Slightly Better	6.41%
Unchanged	22.44%
Slightly Worse	56.60%
Much Worse	19.23%

Q2 a) In respect of specific services how have these changed over the last 3 years?

	Much Better	Slightly Better	Unchanged	Slightly Worse	Much Worse	Don't Know
Recycling Collection	6.94%	26.81%	47.00%	13.88%	4.42%	0.95%
Parks and open Spaces	1.70%	13.27%	55.10%	18.37%	2.72%	8.84%
GP Surgeries	2.52%	16.04%	41.82%	27.99%	10.06%	1.57%
Refuse Collection	3.79%	19.24%	54.57%	16.40%	5.34%	0.63%
Local Hospitals	1.32%	16.50%	36.63%	26.73%	10.56%	8.25%
Schools and Colleges	1.17%	8.56%	36.96%	11.28%	3.89%	38.13%
Bus Services	0%	5.21%	25.00%	34.03%	20.83%	14.93%
Street Lighting	0.34%	6.83%	58.70%	15.36%	7.17%	11.60%
Libraries	1.05%	9.47%	35.79%	24.56%	13.68%	15.44%
Street cleaning	0.66%	4.95%	42.24%	31.35%	12.87%	7.92%
Police	0.99%	10.26%	31.46%	37.42%	11.59%	8.28%
Care for the elderly	0%	0.81%	21.54%	18.70%	11.79%	47.15%
Road Maintenance	1.0%	6.03%	13.33%	33.02%	44.44%	1.27%
Meals on wheels	0%	0%	24.00%	4.89%	4.44%	66.67%
Social Services	0%	0.83%	24.58%	11.67%	10.42%	52.50%

Housing Advice Services	0%	0.87%	26.96%	5.65%	1.74%	64.78%
Planning Services	1.72%	8.25%	31.96%	24.74%	18.90%	14.43%
Environmental Health Services	0%	3.82%	39.69%	16.41%	1.91%	38.17%
Sport and Leisure Facilities	0.36%	11.51%	50.36%	15.11%	3.60%	19.06%

Q2b)

Respondent were asked whether they used the list of services above. The responses below therefore show the same areas of service with responses from the users of the services:

	Much Better	Slightly Better	Unchanged	Slightly Worse	Much Worse	Don't Know
Recycling Collection	7.24%	26.97%	47.04%	14.14%	4.28%	0.33%
Parks and open Spaces	2.06%	15.64%	58.85%	19.34%	2.88%	1.23%
GP Surgeries	2.55%	16.24%	41.40%	28.34%	10.19%	1.27%
Refuse Collection	3.83%	19.49%	54.63%	16.61%	5.11%	0.32%
Local Hospitals	1.48%	18.15%	36.67%	29.26%	10.74%	3.70%
Schools and Colleges	2.91%	17.48%	49.53%	20.39%	6.80%	2.91%
Bus Services	0	7.38%	26.85%	39.60%	25.50%	0.67%
Street Lighting	0.49%	9.22%	60.19%	19.90%	9.71%	0.49%
Libraries	0.53%	13.27%	36.73%	31.12%	16.84%	0.51%
Street cleaning	0.89%	5.33%	42.67%	35.56%	13.33%	2.22%
Police	1.32%	13.22%	29.52%	41.41%	12.78%	1.76%
Care for the elderly	0	3.33%	28.33%	36.67%	26.67%	5.00%
Road Maintenance	2.09%	6.62%	13.24%	32.75%	44.95%	0.35%
Meals on wheels	0	0	66.67%	16.67%	16.67%	0
Social Services	0	4.44%	42.22%	24.44%	22.22%	6.67%
Housing Advice	0	6.67%	40.00%	20.00%	6.67%	26.67%

Services						
Planning Services	1.42%	10.38%	30.66%	29.72%	24.06%	3.77%
Environmental Health Services	0	6.56%	49.18%	29.51%	3.28%	11.48%
Sport and Leisure Facilities	0.54%	15.14%	59.46%	19.46%	3.78%	1.62%

Q3. Have you noticed any changes in the accessibility of services provided by your local Council(s) over the last 3 years in terms of:

a) The opening times when a service is available:

Yes- longer hours	2.26%
Yes –shorter hours	31.29%
No Change	67.42%

Shorter Hours included:

- Loss of services
- GP surgery arrangements
- Bus Links
- Generally increasing reliance on internet to report problems, feeling of distance from call centre staff
- Reduced contact 'window' for speaking to officers
- Cannot contact departments directly
- Recycling tip is closed on several days of the week
- Police presence less accessible because they have moved
- Recycling centres open fewer hours

Longer hours included:

- More services available online

b) How frequently a service is provided:

Yes- More often	2.28%
Yes-Less often	44.95%
No Change	53.09%

Less often comments included:

- Longer waiting times when telephoning
- Longer wait for non urgent appointment with GP
- No street cleaning
- Pot holes not fixed
- Library opening times
- Libraries, road maintenance and youth clubs all worse

- Refuse collection
- Less buses, police more stretched, roads damaged

c) The location from which services are provided?

Yes - Wider range of locations	2.70%
Yes - Smaller range of locations	34.46%
No Change	63.51%

Smaller range of locations included:

- Closure of police enquiry offices / desks
- Harder to get appointments at GP, have to travel to next village
- Consolidation of services in larger towns doesn't help the end users in remote areas
- CAB support in villages now online only
- Bus passes no longer available from district council offices
- Loss of services and lack of transport to access services

d) The charges made for particular services?

Yes – Increased charges	43.92%
Yes – Decreased charges	1.01 %
No Change	55.74%

Increased charges included:

- Garden Waste Collection
- Planning fees increased
- Charges for some types of refuse
- Water sampling charges/risk assessments all cost money now
- Buses, Car parking, Council tax
- Increased charges for carer services
- Planning consultations
- Travel costs for over 16's

Q4. Please list the three most significant impacts of changes in service provision affecting your local area over the last 3 years.

There were a range of responses to this question which can be collated into four main areas:

Negative Impact	Issues
Decline in road maintenance Reduced bus service in rural areas Reduced public realm services/maintenance Decline in policing Poorer refuse or recycling Decline in GP services Decline in planning services	Roads: repairs take longer. Large potholes, lanes very poor. Roads patched temporarily not resurfaced. Lack of gritting. Cycle paths poorly maintained. Overgrown hedges, ditches/drains/gullies not cleared. Road signs deteriorating. Verges left uncut. Street lighting reduced

<p>Reduced hospital services/accessibility Reduced elderly care Reduced access to council services (delays/charges/quality) Less provision for Youth Poorer education provision Less provision for sport/ leisure and play</p>	<p>Buses: Fewer routes, less frequent, first buses later and last buses earlier. No evening service. Some settlements/ parishes have lost all bus services. Increased fares. Problems compounded by loss of local service provision so people have to go to large town. School bus fare increased. Cuts in timetable prevent commuting.</p> <p>Public Realm: Toilets closed. Buildings not maintained. Litter problems. Grass not cut. No street cleaning. Overgrown paths, dog fouling. Footpaths not maintained. No dog warden. Less street cleaning. Abandoned vehicle problems increasing</p>
<p>Positive Impacts</p>	
<p>Improved recycling. More services online (caveat: only positive for those with good broadband) Reduced waste More Parish influence on decisions Local management of a library Better policing and neighbourhood watch Street scene highways inspection Village caretaker initiative</p>	<p>Only recycling received a significant number of positive comments (9). Those that gave more detail included greater frequency and wider range of materials collected.</p>

Q5) Looking forward are you aware of any planned changes to local services that have yet to be implemented?

44.12% responded yes to this question and below are they're responses in more detail.

Closure of cottage hospital, loss of beds in local hospital, reduction in services at local hospital
Children's Centre closing
GP services reducing
Reduction in social care and more use of volunteers, care home closing, meals-on-wheels cuts
Libraries under further threat, mobile libraries cut
More cuts to bus services, increased fares, higher charges to school pupils
Loss of small local police and fire stations
Road maintenance still worse, no footpath maintenance, highway lighting cuts
Increasing rail fares
Fewer dog wardens, removal of dog bins
More charges for recycling garden waste, increased charge for disposing of large items, removal of amenity skips/lorry. Less frequent garden waste collections.
Decline in planning services, outsourcing
Concentration of services in urban "hubs"
Maintenance of public areas declining, more fly tipping