



PARISH PLAN

Writtle Future

BUSINESS SURVEY



Table of Contents

Title	Page No.
References	1
Introduction to project	2
Creation of the questionnaire	2
Completion of the questionnaire	2
Analysis of data	3
Businesses in and around Writtle	3
Reasons for locating businesses in Writtle	3
Percentage number of employees per business	4
Do Writtle businesses prefer to employ local people?	4
Where do employees live?	5
How do employees travel to work?	5
Business provision	6
Business problems with crime/vandalism	6
Writtle News	7
Development of Parish website	7
Contributions towards such a website	8
Adequate resources for development?	8
Do businesses feel encouraged to expand resources?	9
Identifying local issues	9
Local benefits to businesses	10
Perceived current situation	10
Community spirit in relation to the businesses	11
Conclusion	11
Recommendations	11

References

Rural Community Council of Essex (2005): *'Parish Plans Information Pack'*. Feering, Essex.

Writtle Parish Council (2004): *'Writtle Village Design Statement'*.

Jonathan Fulbeck (*front cover artwork*)

Introduction to Project

This report aims to provide the Writtle Parish Plan Association (WPPA) with the necessary information required to aid in the development of the Parish, particularly in relation to its businesses.

The Parish Plan will aim to build upon the current framework of the Writtle Village Design Statement (WVDS) from 2004. This Design Statement was 'developed by a small nucleus of residents who formed a steering group. The group sought the views of the community in order to identify the local character and to make... recommendations to guide the design and character of future development proposals' (Writtle Parish Council 2004). It will also work alongside the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) in its community led planning. 'We work with local communities to plan for their future, by supporting parish councils and community groups in the production of community-led plans'.

Students studying an Applied Research module at Writtle College, on business and leisure/adventure tourism courses, were approached by the WPPA with a view to the two groups working together. This exercise would enable the students to gain valuable practical experience in questionnaire design and completion, whilst aiding the WPPA in the collection and collation of data.

The WPPA provided a list of potential areas for questioning, noting those aspects of the Parish that they wished to gain a particular insight into, and those that were of specific relevance. The list was as follows:

Business and Employment	Crime and Safety
Education and Learning	Environment and Conservation
Health and Wellbeing	Heritage and Culture
Housing and Development	Leisure and recreation
Transport, traffic, roads and paths	New Technology in Business Development

Creation of the Questionnaire

A number of student sub groups devised a questionnaire format with suggested questions. These were then compared and analysed along with two members of the WPPA. A final design and question selection was then agreed upon. An initial listing of 49 Parish businesses was given to the students.

A questionnaire survey was chosen because of its use in the collection and collation of a large amount of data from multiple sources, as well as being user-friendly and suitable for communication. This method is very popular within B2B markets, airlines, hotels, other service businesses and market research companies. Information gathered has suggested that the ideal length for questionnaires given for self-completion is four sides of A4, with approximately 20 – 30 questions. The questionnaire devised by the students of Writtle College included 17 questions (some in two parts).

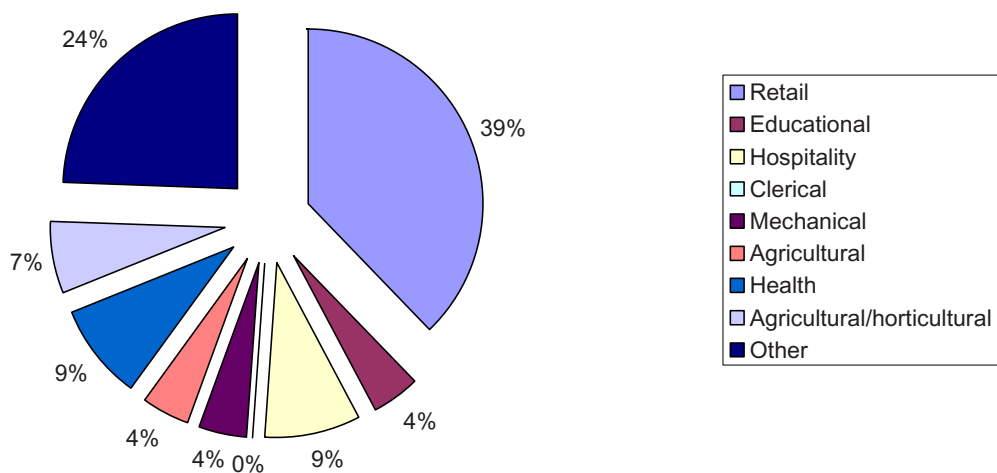
Completion of the Questionnaires

The WPPA notified each business of its intentions and gave prior warning that students would be requesting their time to complete the questionnaire. In addition, students carried their Writtle College photo identification cards with them as well as a covering letter provided by the Parish Council.

Questionnaires were completed during the period of March, April and May 2007. Each business had been contacted initially by the students to arrange a suitable time to conduct the questionnaire. This occurred mostly without problem, although some businesses have ceased to trade and others were closed for refurbishment. Of the 49 questionnaires issued, 42 were returned completed, some declined.

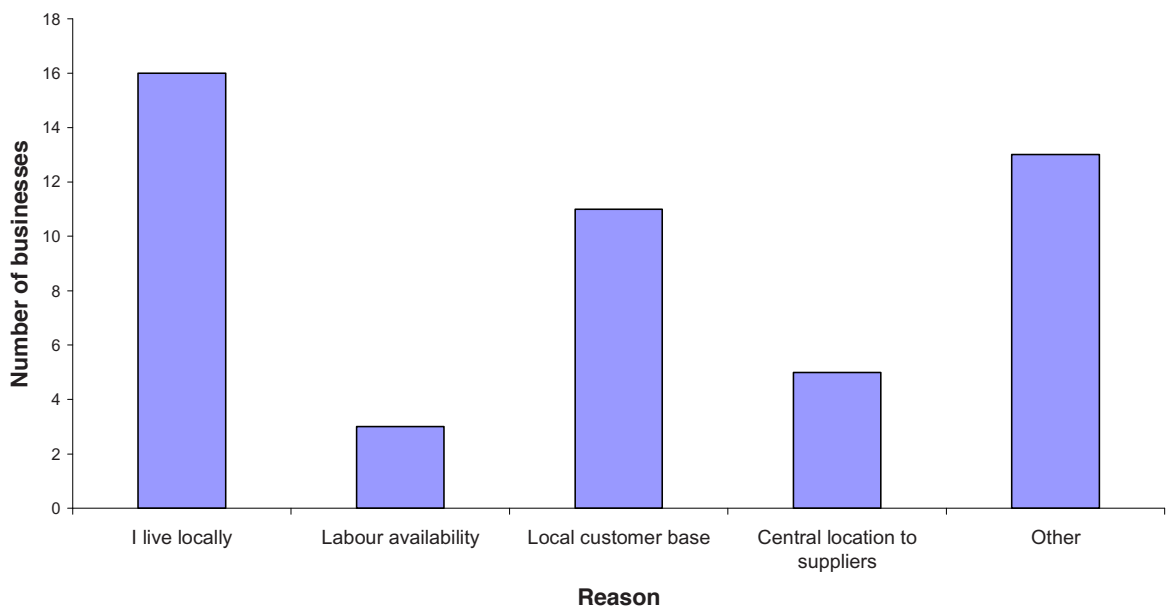
Analysis of Data

Percentages of business in and around Writtle



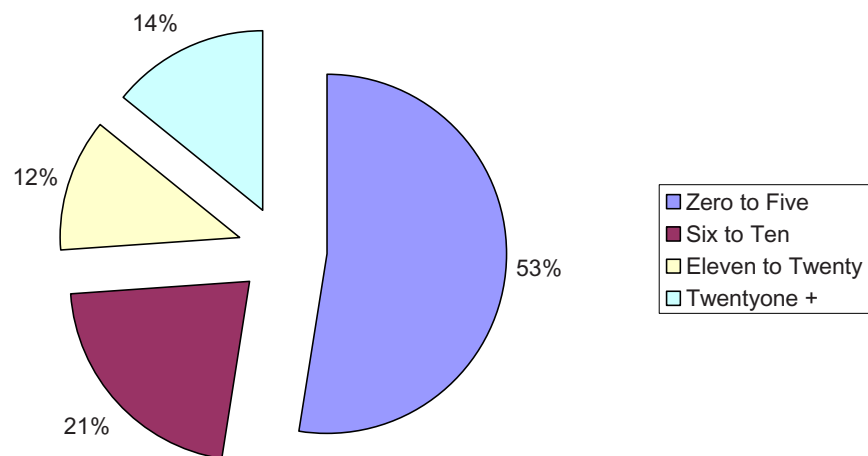
Of all the businesses within the parish of Writtle, 39% are retail based. Although situated in the heart of the Essex countryside, only 11% are agricultural or horticultural based businesses. None of the businesses that responded to the questionnaires were clerical; this may be due to the location. Writtle is not part of a CBD (Central Business District) and although the road network is good it is not an office based area. 'Other' businesses included historical buildings.

Reasons for locating the business in Writtle



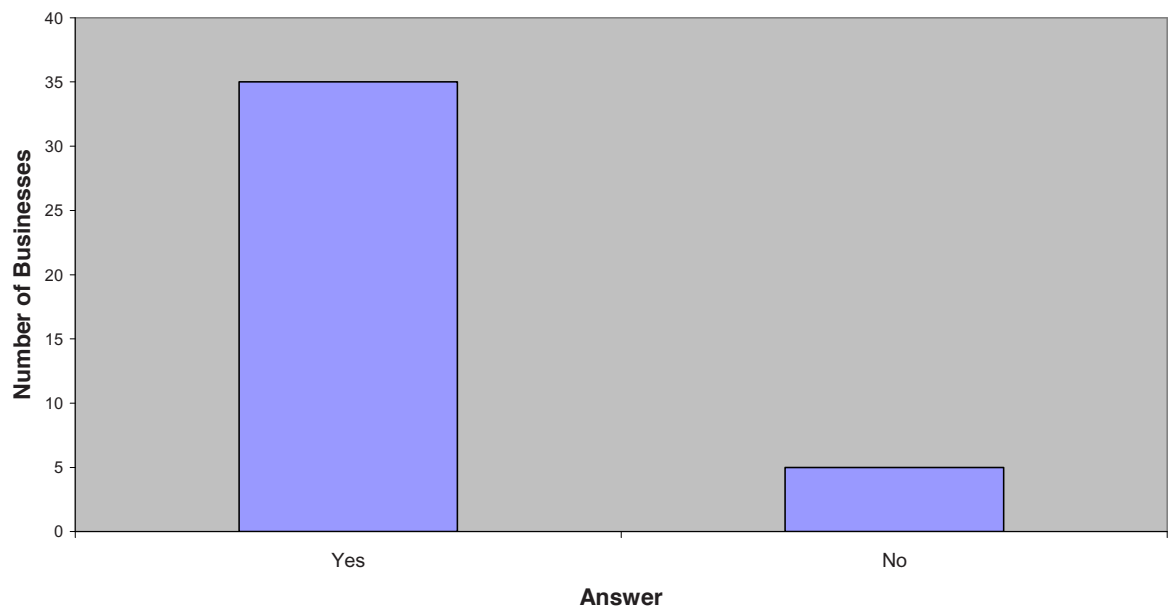
Living locally is the main reason for locating a business in Writtle. Labour availability is not a high priority, as people are willing to travel for employment.

Percentage number of employees per business



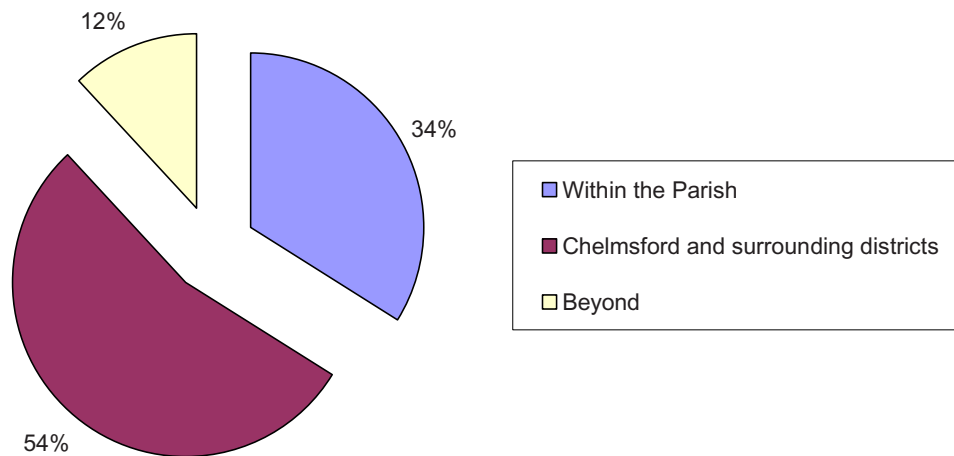
The chart above shows that most businesses in Writtle have up to five employees. This, however, does not necessarily mean that they are small businesses. The farms are huge enterprises but employ only a small number of staff.

Do Writtle businesses prefer to employ local people?



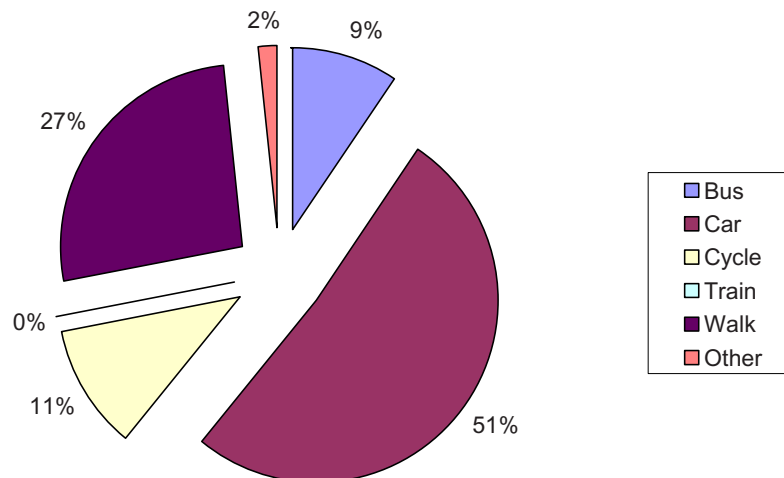
Businesses within the Writtle Parish do prefer to employ locally. Employing locally helps build rapport within the Parish.

Where do employees live ?

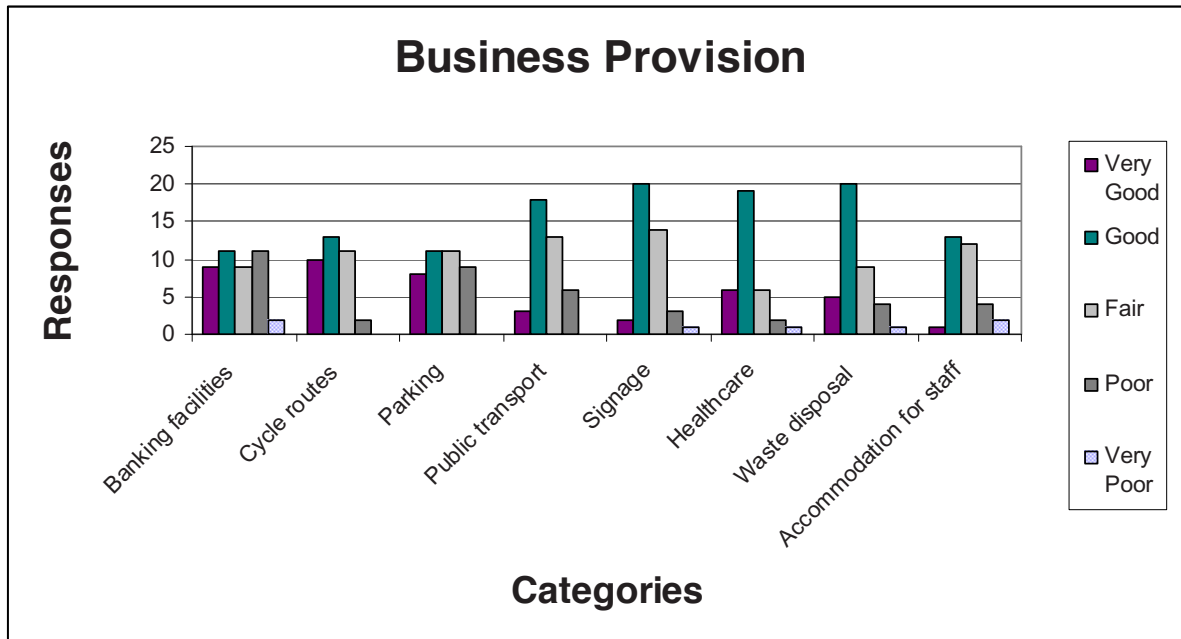


Although the businesses prefer to employ locally, it is obvious from the evidence above that most employees come from Chelmsford and the surrounding districts. Only 34% of employees actually live within the Parish.

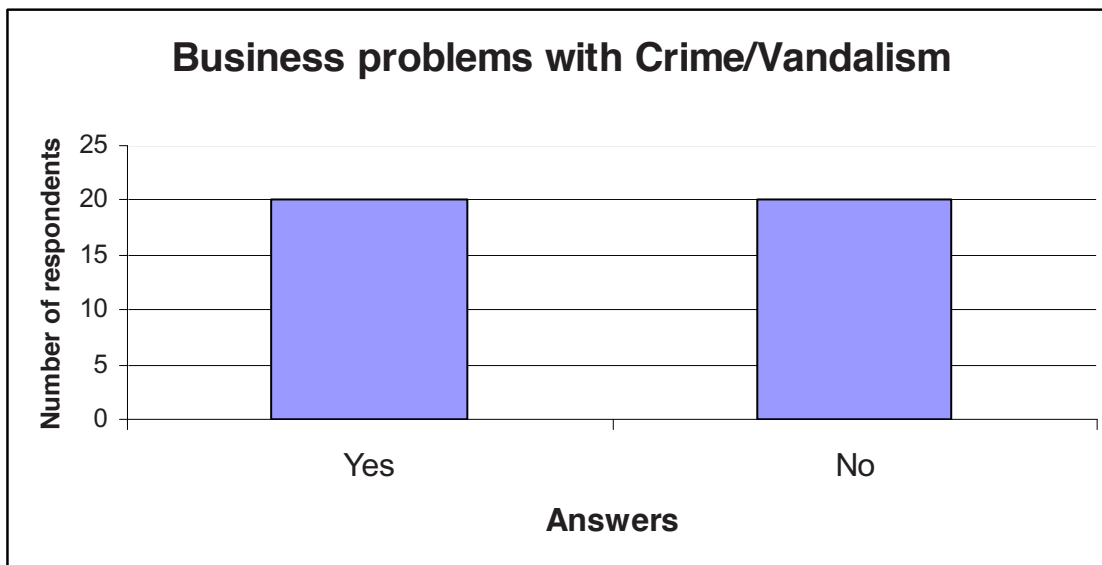
How do Writtle employees travel to work?



Most employees travel to work by car. People are unable to travel in by train as the nearest station is in Chelmsford.

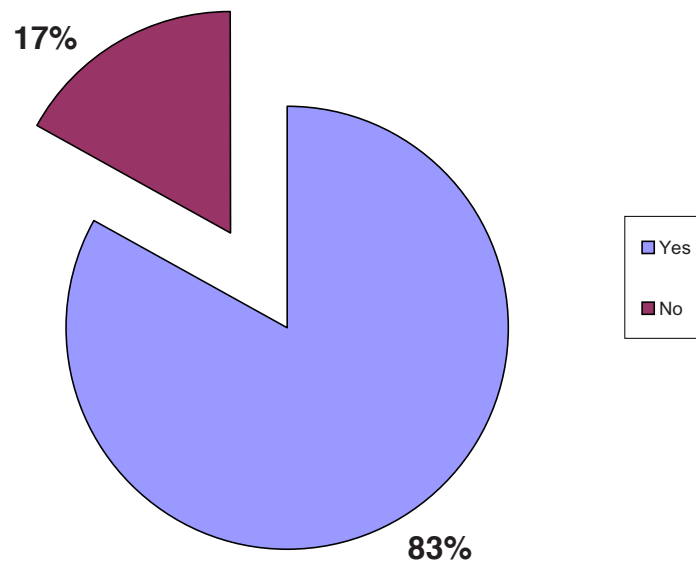


Overall, most of the areas identified were ranked as good to fair. There are a couple of areas such as parking which are deemed as poor, with 9 of the businesses commenting on this. Banking facilities were deemed to be poor by 11 of the businesses. Areas such as signage, healthcare and waste disposal all rank very well among the businesses.



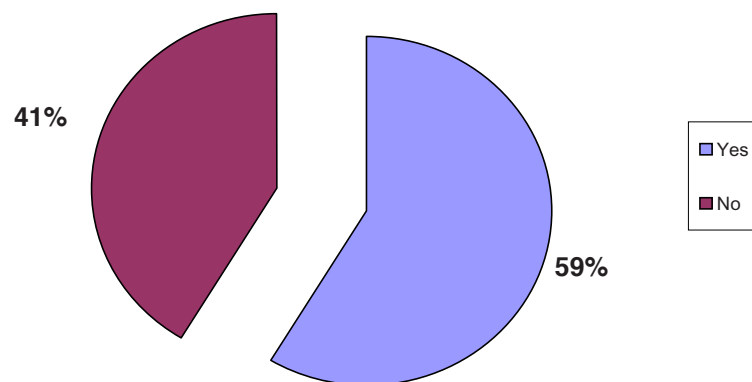
Out of all the businesses asked there is no clear answer to whether there is a problem with crime or vandalism. The data shows that there is a clear 50/50 split. This could be due to the location of the business within the parish.

Writtle News



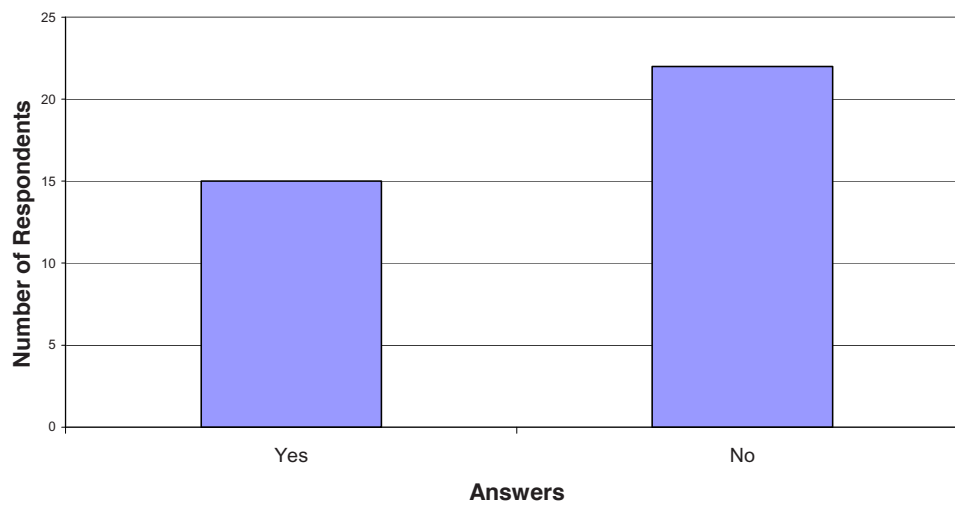
The results show that 83% of the businesses in Writtle are satisfied with the current standard of the Writtle News and its option as an advertising medium to them.

Development of Parish Website



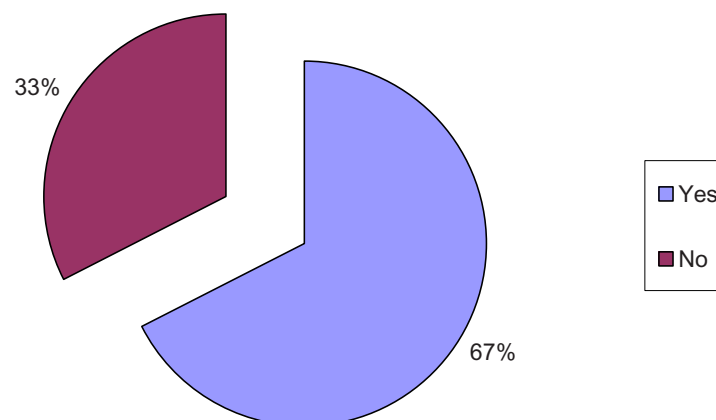
There was a mixed response about whether the development of a parish website would be advantageous to businesses. 24 out of the businesses feel that development would be advantageous, while 17 do not feel it would be of any advantage.

Contributions towards such a website



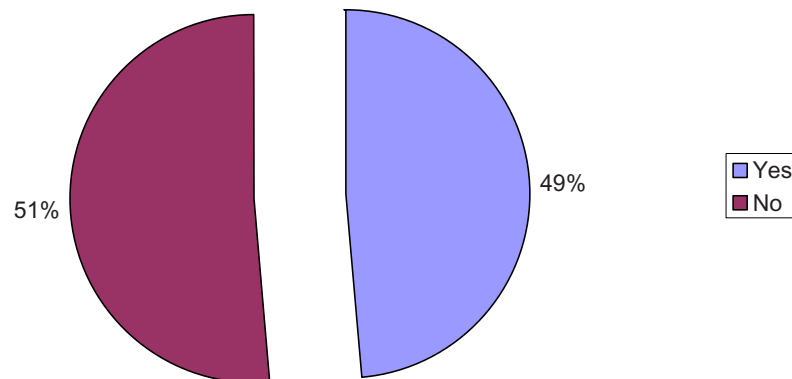
Even though 24 businesses feel that the development of a website would be advantageous to them, only 15 said that they would be happy to contribute towards it. This means that 37% of the businesses that said that they would gain from it do not wish to offer any financial aid.

Adequate resources for development?

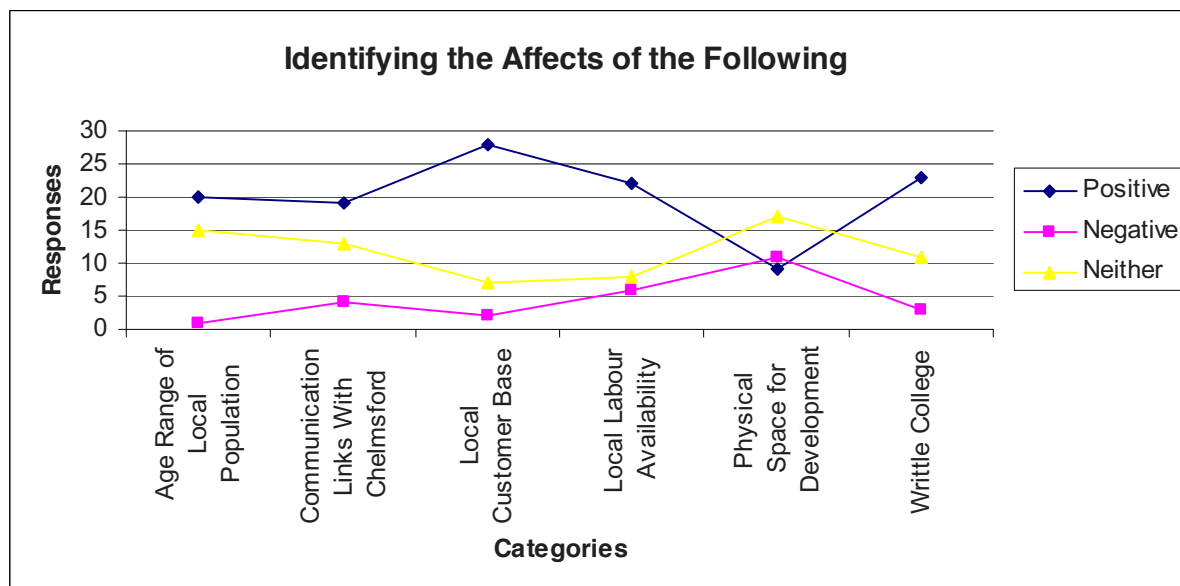


The businesses, in general, feel that there are adequate resources to develop within the Parish. 27 businesses said that they feel encouraged to expand within the Parish, while 13 said that they do not feel there are enough resources to expand. This is clearly shown with 67% of the businesses feeling encouraged to use the resources provided within the Parish to expand.

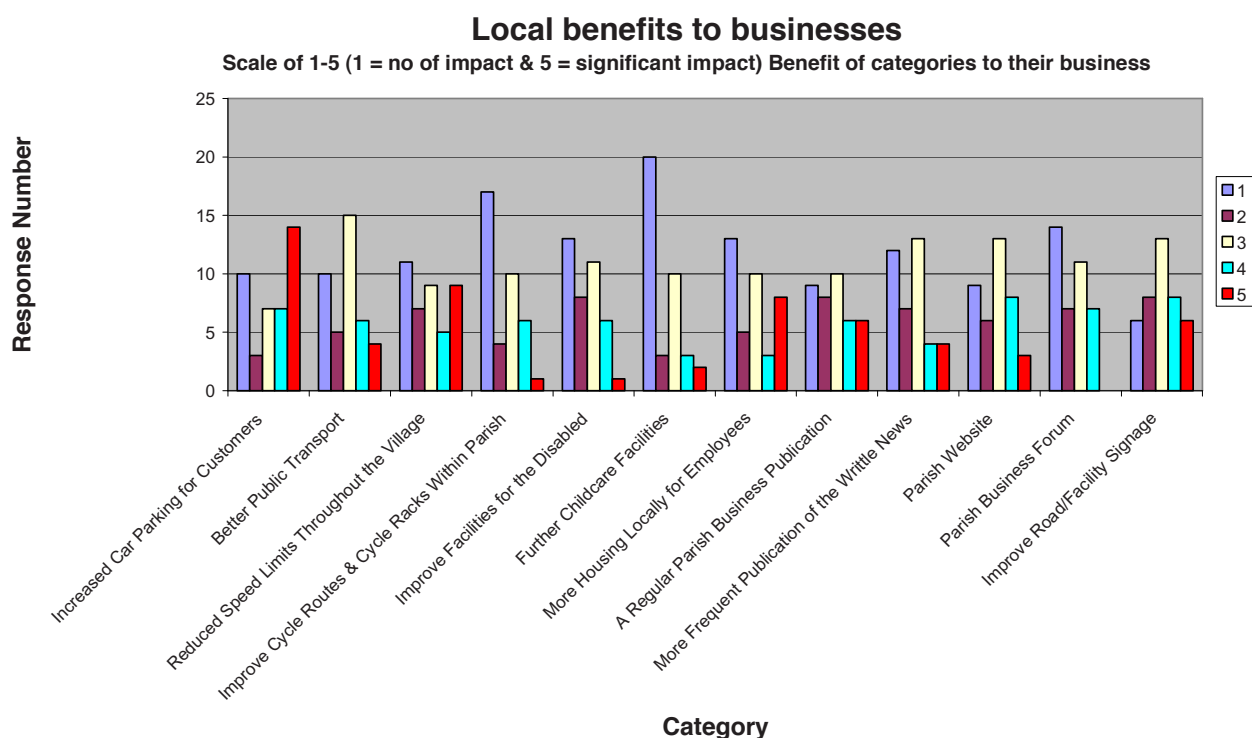
Do businesses feel encouraged to expand on resources?



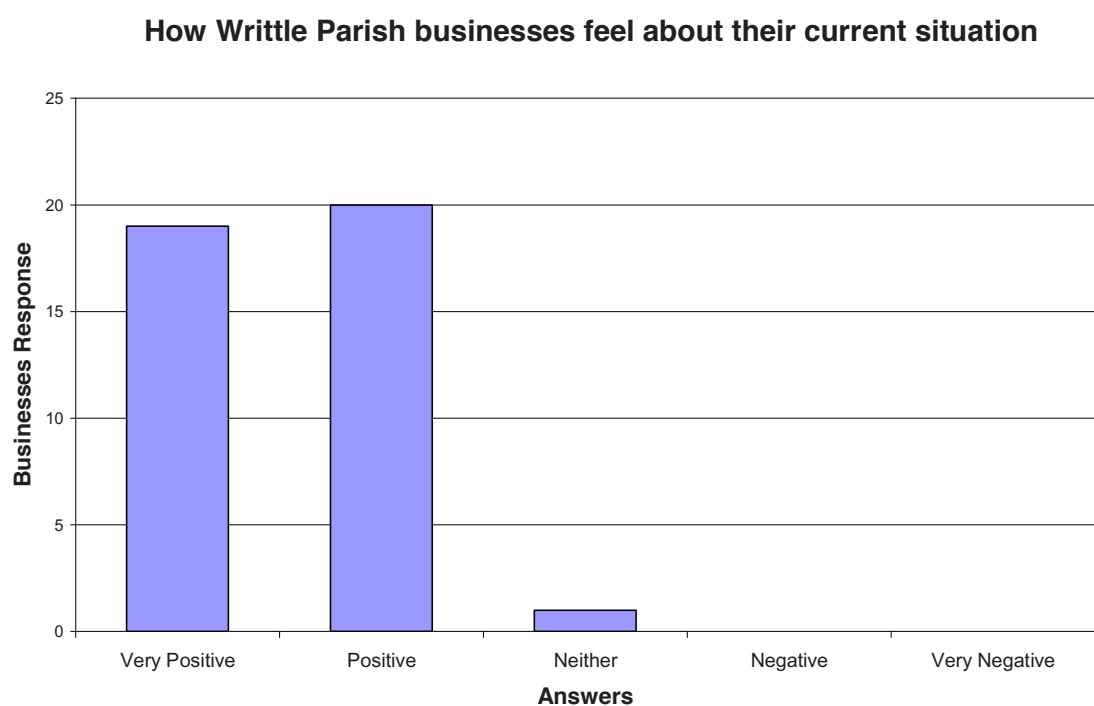
The businesses of Writtle Parish generally feel mixed about using the resources provided within the Parish in relation with their business. 19 businesses said that they don't feel encouraged to expand on the resources, while 18 said that they do feel encouraged to expand on these resources.



Feedback by the businesses was mostly positive. The main concern is the lack of physical space for development. Many of the businesses pointed this out as being a problem; this was the only category to have lower positive votes than negative.

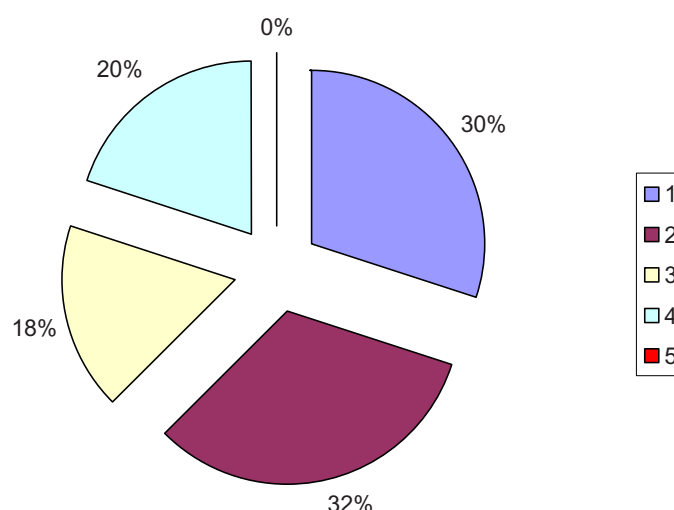


Businesses would like to see is an increase in parking within the Parish. This is clearly identified within the chart above as having the most significant impact. Businesses clearly feel that further childcare facilities would have no impact on their business.



20 of the business felt positive about their business situation and 19 felt very positive about their situation which is good news for the Parish. Only one business couldn't decide how they felt about their current situation and therefore chose neither.

**Community spirit in relation to the business on a scale of 1-5
(1 = Bad & 5 = Good)**



The majority of businesses within the Parish, 62%, said that they perceived the community spirit in relation to their business was bad. Worryingly, none of the businesses questioned said that the community spirit towards them was good.

Conclusion

By constructing and completing a simple questionnaire we have helped start a dialogue within the community between businesses and other residents. The Parish can use this report as a starting block for future projects and continue to develop the local environment, thus helping to create a better community spirit within the Parish of Writtle. The graphs shown provide a good overview of answers to questions asked and should be used and reviewed against future research. The recommendations noted below will help to guide the development of a Parish Plan and give a real focus and measurable objectives towards improvements.

Recommendations

1. The Post Office needs developing to suit the parish business needs.
2. More banking facilities are required (especially extra ATM machines)
3. More car parking is required.
4. The Parish should drive towards business orientation, and focus on the businesses and their operational needs.
5. A business forum and website would be very beneficial; however, the Parish businesses were largely reluctant to contribute to it. Further investigation is required into this as to funding and possible advertising revenues.
6. New/more physical space for business development is required. Businesses need to feel encouraged to expand, as currently they don't feel that they have the support from the Parish.
7. Currently the community spirit from a business perspective is poor, this needs to be addressed.
8. There needs to be improved communication between the Parish Council, locals and the businesses.