

Watford Borough Council Community Safety Partnership Task Group

Community Safety Engagement Survey Report

December 2013

Introduction

The Community Safety Partnership Task Group is a statutory task group which monitors the performance and priorities of the local Community Safety Partnership. The Task Group comprises seven councillors and meets approximately four times per year.

Councillors, officers and members of the public can submit suggestions for topics to be scrutinised. A scrutiny suggestion was received from Councillor Meerabux relating to engagement on community safety issues and it was agreed that three surveys should be undertaken to explore the areas raised in the suggestion.

The purpose of the surveys was to understand how easily the community can engage with authorities on matters related to community safety. The surveys also explored how effective residents believed different methods of engagement were, how familiar residents were with local contacts and how communication could be improved.

The three surveys were sent to the following groups:

- Local residents' and community groups
- Watford Borough Councillors and the Elected Mayor
- Police Officers from the Safer Neighbourhood Team

Methodology

The surveys were conducted using two methodologies: online and postal. The surveys for councillors and for the Police were only conducted online. Local residents' and community groups were contacted either by post or by email. Online surveys were undertaken through Survey Monkey, which is a web-based consultation system. Paper responses were entered manually into the online system. All results have been calculated using Survey Monkey software and open-ended responses summarised.

Response rates

The number of responses for each of the three surveys were as follows:

Community survey: 27 responses

Councillor survey: 20 responses

Police survey: 20 responses

Responses from councillors and the Mayor represented a response rate of 54%.

Most Police officers in the Safer Neighbourhood Team completed the survey.

The response rate for the survey of community groups was approximately 35%, although the survey was circulated more widely by councillors on the Task Group, so a definitive response rate cannot be determined.

Results

The results of each of the three surveys are shown below in turn. Answers to quantitative questions are shown graphically, either in tabular or graph format. Open-ended and other qualitative responses have been reviewed and summarised. Occasional anomalies may appear between the text and figures due to 'rounding' differences. It is also the case that not every respondent will have answered every question.

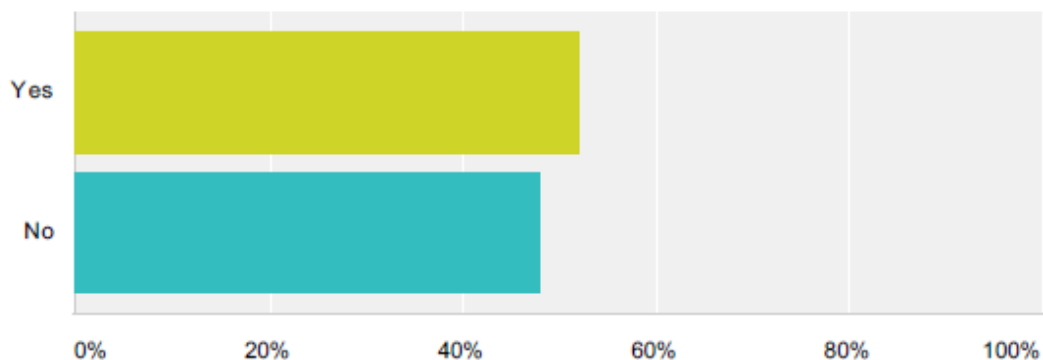
Community survey

Participation

27 responses were received to the survey commissioned by the community safety task group: including 6 residents' associations, 8 faith groups, 2 children's centres, a hostel, Watford Women's Centre, a friends group and a Latin American association.

Q2 Have you had any need to contact the police or other authorities about community safety issues in the past 12 months?

Answered: 25 Skipped: 2



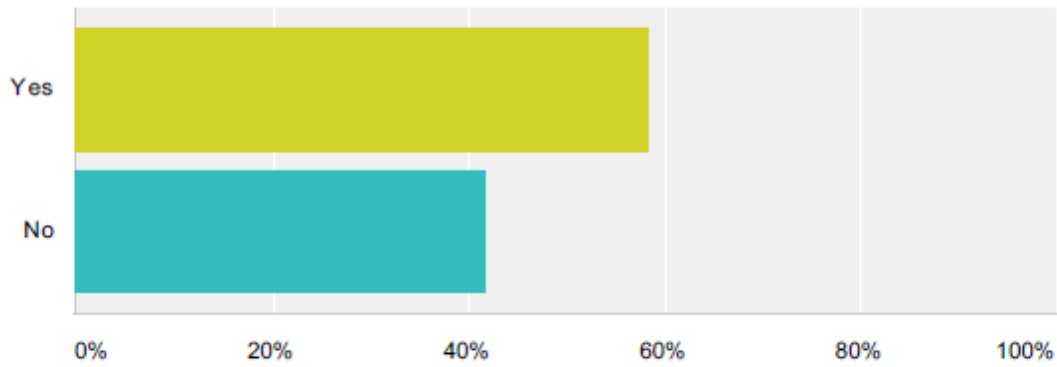
The results for this question show that there is a fairly even split between groups which have had a need to report community safety issues during the past 12 months and those which have not.

Q3. Community safety issues that respondents have contacted the police or other authorities about

Issues that respondents have reported in the last year include: domestic violence, burglary, theft, parking issues, dangerous driving and antisocial behaviour. One group contacts the police when planning a large annual event, to ensure that the police are consulted about health and safety.

Q4 If no, do you know who you could contact to raise any concerns about community safety?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 15

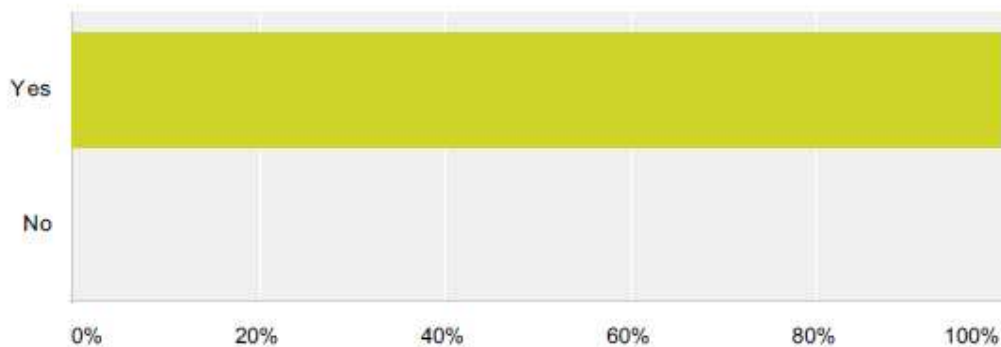


Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Yes	58.33%	7
No	41.67%	5
Total		12

Over half of the groups questioned know their local contacts with whom they could raise concerns about community safety.

Q5 If you answered no, would you like this information to be provided?

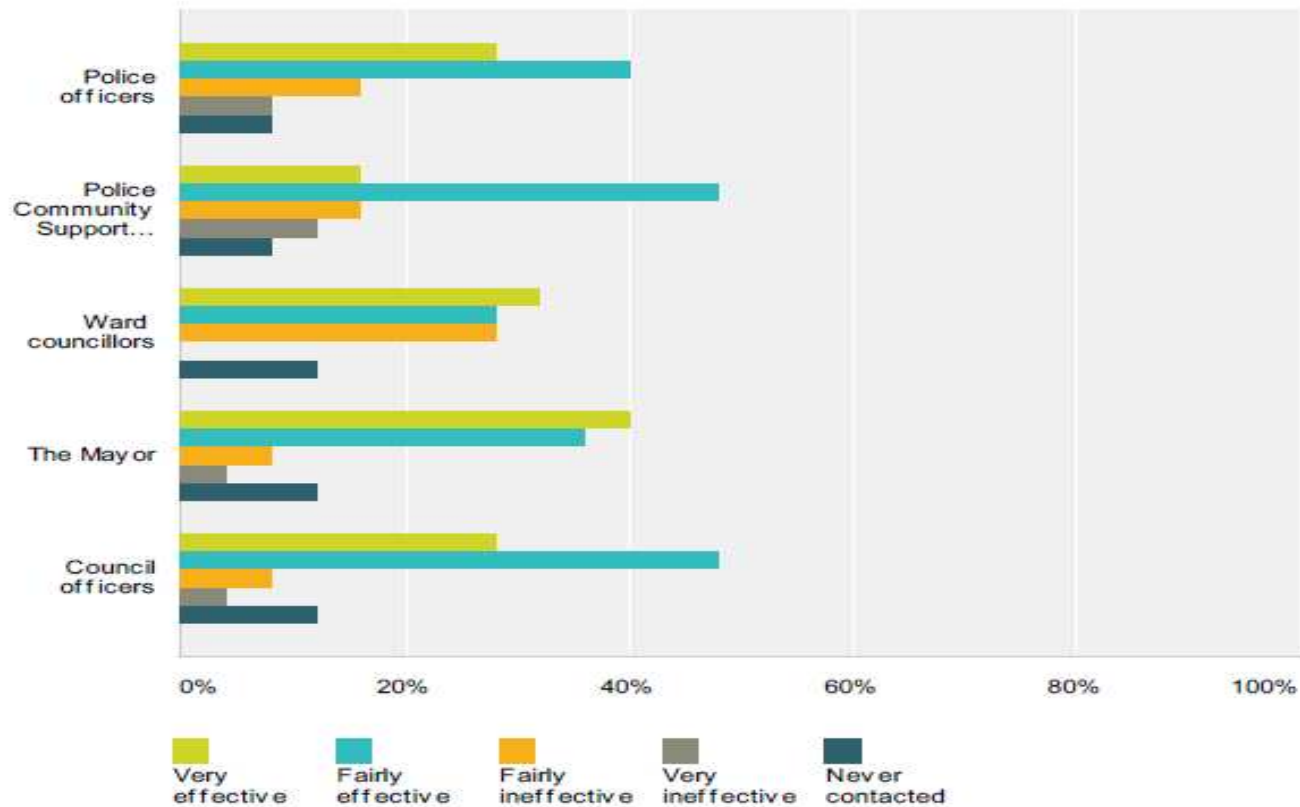
Answered: 5 Skipped: 22



Every respondent who answered this question would like to have details of local contacts to whom they could report community safety issues.

Q6 Thinking about who you might contact about community safety issues, how effective would you say they are in addressing your concerns?

Answered: 25 Skipped: 2



	Very effective	Fairly effective	Fairly ineffective	Very ineffective	Never contacted	Total
Police officers	28.00% 7	40% 10	16% 4	8% 2	8% 2	25
Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)	16% 4	48% 12	16% 4	12% 3	8% 2	25
Ward councillors	32% 8	28.00% 7	28.00% 7	0% 0	12% 3	25
The Mayor	40% 10	36% 9	8% 2	4% 1	12% 3	25
Council officers	28.00% 7	48% 12	8% 2	4% 1	12% 3	25

Q'7. The effectiveness of agencies dealing with community safety issues – 'others'

Respondents variously mentioned the probation and social services, leaders of faith communities, the police and individuals. The implication from one respondent was that a good working relationship with one individual could be followed by a very disappointing experience when that individual has to move on.

One respondent commented that police officers and PCSOs are able to deal with the immediate effects [of an incident or situation], but ward councillors, the Mayor and council officers “play a more strategic role and the effects are more long term”.

Q8. How community groups think communication between residents and authorities engaged in community safety could be improved

One respondent is concerned to have “joined up routes for complaining”, particularly in relation to pedestrians causing accidents to happen to cyclists. Another feels that there used to be good, two-way communication with their local PCSO, but this has now been largely replaced by an automated newsletter, leading to a reduction in interpersonal communication.

Some respondents would like more community involvement by PCSOs (for instance, the hostel would like regular visits by PCSOs so they can see the work they do), while one of the schools that responded feels that visits by PCSOs have “caused pupils to be taken out of class on too many occasions”. A third respondent feels that the police presence should be increased in the ‘Cassiobury triangle’ and that PCSOs should “make themselves available to be contacted”. Another respondent says that a local councillor is highly visible and makes a huge effort, while “sadly the authorities do very little”. This respondent would like representatives to attend community projects to improve communications.

Q9. Other comments that community groups wanted to make about engagement on community safety issues

Some comments refer to specific or practical issues such as attendance by the police or PCSOs at an organisation’s AGM, the desire to see more lights and less grass in Cassiobury Park, or wanting the council to enforce the rules

regarding cycling on pavements. Other comments are more general and strategic, such as “there are some amazing services in Watford but they need support to advertise and be sustainable”

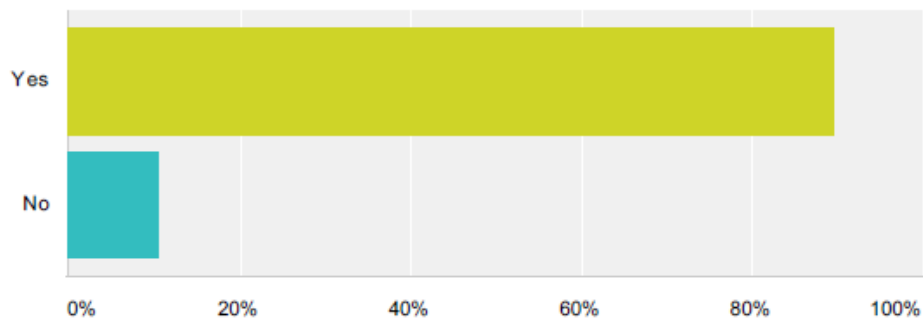
2. Councillors’ survey

Q1.Participation

20 people who participated in the survey identified themselves –19 councillors and the Mayor. Those who identified themselves represent nine out of 12 wards.

Q2 Have you had any need to contact the police or other authorities about community safety issues in the past 12 months?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



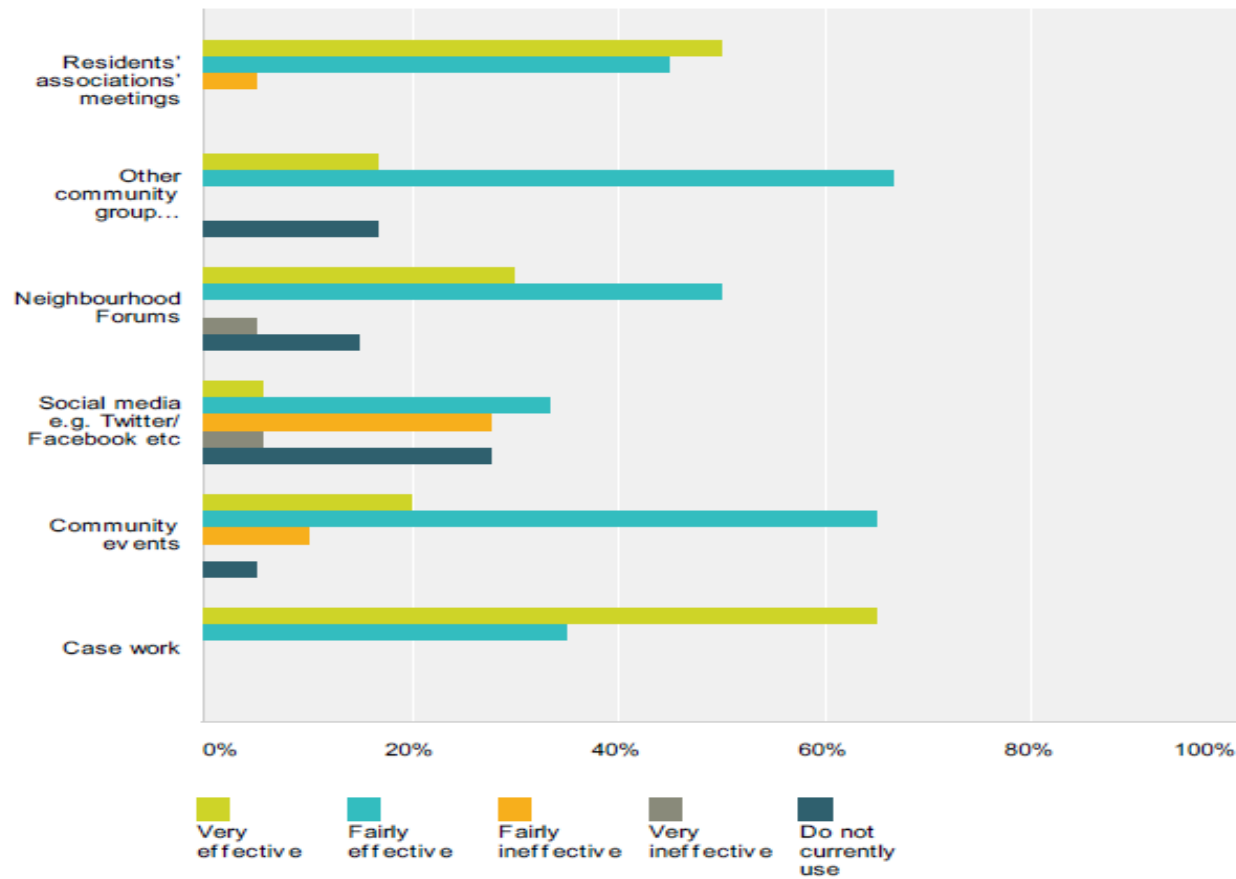
A very high proportion of councillors (89%) had contacted the Police or other authorities about community safety issues in the past 12 months.

Q3. Issues which councillors had raised with the police

A variety of issues were raised by councillors with the police in the previous year. These included: domestic violence, sexual assault, arson, theft, noise disruption, damage to property, speeding and teenagers drinking. However, those issues which were raised most often were drug-dealing and antisocial behaviour.

Q4 Thinking about how you engage with your local community/residents, which of the following, in your experience, work well?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



	Very effective	Fairly effective	Fairly ineffective	Very ineffective	Do not currently use	Total
Residents' associations' meetings	50% 10	45% 9	5% 1	0% 0	0% 0	20
Other community group meetings	16.67% 3	66.67% 12	0% 0	0% 0	16.67% 3	18
Neighbourhood Forums	30% 6	50% 10	0% 0	5% 1	15% 3	20
Social media e.g. Twitter/ Facebook etc	5.56% 1	33.33% 6	27.78% 5	5.56% 1	27.78% 5	18
Community events	20% 4	65% 13	10% 2	0% 0	5% 1	20
Case work	65% 13	35% 7	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	20

Approximately two thirds of councillors felt that case work is the most effective means of engaging with their communities. Residents' association meetings as well as other community meetings and events are also considered to be fairly or very effective. Social media is considered to be the least effective and least used form of engagement by councillors.

Other' engagement methods that councillors believe work well

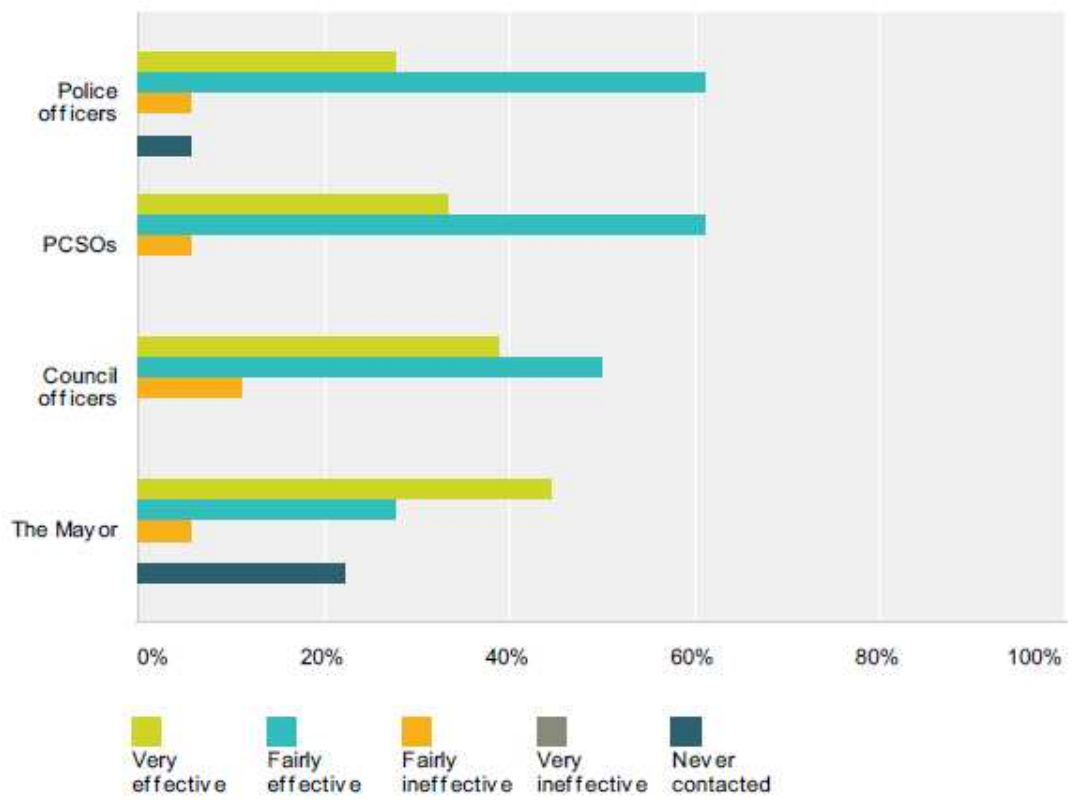
Councillors variously mentioned:

- Councillors being visible to members of the public/personal contact
- Meeting with people in the community (supermarkets, pubs, school gates, etc.)
- Street surgeries and surveys
- Letters to residents
- Using a combination of approaches

(One person mentioned that they regard Facebook as a conduit for personal communications and not for relating to the community.)

Q5 Thinking about who you might contact about community safety issues, how effective would you say they are in addressing your concerns?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 2



	Very effective	Fairly effective	Fairly ineffective	Very ineffective	Never contacted	Total
Police officers	27.78% 5	61.11% 11	5.56% 1	0% 0	5.56% 1	18
PCSOs	33.33% 6	61.11% 11	5.56% 1	0% 0	0% 0	18
Council officers	38.89% 7	50% 9	11.11% 2	0% 0	0% 0	18
The Mayor	44.44% 8	27.78% 5	5.56% 1	0% 0	22.22% 4	18

For this question, the Mayor is considered to be very effective by 44% of respondents, followed by council officers (39%), PCSOs (33%) and Police officers (28%). The majority of the forms of engagement listed are considered to be effective by most respondents.

Q6. The effectiveness of agencies dealing with community safety issues – ‘others’

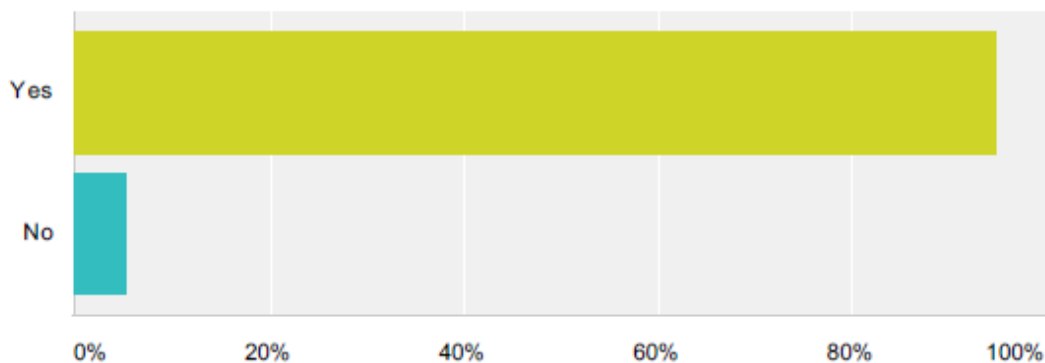
One councillor mentioned that they found council officers particularly supportive, especially in certain teams: housing, licensing, community safety, and the Mayor’s office were mentioned.

Another respondent also mentioned the ‘superb’ response of the council’s community safety officers, but also how lucky it is to have “very effective community police officers” in a ward.

The only negative response referred to housing associations being “fairly ineffective”.

Q6 Do you think that communication between residents and authorities engaged in community safety could be improved?

Answered: 19 Skipped: 1



Almost all councillors (95%) believe that communication between residents and authorities engaged in community safety could be improved.

Q7. How councillors think community engagement could be improved

There is recognition that the texted Neighbourhood Watch news is innovative and helpful, but also concern for those who are not able to access this medium. There is also mention by some councillors that the police are not very good at updating interested parties about the resolution of issues, which, it is thought “would pay dividends”.

Other comments made include reference to: having a CSP officer in the customer service centre, more neighbourhood watch schemes, better use of the council’s communications, live surgeries on Facebook, more police officers and PCSOs knocking on doors and the police being more positive and not ‘talking up problems’.

Q8. Other comments that councillors wanted to make about engagement on community safety issues

One respondent’s comments are strongly themed around housing. They are concerned that the police should take a responsible attitude to antisocial behaviour in housing association properties and that landlords should offer “good quality accommodation” (which the councillor believes will encourage pride in where they live).

Another respondent believes that communicating community safety messages to young children in school is invaluable, while older residents are reassured by messages from the community safety partners which communicate approachability and efficiency.

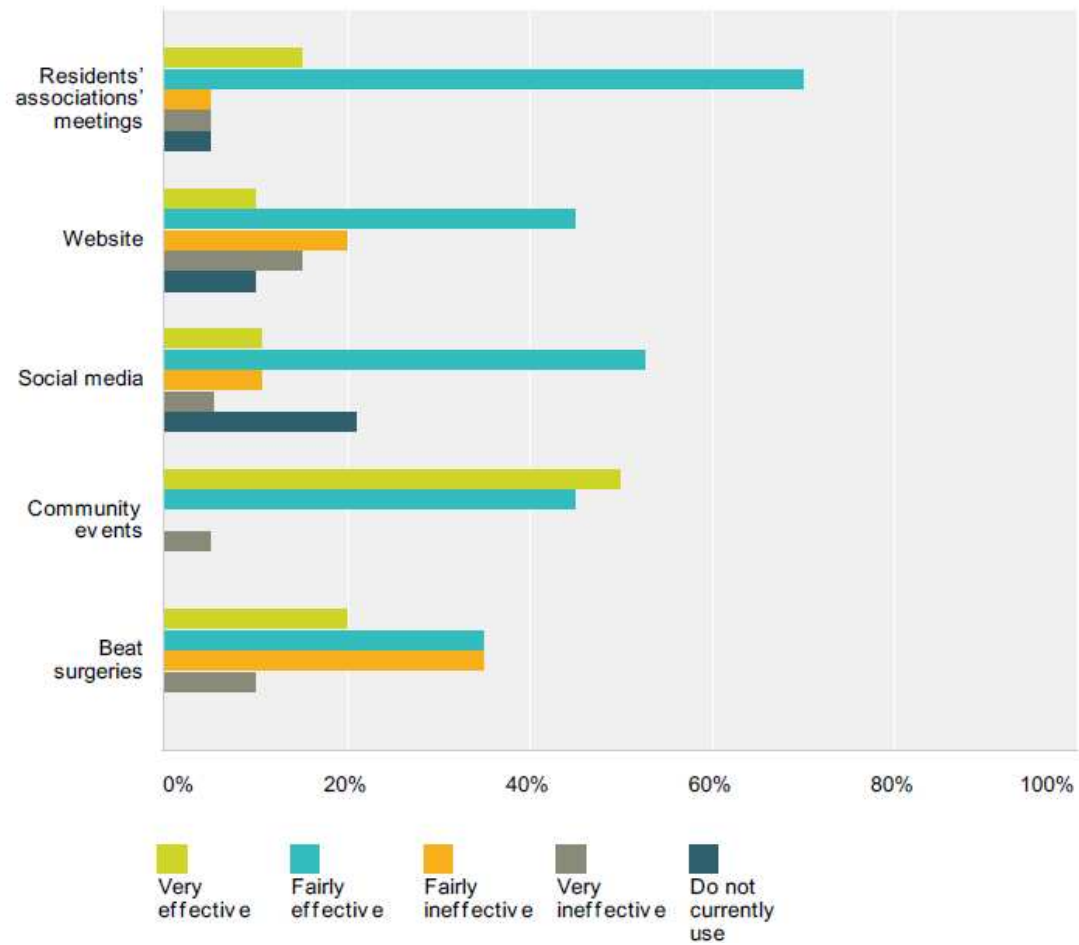
3. Police survey

Participation

20 members of local policing teams responded to the survey.

Q2 What engagement strategies work well within the local community?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



	Very effective	Fairly effective	Fairly ineffective	Very ineffective	Do not currently use	Total
Residents' associations' meetings	15% 3	70% 14	5% 1	5% 1	5% 1	20
Website	10% 2	45% 9	20% 4	15% 3	10% 2	20
Social media	10.53% 2	52.63% 10	10.53% 2	5.26% 1	21.05% 4	19
Community events	50% 10	45% 9	0% 0	5% 1	0% 0	20
Beat surgeries	20% 4	35% 7	35% 7	10% 2	0% 0	20

95% of Police respondents feel that community events are either very or fairly effective in engaging residents on community safety matters. Social media and residents' association meetings are also considered to be effective, although less so overall than community events.

Q 3.Engagement strategies that work well within the local community - other

One respondent comments that the website could be more effective and that beat surgeries are only effective if adequately publicised. Another respondent believes that the same residents attend beat surgeries and residents' meetings, while community events are "attended by a wider spectrum of the community". A third respondent remarks that information evenings work well – if advertised in advance.

Q4. How could strategies be developed to improve future engagement?

A number of respondents make comment in answer to this question (not necessarily with reference to the previous question):

- One suggests less constraint and broader use of Twitter and Facebook
- Another suggests linking police websites with those of resident associations and also going to streets where people live
- Another respondent suggests that residents living in central Watford appear not to want beat surgeries
- One person suggests that a real investment in community engagement, for instance investing time to spend with young people in a meaningful way
- Two other respondents suggest that it would help if police patrols were more visible and having DVDs and other forms of media to show people and to give them

Q5-9 Gaps in contact with sections of the community?

Police respondents were asked if they believed there was a gap in the contact that the local police force has within certain sections of the community.

The comments made in response to this question do not add significantly to our understanding of the situation.