

Rural Services Network

Kerry Booth
Chief Executive
March 2024

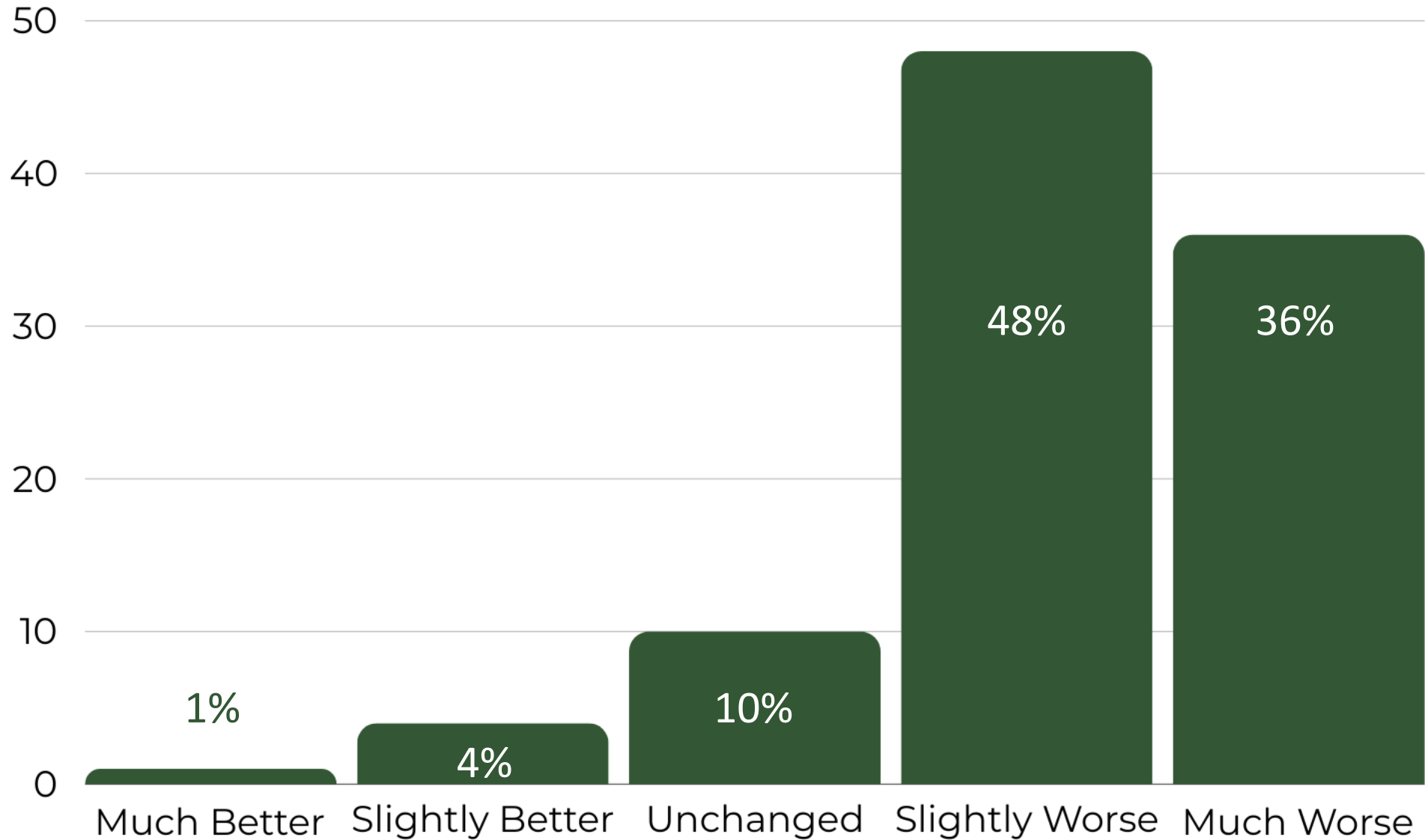


RURAL MARKET TOWNS SURVEY

Survey of Rural Market Towns

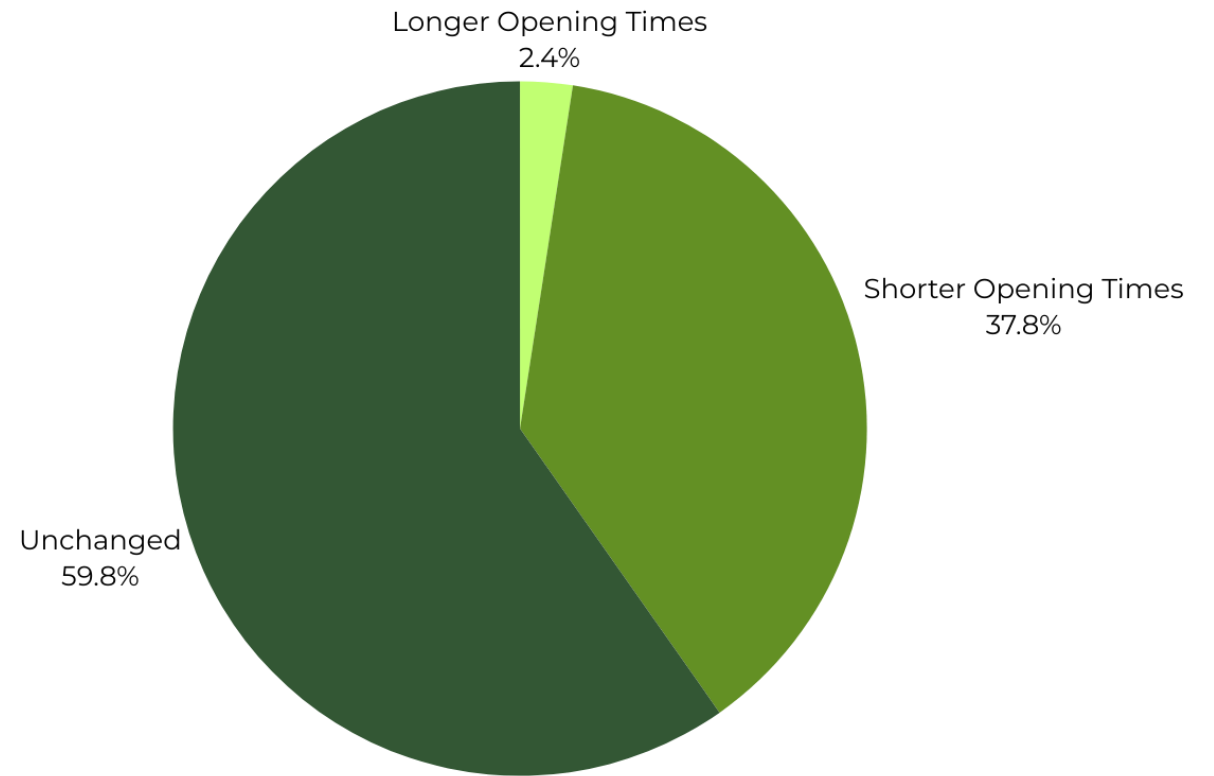
- Issued to all member organisations of the Rural Market Town Group
- Responses received: 169
- Mix of closed questions and open ended to provide opportunity to share key local issues

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

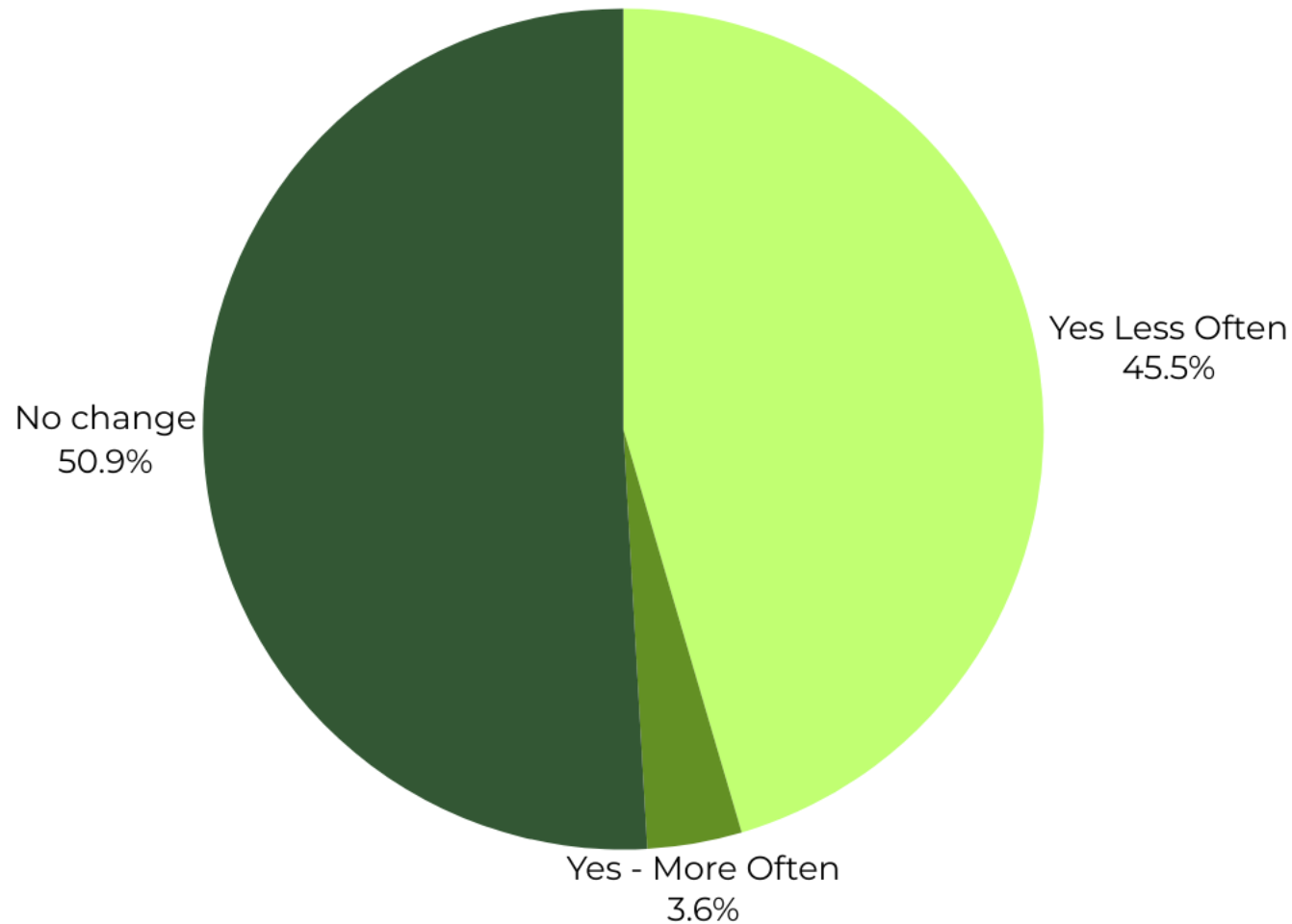


Have you noticed any changes in the availability of services provided by your council in relation to opening times of services?

- Reduced recycling hours
- Impossible to get Dr appt
- Town council opening hours
- Phone service stops at 2pm
- Council hours reduced to allow clerk focus time
- Shorter times at leisure centre
- Removal of advice services
- Library open longer but road repairs and cleaning not being done



Have you noticed any changes in the availability of services provided by your council in relation to how frequently a services is provided?



Shorter opening hours

Household and Recycling Centre open more often

Street Cleaners / Drain Clearance less often

Buses less often

Reduced bus services

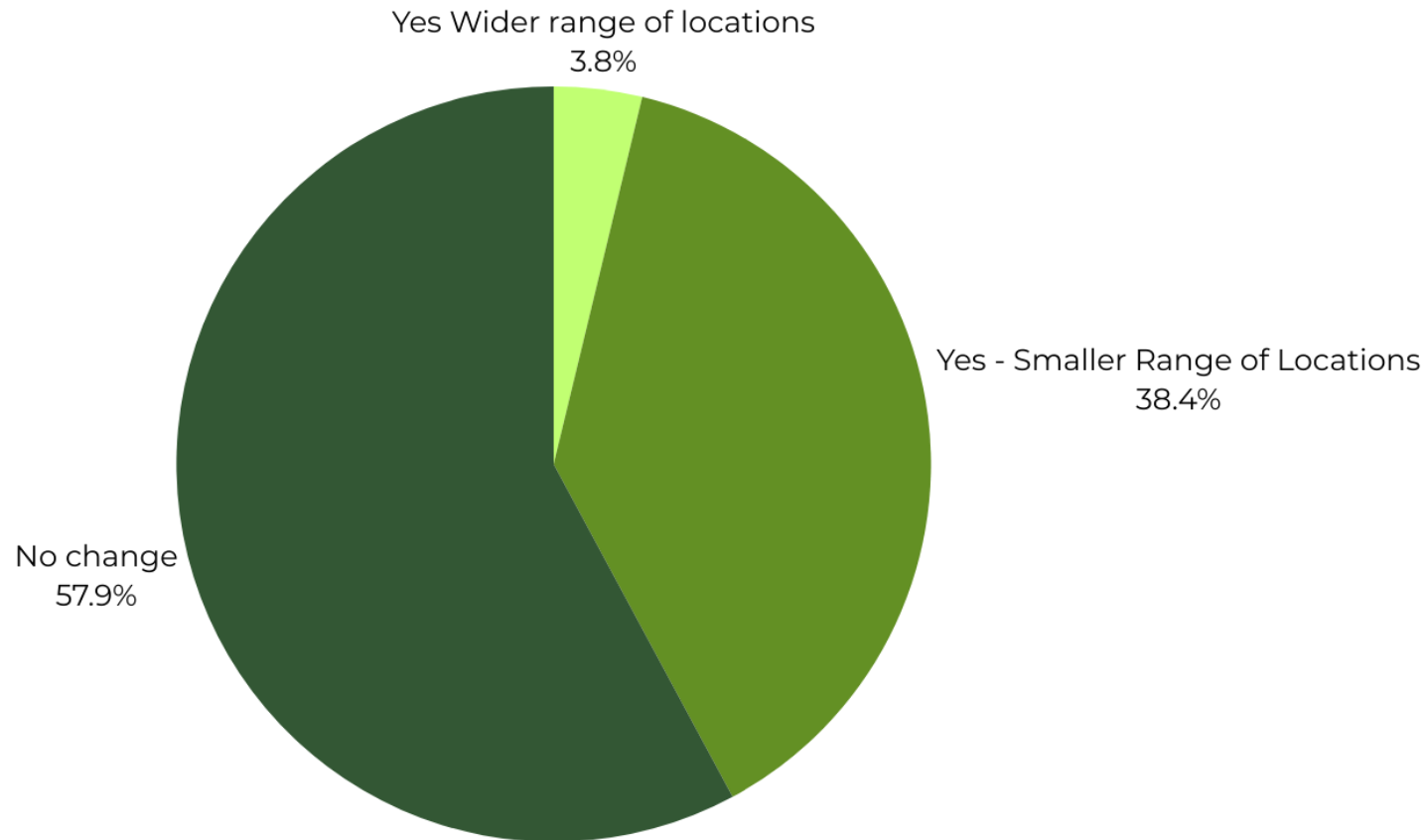
Less Youth Services

Less highways maintenance

More often - additional services provided by parish

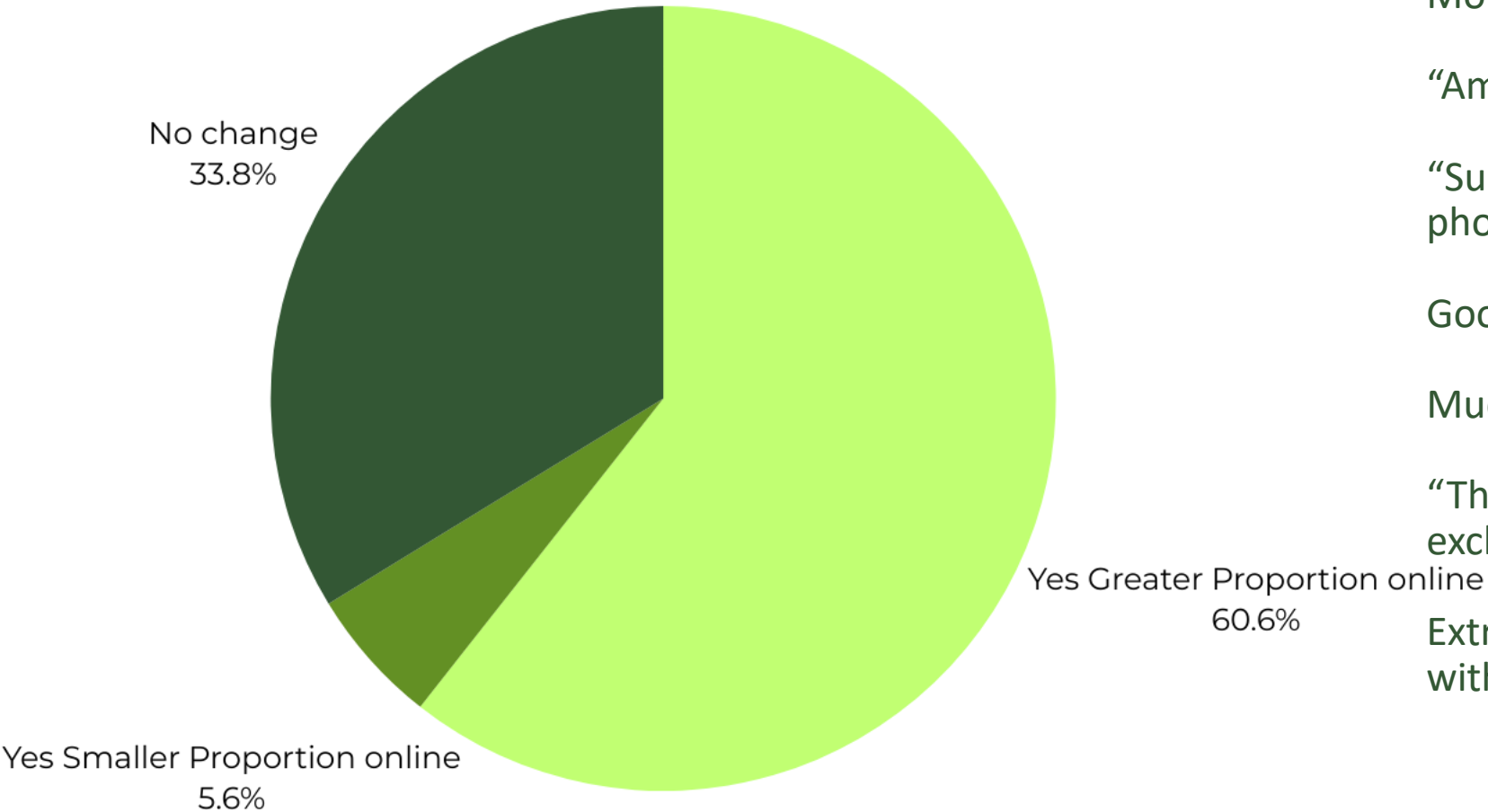
Green waste price increased

Have you noticed any changes in the availability of services provided by your council in relation to the location of services?



Wider range ie Hubs but less house
Police accessibility for residents from
smaller range locations
Public toilets being closed due to lack of
funding
“The locations have reduced as cost savings
so you often have to travel further to
receive services, which is difficult due to
poor public transport and lack of private
transport.”
“Children and Family centre now closed in
Billingshurst, and many families cannot
afford transport to the nearest centre which
when mental health has increased was an
appalling decision”

Have you noticed any changes in the availability of services provided by your council in relation to the proportion of services provided online?



More online but less user friendly

“Am unable to access most of it”

“Submitting online gives you a physical record, phoning seems to do nothing”

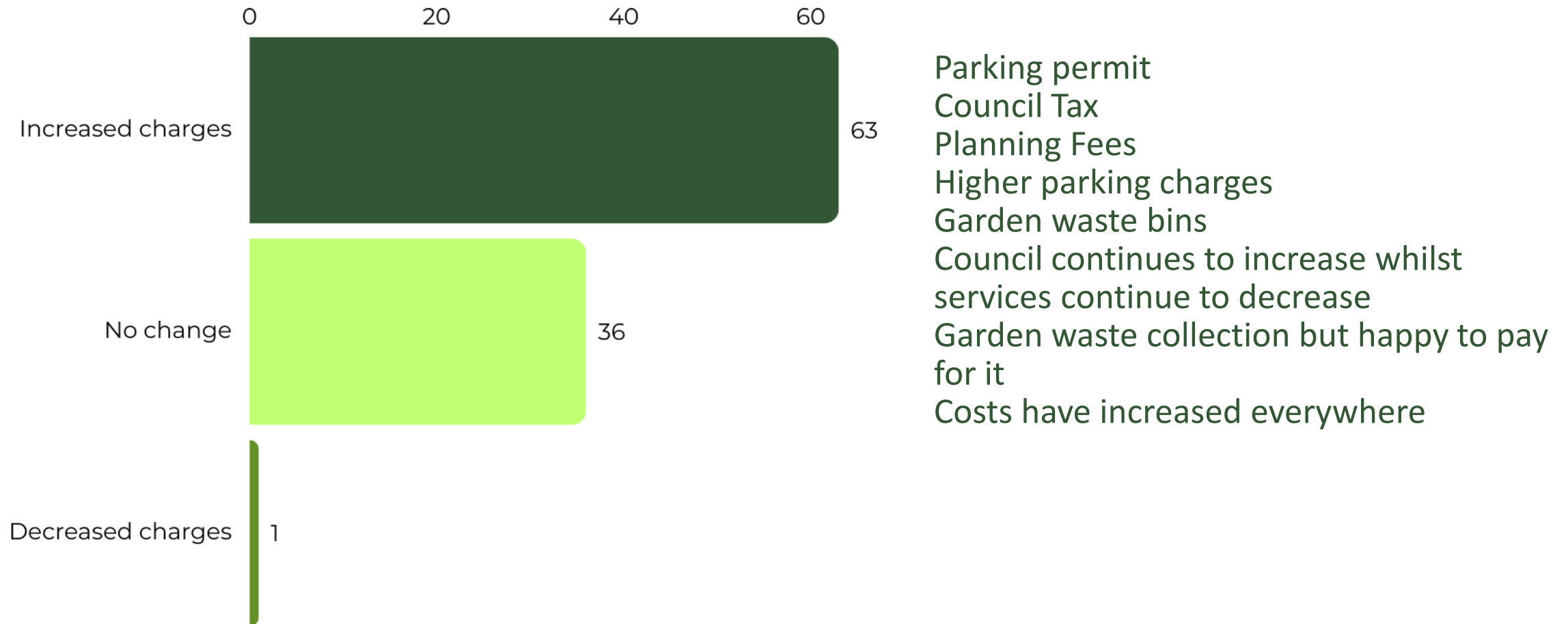
Good to do routine admin online

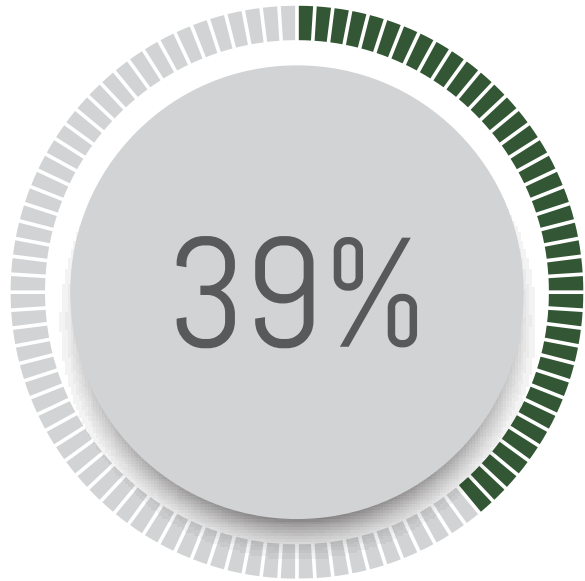
Much more availability to online information

“The move to online only services is exclusionary of many in society”

Extra opportunities to report on line but no help with unusual queries

Have you noticed any changes in the availability of services provided by your council in relation to the charges for some services?





39% of respondents have taken over services devolved by the principle local authority

These are being delivered either directly by the Town / Parish Council or through support for a community organisation to deliver the services

Impact of changes in service provision over last 3 years?

Lack of government funding resulting in reduced capacity to deliver services, moving services online and reducing access for older residents, unavailability of NHS services and public transport.

Poor bus links

Fly tipping has increased

Town and Parish councillors taking on work such as reporting of planning breaches, fly tipping, overgrown hedges

No street cleaning or weed control

Elimination of non obligatory services

Services are improved when town takes over delivery

Lack of police presence

All online no personal contact

Hard to get GP appointment

Dentist are oversubscribed, need more facilities

Local rural services centralised to larger population areas

Loss of services – youth, social, highways, bus

Poor road maintenance, pot holes

More home working means harder to get hold of staff at councils

Less traffic wardens

No public toilets

Less support from mental health teams

THE TRUE COST OF DELIVERING PUBLIC SERVICES

A survey of UK charities

Sam Mercadante

Published: 04 March 2024



The types of public services delivered by the voluntary sector include:

- homelessness support and temporary accommodation
- domestic violence and sexual abuse services
- social care services
- services for disabled people
- education and training
- support for people with experience of the criminal justice system
- youth services
- mental health support, including counselling and suicide prevention
- advice, including support with debt and benefits
- health services, including hospices, sexual health services, and rehabilitation services.

What is the issue?

- Charities have warned that contracts and grants are not keeping up with inflation] Charities are increasingly subsidising public services with voluntary income and reserves. They're risking their **long-term sustainability** to meet urgent needs now.
- The National Audit Office's [financial sustainability of local authorities report](#) describes changes in English local authorities' finances over the last decade.
- It estimates that **real terms spending power for local government** across England was **26% lower in 2020/21** than in 2010/11. This was despite council tax rising by 15.6% in real terms over the same period. The drop was mainly due to a real terms decline of more than 52% in government-funded spending power.
- [Research by Lloyds Bank Foundation](#) highlights that **councils are increasingly forced to shift spending away from preventative services to meet crisis needs.** The research also found that cuts impact deprived communities the most. This is despite demand typically being higher in these communities.

www.rsnonline.org.uk

Kerry.booth@sparse.gov.uk

www.rsnonline.org.uk/winning-the-rural-vote

