

West Huntspill & Alstone  
Parish Plan



Findings and Recommendations from the Community

Questionnaire

July 2017

## **Introduction**

The Parish Council last published a Parish Plan derived from a village survey in 2003 and I am sure all will appreciate, much has changed in the fifteen years and the current Parish Council decided it would benefit the village to repeat the process and also to include Alstone. The new questionnaire was published in September 2016.

We recognise that the heart of the village are the residents themselves and it is vital that the thoughts, comments, and visions of the residents are fully considered.

The information gained will assist the council and, to some extent, guide us in the decisions that need to be taken in respect of our village, planning matters, children's play areas, etc.



*A different view of the church*

The role of the Parish Council is simply to be the manager of the village, on the resident's behalf. The more input that we get from the people of the village the better we can try to make it the village that you want it to be.

How much we can do and how far we can go to achieve our aims will, sometimes, be controlled by the District or County Councils - but knowing that it is the wishes of our villagers which are driving us, makes our arguments more compelling to those bodies.

The council would like to thank all those that completed the survey which will give us a steer on where you want the village to be going. And help us to be a good council.



**John Wakefield**  
**Vice Chairman**

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# People

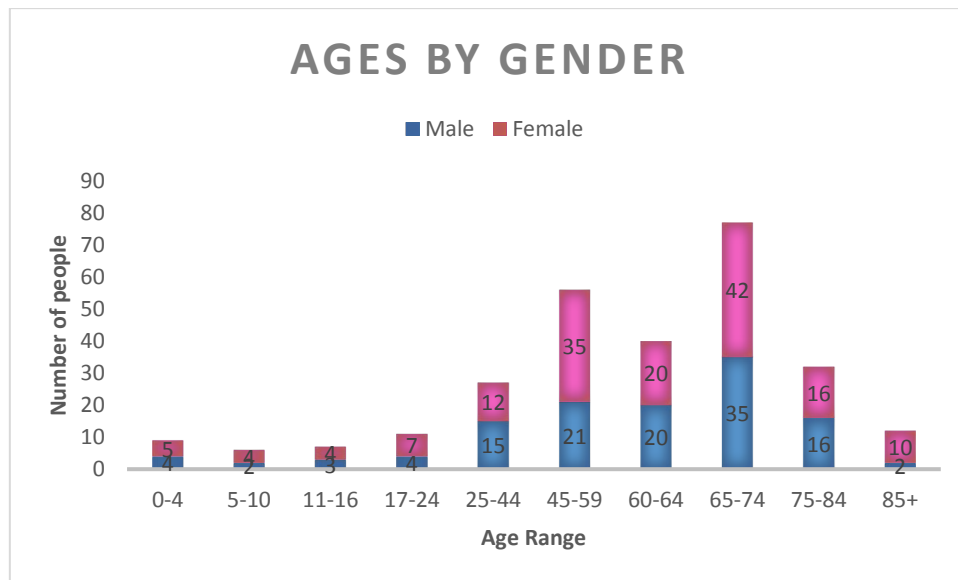
## Age Ranges

Of those that responded to the questionnaire there were 120 males and 155 females.



Scarecrow competition 2015

Age Range	Male	Female
0-4	4	5
5-10	2	4
11-16	3	4
17-24	4	7
25-44	15	12
45-59	21	35
60-64	20	20
65-74	35	42
75-84	16	16
85+	2	10



## Comparison with 2003

	Males %	Females %	Average Age
2003	53	47	48
2016	44	56	57

**Conclusion;**

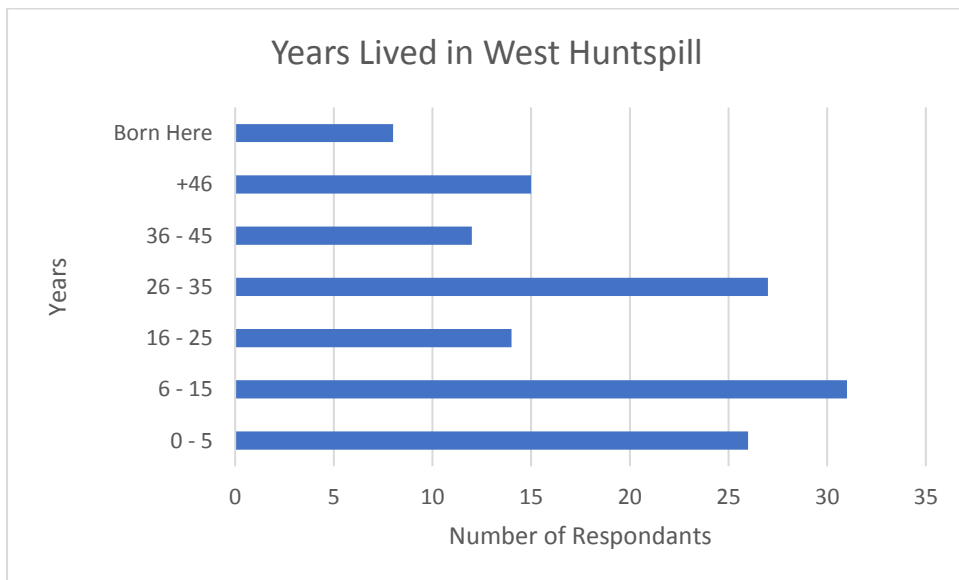
There were very few responders from families with children in comparison from those from older generations. It is therefore considered that the actual average age is lower than stated. However, it is most likely that the average age has increased significantly since 2003.

**Action**

**More must be done to attract young people with families into the village whilst provision for the older population in terms of facilities offered should be reviewed.**

**How Long Lived in West Huntspill / Alstone?**

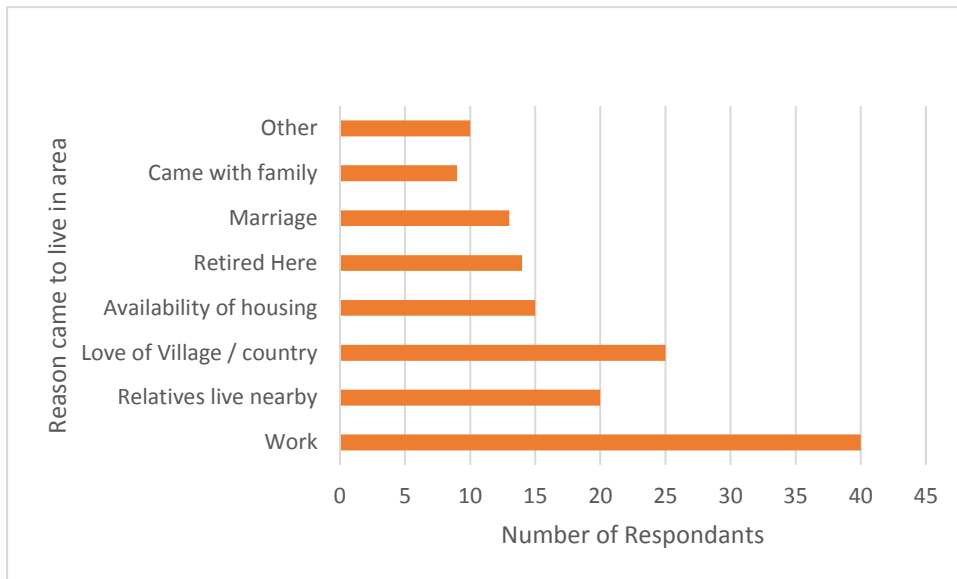
0-5 Years	6 – 15 Years	16 – 25 Years	26 – 35 Years	36 – 45 Years	Over 46 Years	Born Here
26	31	14	27	12	15	8





Allotments

### Reasons residents came to live in the area



### Conclusion

Many residents who largely came to live in West Huntspill for work reasons many years ago still live in the village. Pleasingly new comers have been attracted to live in the village in more recent years. This is a testament to the appeal both of the village itself and the surrounding area.

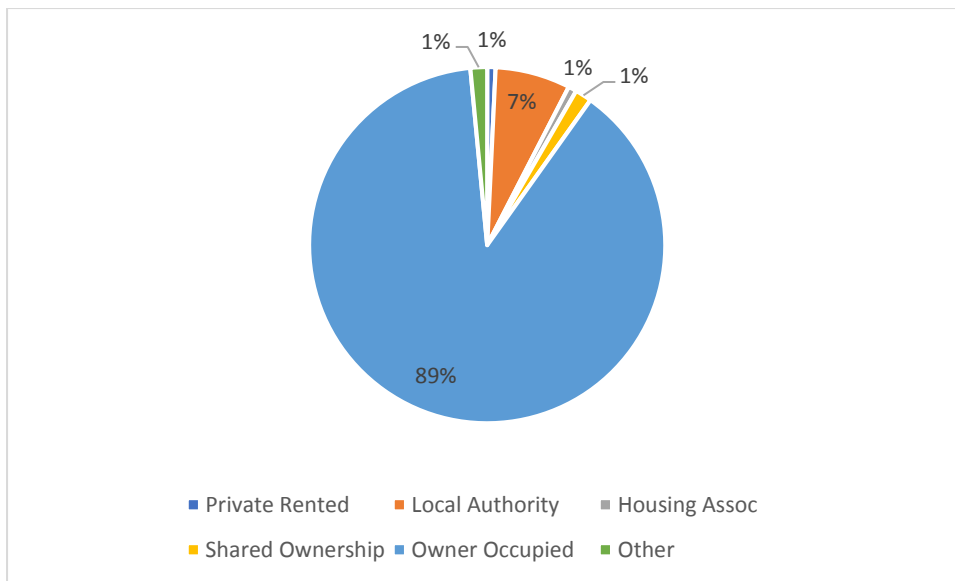
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# Housing

## Dwelling ownership

Private Rented	1
Local Authority	9
Housing Association	1
Shared Ownership	2
Owner Occupied	117
Other	2



## Dwelling Type

Detached House	57
Semi-detached House	22
Terraced	16
Bungalow	30
Flat / Maisonette	1
Purpose built for elderly no warden	1
Mobile	4
Other	1

## Year Built

pre 1900	25
1901 - 1930	6
1931 - 1960	33
1961 - 1990	42
1991 -	14
Not Known	4

## Comments

The clear majority of homes in West Huntspill and Alstone are owner occupied, detached and semidetached houses and bungalows.



The heritage of the village is shown by almost 20% of the responders living in houses that are pre-1900 with many being 17<sup>th</sup> and even 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

The village grew considerably from 1961 to 1990 but has slowed since, most likely due to the lack of space available.

The number of flats / maisonettes and low cost housing that are available is very low which may be a barrier to young people staying or moving into the village. Since this questionnaire was published Ringstone Court has been completed which does offer some extra low-cost housing.



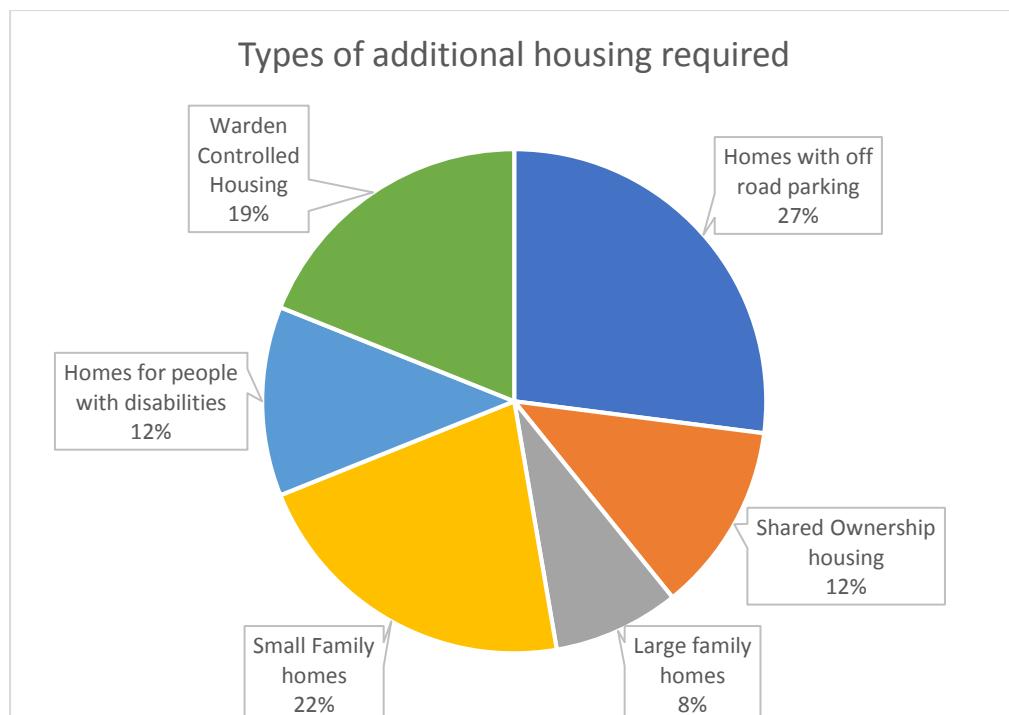
*Illex Park newly refurbished 2017*

### **More Housing?**

Yes	29	22%
No	79	61%
Don't know	21	16%



Of those that thought the village could accommodate more house the types were;



Comments;

Two thirds of the respondents were against any further housing developments within the village.

**Action**

**With the new housing in Ringstone and the Brue Farm development to begin shortly this further reduces the need for more housing in the immediate area. Whilst each planning application will be considered independently the council will give due consideration to views of the residents expressed in the survey.**

**Home Energy Saving Methods Employed**

<u>Type</u>	<u>Number</u>
Cavity Wall	63
Loft Insulation	120
Double Glazing	120
Secondary Glazing	4
Lagged Hot Water Tank	69
Water Saving Device	17
Solar Panels	12
Domestic Wind Turbine	0

### Comments

Although the number of houses with cavity wall insulation appears low it is likely that many responders are not aware that they have this form of insulation as it is not easily apparent. Also, the number of old houses with solid walls will reduce the figure.

Houses fitted with combination boilers would not require a hot water tank which would explain the relatively low number.

The inclusion of "Water Saving Device" did cause a little confusion as it was not clear if, for example, external water butts were included rather than more technical mains water saving devices.

### **Domestic Heating Type**

<u>Heating Type</u>	<u>Number</u>
Mains Gas	100
Bottled Gas	4
Electricity	41
Oil	23
Wood Burner	28
Solar Power	2
Other	1

### Comments

Many respondents used a combination of the types available.



Scarecrow competition 2016

### Sewage Disposal

Mains Sewer	120
Septic Tank	8
Cess Pit	2
Chemical	0
Digester	3

### Comments

The clear majority of the responders utilise mains sewers. Those not fortunate to have this facility available should be encouraged to switch to a digester which is much more environmentally friendly than septic tanks or cess pits.

### Action

***The availability of digesters should be made known to residents. Note that discharge consent will need to be approved.***

## Flooding

Flooding Problems	
Yes	10
No	119

### Comments

Of the ten that reported problems with flooding, nine were from surface water not draining off the roads quickly enough causing ingress into their properties.

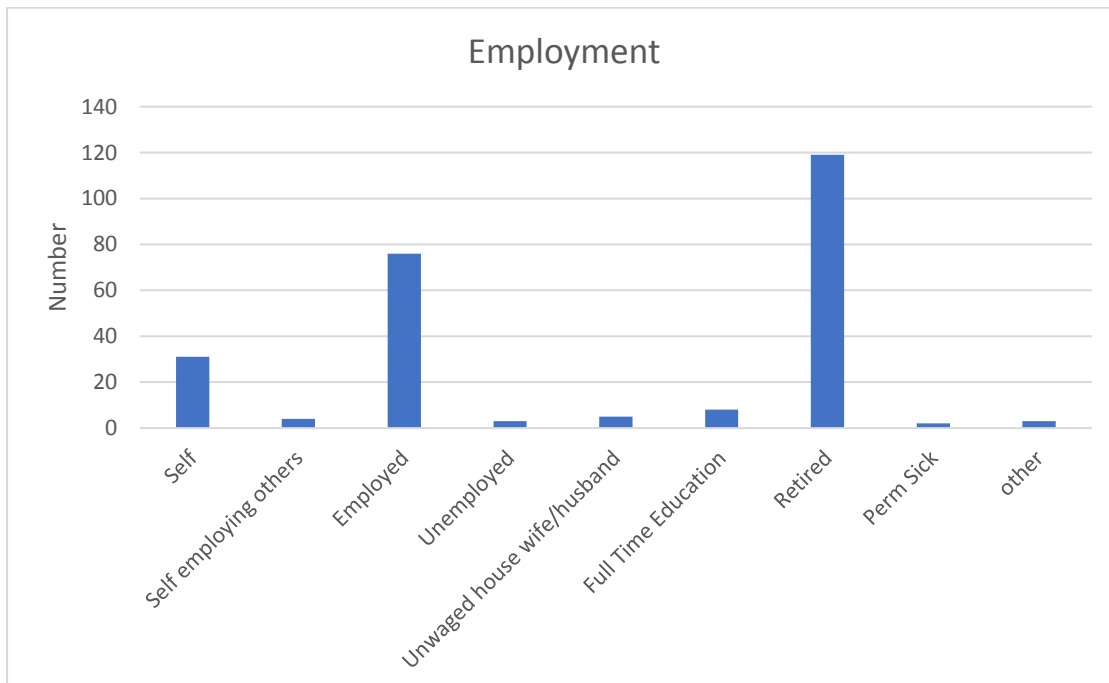
### Action

***It can be concluded that the drains and gullies need to be cleared more often particularly during the autumn. This will be actioned where possible.***

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## Employment

How Many Employed within each household?





**Nature of business of those employed**

Employment Sector

Agriculture / Horticulture	3
Manufacturing / Engineering	4
Manufacturing other	2
Retail / service	15
Financial Services	4
Tourism hotel B&B	4
Construction	4
Transport Communications	2
Power Generation	1
Local Government	9
Food	1
Other	17

Those in "Other" included several in education and NHS.

**Seeking Work**

Comments

Only six people of the households that responded are seeking work at this time. Barriers to gaining employment were given as lack of opportunities and lack of affordable child care.

Of those that responded 70% thought that a jobs vacancy board in the village would be useful.

**Action**

***A jobs vacancy board may be combined within a new notice board to be placed in a location to be decided.***

**Businesses within West Huntspill / Alstone**

Handyman, Farming, Beef Farming, On line Greetings Cards, Taxi, Publican, B&B, Tree Surgeon, IT Consultancy, Electronic Switch Manufacture, Computing Services,

Conclusion

The number employed was not always given but thought to be in the region of 80.

**Action**

**A "Local Business Forum" should be considered where all proprietors are invited to meet and discuss common issues and opportunities.**

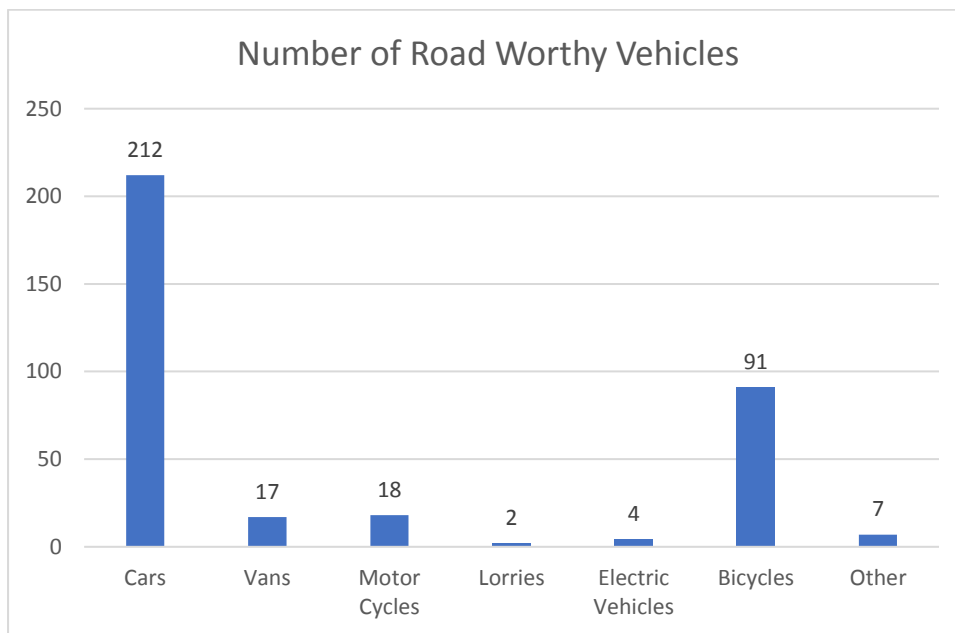
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# Transport

Vehicles (130 respondents)

<u>Roadworthy Vehicles</u>	<u>Number</u>
Cars	212
Vans	17
Motor Cycles	18
Lorries	2
Electric Vehicles	4
Bicycles	91
Other	7

Number of motorised vehicles per household = 1.9



## Means of transport travelling to and from work

Car / Van	63
Service Bus	2
Motor Cycle / Moped	1
Train	1
Walking	3
Work from home	7
Bicycle	5

**Residents that experience difficulty in getting in and out of the village**

Often	16
Occasionally	43
Never	49

The most common reasons for any difficulties was when there is a problem with the motorway that results in a large rise in traffic using the A38 and lack of busses particularly at night.



*Church Fair*

**Residents that experience parking difficulties in the village**

Nowhere to park	12
Cars blocking entrance	20
Other	9
No	50

## Conclusion

Virtually the entire village is affected by parking issues to some degree. Particular hot spots were given as;

Ringstone, Silver Street, Plymor Road, Millgreen Close, Greenwood Close, Alstone Road, Church Road and New Road during school time.

Given the large number of vehicles owned by residents with almost two per household, and additional vehicles from visitors and deliveries, it is inevitable that issues regarding parking will occur without the major restructuring of the village. However, poor and inconsiderate parking can be alleviated by enforcement.

## Action

***The Parish Council will invite a Community Police officer to discuss further.***

***Ideally a purpose built, one-way parking area is needed in New Road opposite the school. This would not only improve the parking situation but would improve the safety of the children.***

## The residents were asked if they have difficulty getting to the following?

Hospital	13%
Med Centre	7%
Dentist	3%
Optician	4%
Chiropodist	3%
Other medical	0%
No	69%

Comments were made that the bus direct to Musgrove Hospital has been stopped and needs to be reinstated. Residents needing to travel to Southmead suffered a difficult journey using public transport.

## Conclusion

This may be alleviated in part by use of Sedgemoor Community Transport or a new voluntary car service.

There is an existing Patient Transport Service to Musgrove Hospital that can be contacted on 01278 727444

## Voluntary Transport Service

Twelve residents offered to use their vehicles as a voluntary transport service mostly on an occasional basis. The number of residents that said they would use such a service was twenty-one.



## Conclusion

There is a service offered by Sedgemoor Community Transport running out of Colley Lane, Bridgwater currently (01278 434881). If an alternative service is to be offered a coordinator will be needed. This should be followed up with a viability study.

A further alternative would be for the village to purchase a community bus. Again the viability of this needs to be followed up.

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## Road Safety

The residents were asked if there were any major danger spots on the roads in West Huntspill.

The response was;

Yes = 106

No = 18

The danger spots were given as;

Danger Spot	Number
Main Road	35
Side roads	26
Crossways junction	71
School	18
Huntspill Projects	4
Other	6

### Further comments made;

- Main Road - Cars racing late evenings, speeding motorbikes
- Side Roads - Alstone Road parking leaves insufficient width for fire engine.  
Many reported speeding in New Road
- Crossways junction - Poor visibility when turning right out of Church Road  
Poor visibility when pulling out of Withy Road  
Pedestrian Crossing needed to Bus Stops
- School - School hedge restricts visibility when tuning out of New Road
- Others - Poor visibility when turning out of Ringstone due to parked vans

Cont.

Poor visibility when turning out of Orchard junction due to parked cars and pub signage. Cars parked very close to junction are a danger.

Poor visibility when turning out of Langlands Lane

Cars parked near car wash causing obstruction

Sloway Lane very narrow with much traffic to and from Laburnum House.

**The residents were asked what further safety measures should be employed?**

Safety Measure	Number
30 mph limit with 30mph road markings	43
20 mph limit with 20mph road markings	26
Pedestrian crossing	46
Traffic speed indicator	46
Other	5
No extra needed	10

Of those quoted as "other" included; Speed camera to be reinstated, footbridge near the school, flashing digital 20mph sign near the school.

***Conclusions / Actions***

***Several measures could be employed that will need to be followed up with the relevant authorities;***

- ***Pavement on west side of the Main Road from Church Road north could be widened.***
- ***A mirror opposite Church Road entrance near The Common should be considered.***
- ***The school hedge should be cut lower.***
- ***Traffic calming in New Road to the Cricket Field should be considered.***
- ***The size and location of signage should be discussed with the manager of the Orchard Inn to try and improve visibility for traffic emerging from Church Road.***
- ***A double mirror should be placed opposite Ringstone entrance.***
- ***Repeater signs and double yellow lines near junctions could be installed.***
- ***Parish Council to consider purchase of speed indicator.***
- ***A 20mph speed limit should be considered in New Road near the school.***
- ***A pedestrian crossing across the A38 is needed. Suggest location near the chapel.***

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*Allotments Facility*

## **Environment**

What is most important to you about living in West Huntspill?

community	43
environment	47
location	77
other	4

### Comments

Many respondents put all three as equal value

**In relation to paths, footpaths and streetlights the residents would like to see the following;**

More cycle paths	30
More footpaths	22
More paths	6
Bridle ways	9
Dimmed street lights	45
More street lights	29
other	1
Good as it is	4
All of the above	1

### Comments;

With regard to street lighting those along Main Road could be dimmed during the night and early hours. However, many areas of the village were seen to be poorly lit. In particular Church Road and Smurl Lane. There is only one designated bridle path in the village currently.

### Action

***The Parish Council is aware that there is program of street light replacement to the LED type provided by the County Council. It will make enquiries as to the details and timescale of the replacement program and assess if this will alleviate some of the issues raised and consider light dimming along Main Road. The Parish Council will also press for an extra street light in Smurl Lane.***

### Residents were asked what could be done to improve the environment in the village.

A summary of the comments made follows;

- Remove Car Wash
- Reduce Traffic
- Improve street lighting in Church Road
- Provide more dog bins / Reduce dog mess
- Plant bulbs along A38
- Provide community shop
- Reduce litter / more litter bins
- Improve maintenance of The Common
- More frequent hedge and verge cutting
- Clear drains more often
- Improve maintenance of rhines
- Entrance to memorial playing field untidy and sign needs replacing.
- Improve communication to residents
- Enforce rubbish removal from gardens (Ringstone)
- More bridleways and droves needed
- Prohibit ball games near housing
- Less clay pigeon shooting

The most repeated comments were the need for a local shop and reduction of dog mess.

### Action

***The Parish Council will consider all the above and form an action plan to implement improvements where possible.***



**Areas where residents feel unsafe within the village**

Feel unsafe?

Yes	13
No	108

Where do you feel unsafe?

- Plymor Farm to Grange Road at night
- Poorly lit areas
- Crossing the A38
- Corner of Orchard & Greenwood Close
- After dark in general
- Dark and narrow footpaths
- Church Rd at night
- Around the "park" at night
- Sloway Lane
- Sea Wall

**Conclusion /Action**

***It is of great concern to the Parish Council that any residents should feel unsafe anywhere in the village. Regarding light levels this can be alleviated by improving street lighting as per the previous section.***

***The Parish Council will continue to try and get a pedestrian crossing installed across the A38 at a location that will benefit most residents.***

***Members of the Parish Council will plan a site visit to the sea wall and corner of Orchard & Greenwood Close to assess.***

**Residents willing to take part in "Clean Sweep"**

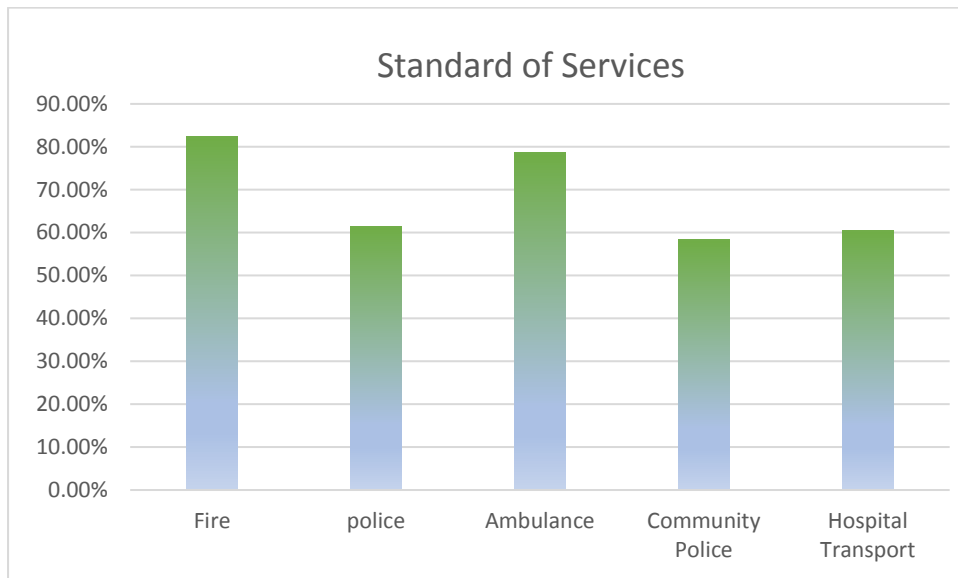
It was pleasing to see that 58 residents said they would willing to help with the Clean Sweep to remove litter from our village.

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# **Village Facilities**

## **Standard of Village Services**

The residents rated the services from very poor (0%) to very good (100%)



Those given the lowest score was the community police and hospital transport.

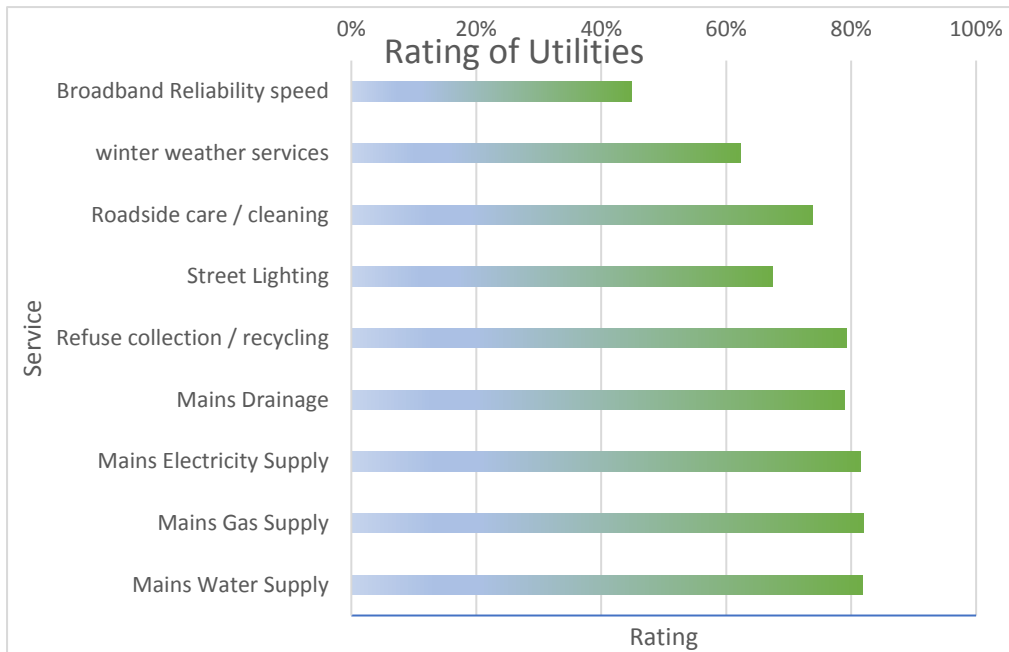
The reasons given were a total lack of visibility of Community Police and many residents not aware that there was a Hospital Transport service.

### **Action / Conclusion**

***The Parish Council will invite the Community Police to a meeting to discuss how their visibility can be improved. The transport services available will be advertised in the Church Magazine and on noticeboards.***

## Rating of Village Utilities

The residents rated the utilities from very poor (0%) to very good (100%)



### Conclusion.

The broadband speed varied widely across the village. This is largely due to fibre optic cable being available in some areas of the village only. Since the questionnaire was published a new connection has been made near the common.

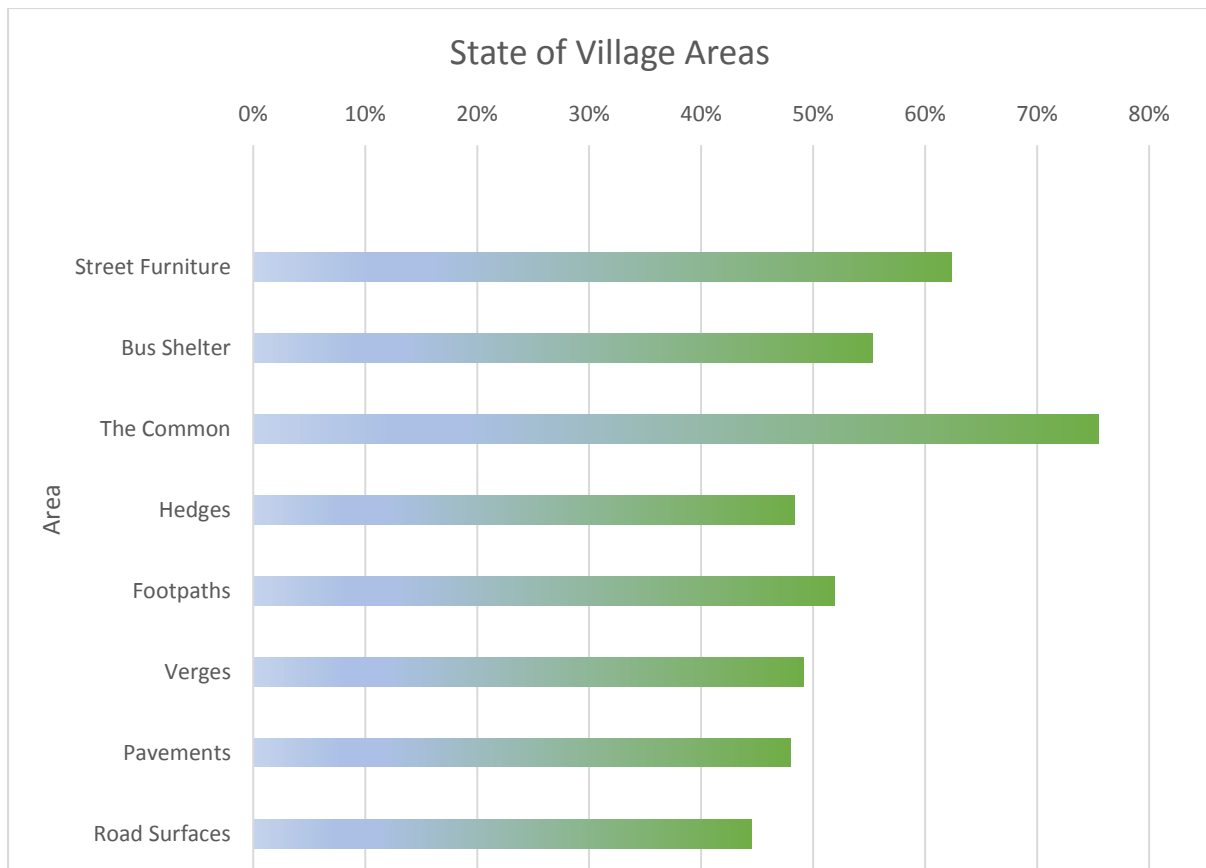
### Action

***The winter weather service could be improved by the installation of more road grit stores.***

***The Parish Council will seek improvements to the maintenance of roadside care and streetlighting.***

## State of Areas and Facilities

The residents rated areas and facilities of the village from very poor (0%) to very good (100%)



## Comments

No area received a rating of “Very Good” (80-100%) and only The Common and street furniture being viewed as “Good” (60 – 80%). The lowest rated were the road surfaces, pavements, verges and hedges although they were all in the “Fair” category (40 – 60%).

## Conclusion.

Many residents may not be aware of the restriction in cutting hedgerows from April to September due to bird nesting. Due to the timing of the questionnaire it is likely that much of the overgrowth has been cut back and hedges trimmed.

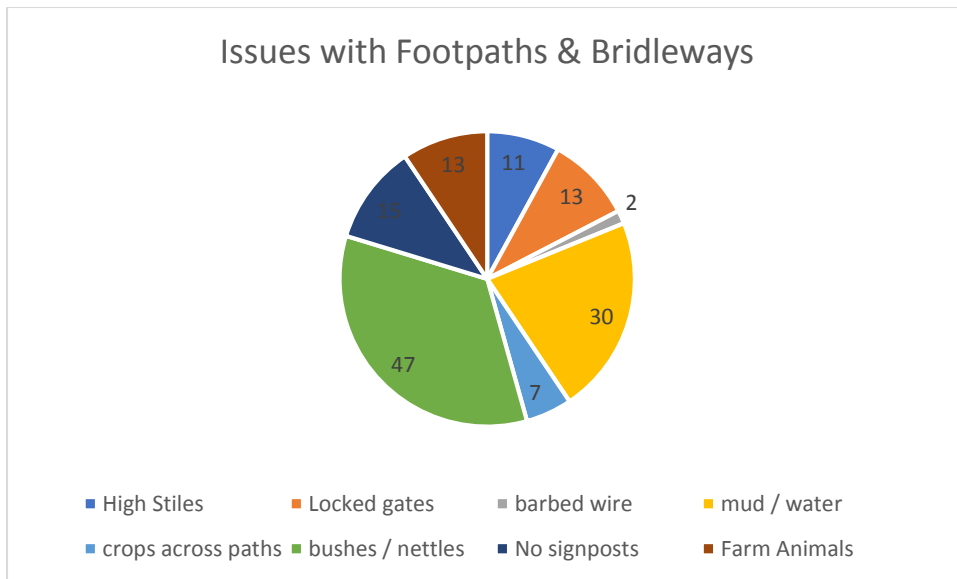
It is pleasing that The Common scored highly and some work has been completed since the questionnaire was published. Additional work is planned to reduce bushes and hedgerows.



**Action**

***There should be a clear system put in place for residents to report any issues directly to the Parish Council in order that it can press for rectification directly with the relevant authorities. The council is aware that agency cut backs have reduced the amount of maintenance available.***

**Residents were asked if they knew where all the local footpaths and bridle ways were and if they had experienced any difficulties?**



**Further comments;**

Mud & Water - Path near allotments very bad

Barbed Wire – Blocked near Methodist Church

Bushes & Nettles – Especially bad - Alstone Footpath, Main Road, Stoney Path & back of Caramia Park

Other – Dog mess, not pushchair friendly, Some stiles need repair, path New Road to Highbridge obstructed by fallen trees.

Don't use – Not dog friendly

Many have said that a map of local footpaths would be very useful.

## Conclusion

A program has been put in place for the members of the Parish Council to review all local footpaths and report any issues found. There is an online facility to view all local footpaths with the ability to report issues at <http://roam.somerset.gov.uk/roam/map#> . This needs publicising to the residents.

## Action

**Maps should be made available at locations such as the church, in noticeboards and local pubs.**

## Ilex Park

Only 13 of the respondents used Ilex Park and no one has offered to assist with the maintenance of the play area.



*Ilex Park*

Many stated that they didn't know where the park was and some said that it was seen as for the exclusive use of children from Ringstone.

## Conclusion.

The Ilex Park has been subject to a complete refurbishment this year and is a credit to the village.

### **Action**

***A sign or plaque should be installed close to the public footpath entrance to the park. The location and responsible person contact details should be advertised.***

### **Allotments**

There were six residents that would like an allotment. However some expressed issues with the area particularly with regard to flooding, poor soil and theft from plots.

### **Residents expressed an interest in the following clubs**

Amateur Dramatics	4
Gardening Club / Allotment	8
Musical Activities	8
Women's Institute	6
Short mat bowls	7
Table Tennis	5
Other	5

Suggestions for "other" included; Walking Group, University of the Third Age, Choir, Fitness Group, & Cycling Club.

### **Action**

***Regarding the existing clubs, we will attempt to contact the residents that responded positively (where addresses have been given) to give the details of each club.***

***The Parish Council will follow up the suggested clubs to attain venues and, most importantly, people willing to act as tutors and run the classes.***

### **Residents that would attend the following classes**

Crafts	26
Languages	26
Fitness	29
Art	19
IT	22
Food prep	10
Other	4

Suggestions for "other" included; Dance, Dog Training, Photography, Social Media, Yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates.

**Action**

***The Parish Council will follow this up to attain venues and, most importantly, people willing to act as tutors and run the classes. The church is interested in hosting classes and the Parish Council will follow this up.***

**Where residents get their information from**

Notice Boards	58
Church Magazine	77
Parish Council Website	11
Local Papers	38
On Line news	24
Other	16
Don't see any	3

Most of "Other" was given as word of mouth and in the Crossways.

**Comments**

It is noticeable how few people use the Parish Council website as a source of information. Further it is felt that the number of residents receiving the Church Magazine only accounts for about a third of the households in the village.

**The residents were asked if they were satisfied with way PC spends it's money?**

Very Satisfied	6
Quite Satisfied	44
Quite Dissatisfied	4
Very Dissatisfied	1
Don't know how it is spent	61
No opinion	7

**Action**

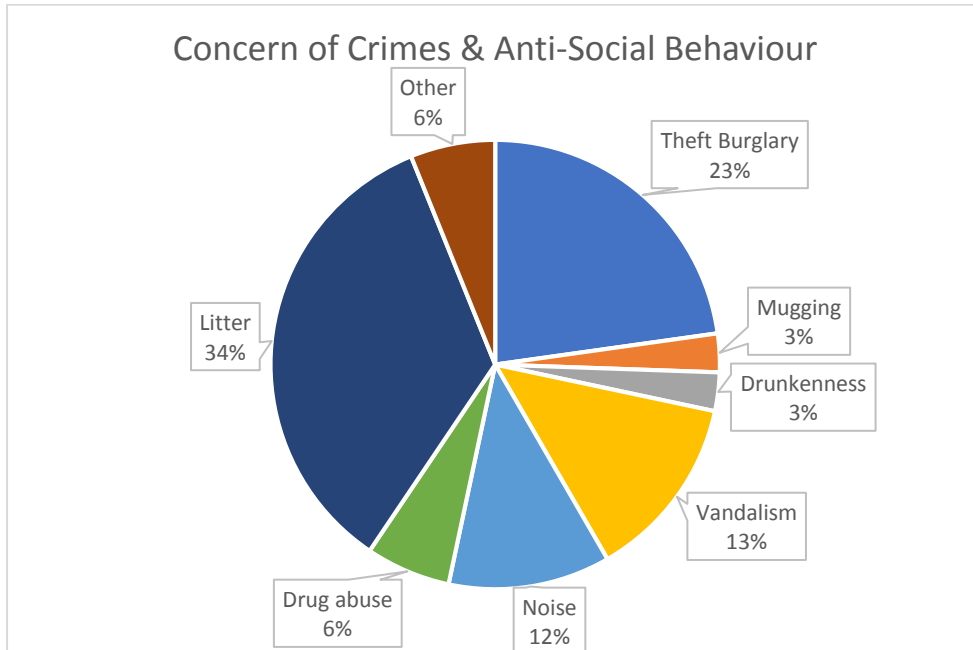
***It is most striking how few residents are aware how the Parish Council spends its money. A summary of the spending should be advertised on a quarterly basis.***

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# Crimes & Anti-Social Behaviour

The respondents expressed concern of the following crimes and anti-social behaviour.



## Comments

Many of those in the "other" category included dog fouling whilst some included that in "litter".

## Conclusion

The number of residents that had been a victim of crime or anti-social behaviour was fairly low at eleven. Four reported being a victim of anti-social behaviour, one burglary and one theft. The remainder did not give a reason.

## Action

***The Parish Council will discuss the findings with the Police and Community Police.***

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## **Any issues, suggestions or concerns not previously covered**

- Narrow pavements between the school and Alstone
- Bus shelter near school needed
- Untidy drives in Alstone Lane
- 30mph repeater signs needed along Main Road
- Parish Council should do more to promote Balliol Hall
- Need village garden sale with BBQ event
- Workmen leaving traffic signs in verge is a problem
- Deliveries to Orchard Inn cause issues in Church Road
- Map of local footpaths made available (in church or notice boards)
- Shop needed
- Safe crossing for Main Road
- Parking is a big issue, need restricted parking on Silver Street near church
- Church needs closer links with Parish Council
- Make greater use of the church as a community building
- Poor state of Pavilion
- Poor public transport
- Cows chasing walkers and dogs on public footpaths on route used to take children to school.
- Stiles not dog friendly

The most frequent issues raised was with regard to parking and need for a local shop.