



Ilminster Town Council Community Plan March 2023



Community **Review**

Your future plan

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Executive Summary (available as a separate document)

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Action plan (available as a separate document)



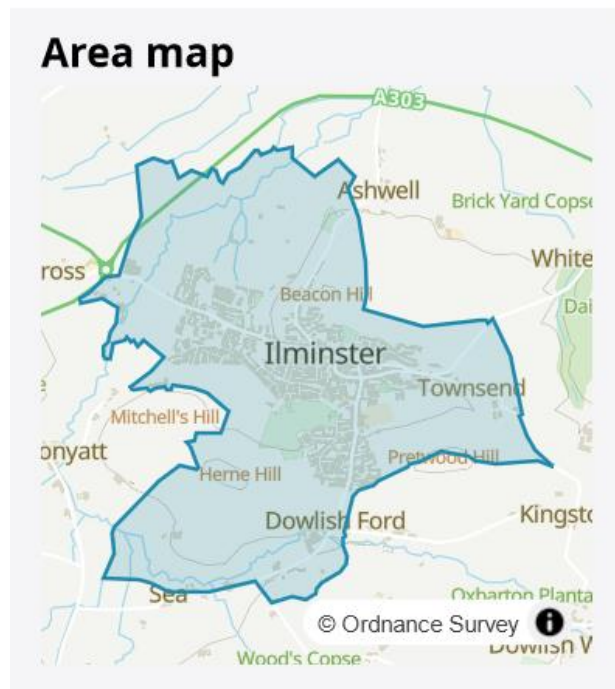
History

Ilminster is a minster town and civil parish in the South Somerset district of Somerset, England, with a population of 5968. The parish includes the hamlet of Sea.

Ilminster is mentioned in documents dating from 725 and in a Charter granted to Muchelney Abbey (10 miles (16 km) to the north) by Æthelred the Unready in 995. Ilminster is also mentioned in Domesday Book (1086) as Ileminstre meaning 'The church on the River Isle' from the Old English *ysle* and *mynster*. By this period Ilminster was a flourishing community and was granted the right to hold a weekly market, which it still does.

The town grew up around the church and some of the oldest buildings are close to the churchyard including the grammar school founded in 1549. In Victorian times the town was an important staging post for travellers with east-west and north-south routes converging there. Bypassed in 1988, the town now lies just east of the junction of the A303 (London to Exeter) and the A358 (Taunton to Chard and Axminster). Market Square has a colonnaded market cross rebuilt in 1813 and is surrounded by handsome buildings. Ilminster is an attractive and peaceful town with a good variety of shops and a theatre.

Ilminster



Iminster Town Council

Iminster Town Council was established in 1974 and comprises of 15 Councillors who represent the Community, supported by the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, Officers, a team of Wardens and a Town Crier.

The role of the Town Council is to make policy and financial decisions at a town level. Recent decisions have included setting up a youth project to support young people in Iminster; the purchase of the Old Magistrates court in order to ensure the continuity of a historic building and to give the Town Council its own offices; as well as the installation of a new play park on the recreation ground.

The Town Council look after open spaces such as Britten's Field, the canal, Herne Hill Nature Reserve and the recreation ground including providing and maintaining play facilities for our community. The New Road Cemetery is managed and maintained by the Town Council.

Iminster is a Market Town supporting local business and has a weekly market on a Thursday morning in and around the Market House. The Market House is also available for local charity and community organisations to book at throughout the year. The recreation ground is home to various annual events during the course of the year and in a normal year people from all around the area are drawn to the town for the Carnival, the Christmas Lights and other events.

Introduction

In the Autumn of 2022, Iminster Town Council agreed to the production of a Community Plan in order to understand how the community would like the focus of the council to be directed in the coming years. Residents were given the opportunity through a survey to have their say of what matters most for the community and resources needed to address the issues raised. It looked at how the community can best recover following the Covid pandemic and the current funding crisis. We're very aware that people's health and wellbeing is being seriously eroded within the community and whilst there are limits to what the council can do, it wanted to try to maximise the opportunities which it can avail itself of.



Background

A local Neighbourhood Plan was started in 2018 but due to covid it had been delayed and it has reached the point where the community Referendum can take place. The topics we have chosen have not been covered/ addressed by the Neighbourhood Plan.

We wanted to engage/consult with our residents on matters that are important to them and that we as a Town Council may be in a position to deliver.

What did we ask about?

The topics were chosen for this consultation were:

- Demographics: a bit of background information about those completing the survey.
- Your Town: what you like most and least about Ilminster.
- Community Facilities and Services: what you use, what needs improving and thoughts on specific community projects.
- Retired and Older People: what support may be needed.
- Young People and Children: what is needed for children and young people.
- Additional Comments: an opportunity to raise any other ideas and issues.

Methodology

The survey was live between 18th November and 9th December 2022. It was available online through a link and QR code to Survey Monkey, and hard copies were also made available and the information provided was inputted by Ilminster Town Council. A prize draw of £25 was offered, and contact details were only gathered for those wanting to enter the draw; otherwise the survey was conducted anonymously. The survey was widely promoted at events, through groups, organisations, schools, businesses as well as through social media.

THE FINDINGS

The findings have been analysed and where 'other comments' have been submitted care has been taken to ensure that the views are incorporated in the report in the relevant area.



Demographics

An introduction to who has completed the survey, including some basic background questions about age, household size and how long they have lived in the area.

Data from 2021 census shows that the population of Ilminster has increase to 5,968 people.

The increase in population from 2001 – 2021 in Ilminster and the South West:

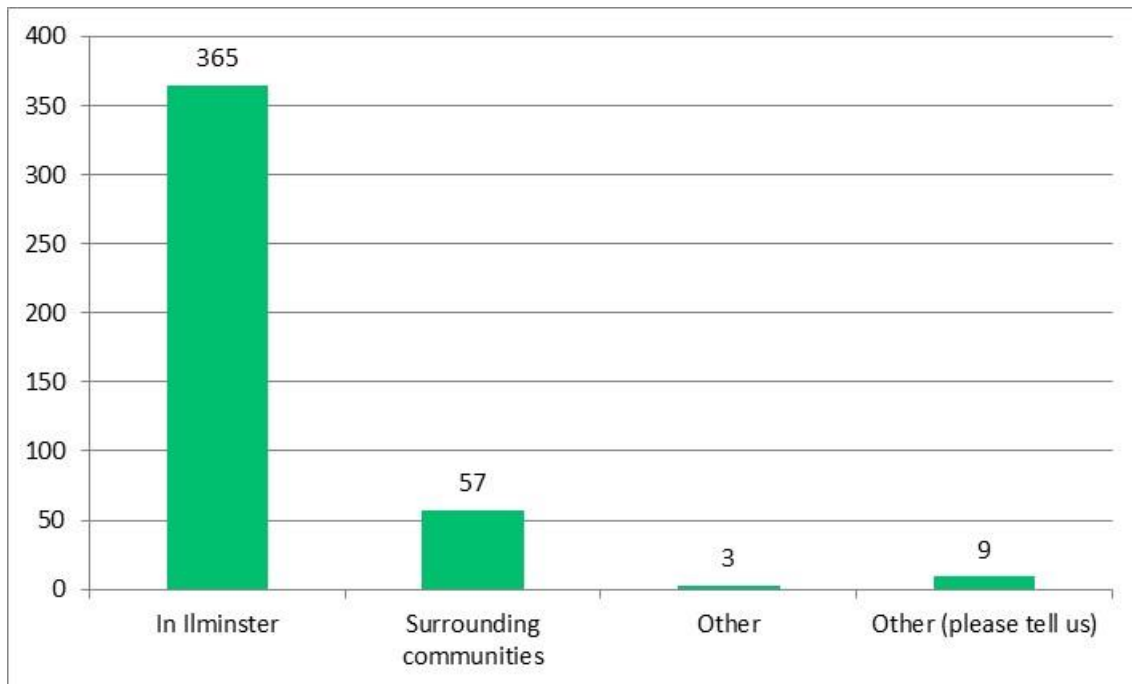
Name	Population Census 29/04/2001	Population Census 27/03/2011	Population Census 21/03/2021
Ilminster	4,573	5,808	5,968
South West England	4,928,434	5,288,935	5,701,186

The census 2021 age distribution in Ilminster:

Age	Number in Ilminster
0-9 years	623
10-19 years	576
20-29 years	566
30-39 years	668
40-49 years	656
50-59 years	783
60-69 years	711
70-79 years	812
80+ years	553

Q1: Where do you live?

Answered: 434 Skipped: 1



Of the 434 people who answered the question 365 live in Ilminster and 57 live in the surrounding communities.

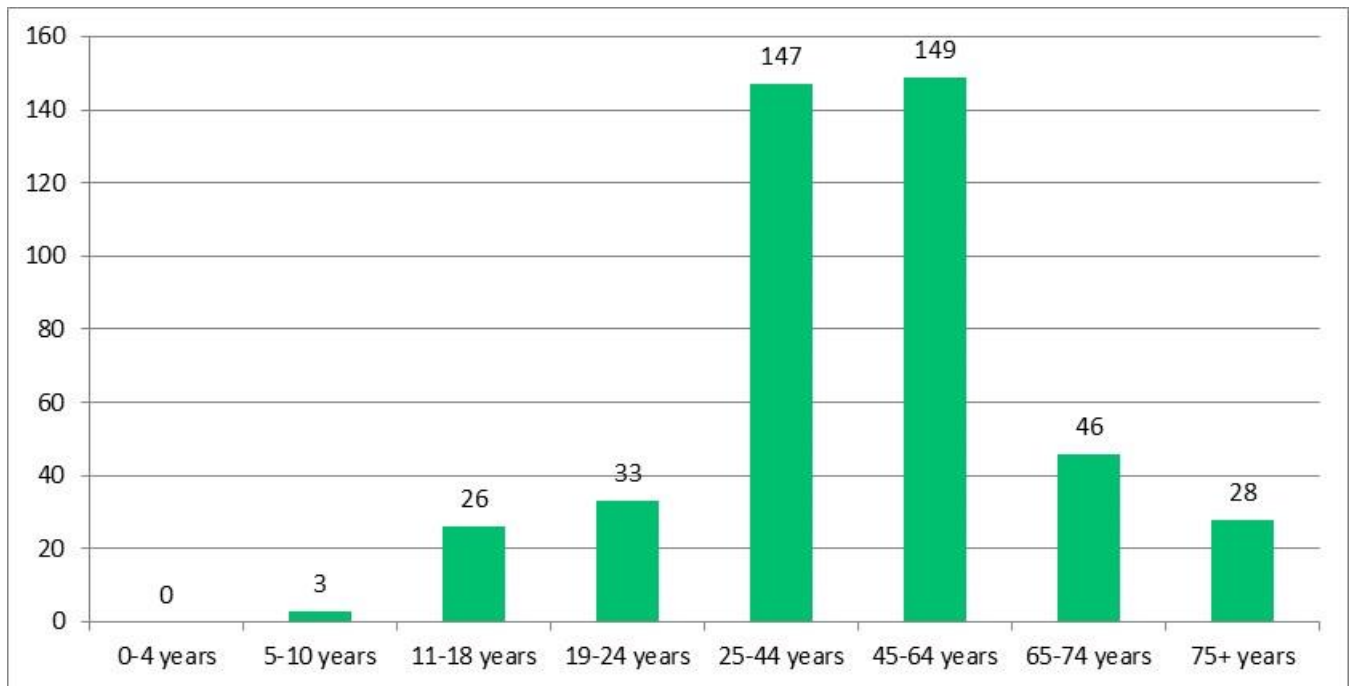
The majority of respondent's live within Ilminster or the surrounding communities thus lending weight to the survey.

However, in many instances additional verification will be needed.



Q2: What age are you?

Answered: 432 Skipped: 3



Of the 432 people who answered the question 149 were in the age range 45-64 years, 147 were 25-44 years, 46 were 65-74 years, 33 were 19-24 years, 28 were 75+ years, 26 were 11-18 years and 3 were 5-10 years.

The respondents cover a wide range of ages from 5 to 75+ years.

The majority of respondents 69% (296) were between the ages of 25 and 64.





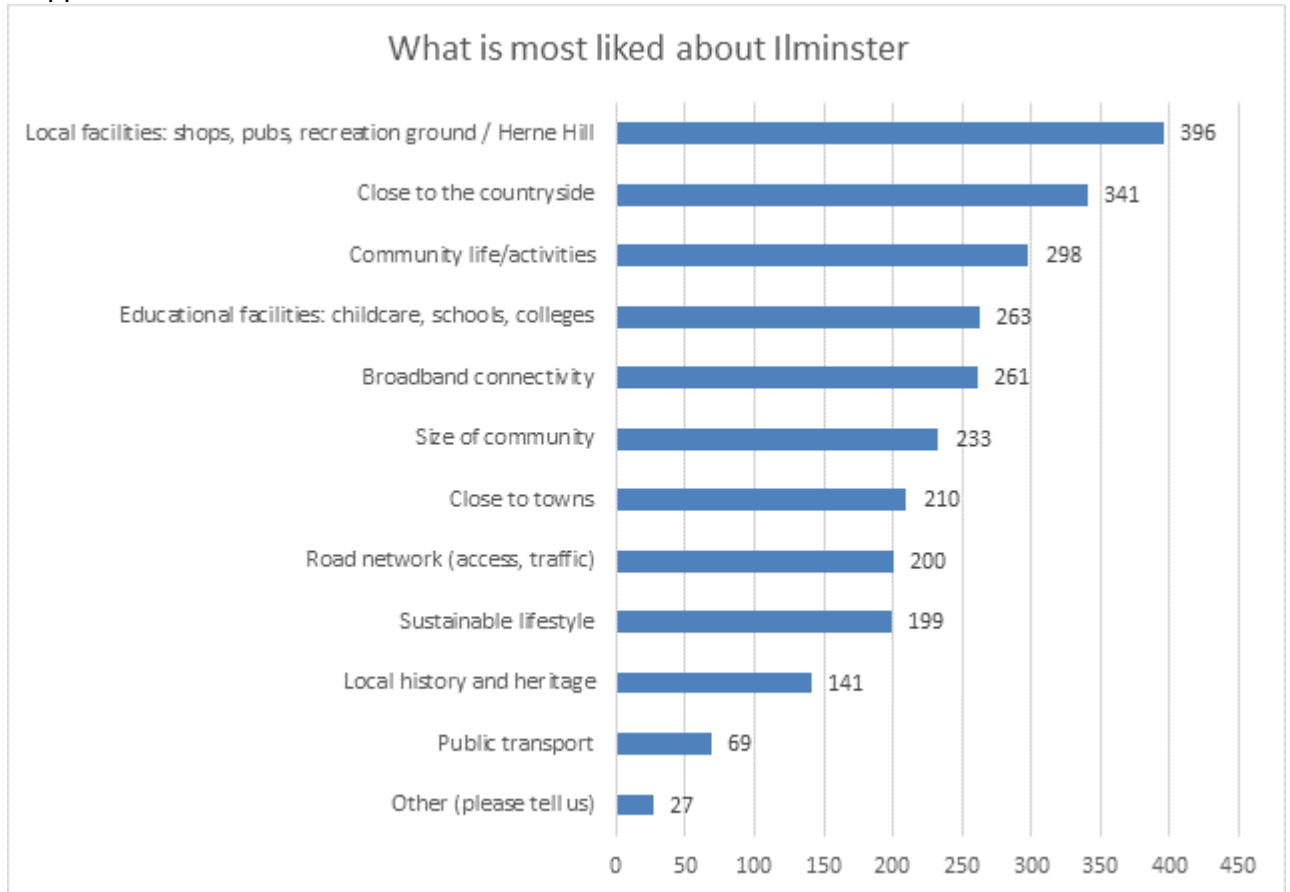
Your Town

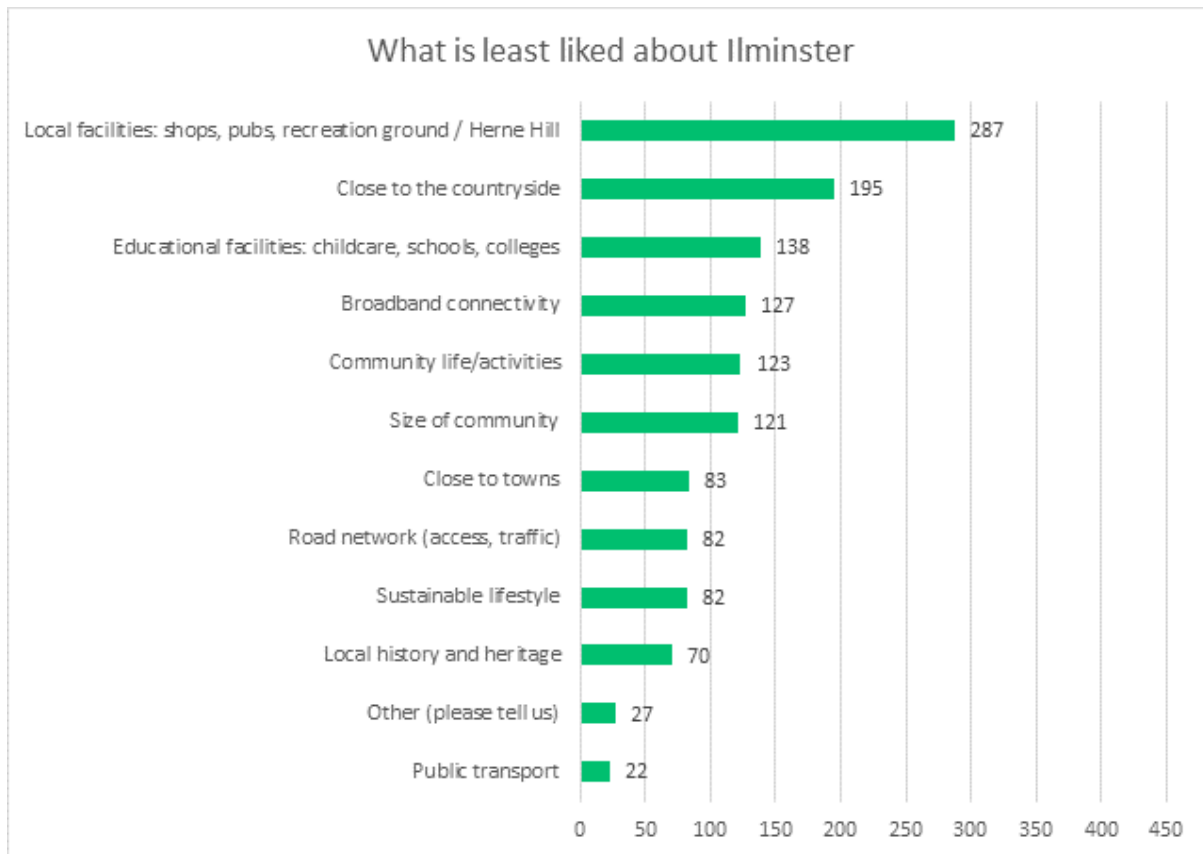
Your views on living in Ilminster and a snapshot of what aspects of the Town you like and don't like.

Q3: What do you like the most and least about Ilminster? (please tick up to 5 in each column)

Answered: 428

Skipped: 7





More people responded with aspects that they **liked most** about Ilminster with the top three responses being:

Local facilities: shops, pubs, recreation ground/Herne Hill (396)
 Close to the countryside (341)
 Community Life/Activities. (298)

The **least liked** aspects were:

Local facilities: shops, pubs, recreation ground/Herne Hill (287)
 Close to the countryside (195)
 Educational facilities: childcare, schools, colleges (138)

It should be noted that in the 'other' comments people mentioned that the category of local facilities was too broad as some aspects such as Herne Hill were liked but that there are a lack of pubs so this was least liked. This would account for this topic being both the most liked and least liked.

'Other' comments also highlighted positive comments including: the 'friendly community spirit', the 'friendly caring community', the 'most complete, caring, supportive community of anywhere that I've lived or worked in the U.K. or Europe'.

In terms of least liked 'other' comments public transport was raised by a number of people as being an issue.

The responses to this question illustrate that before committing to certain actions it would be advisable to obtain greater information.

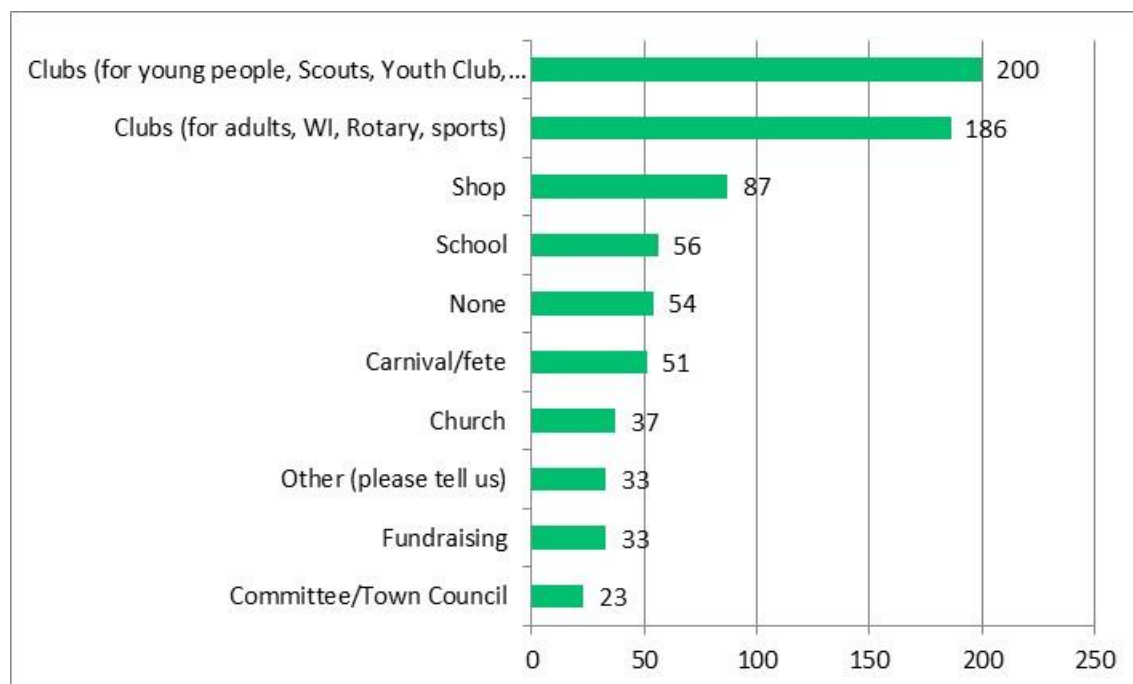


Community Facilities and Services

We have a number of community facilities in Ilminster, by that we mean buildings, equipment for recreation and places to assemble for meetings, events and social gatherings. These questions have helped us understand whether the facilities are suitable for the community, where improvements are needed or if new facilities are needed.

Q4: Do you currently engage with the Ilminster community in any way (volunteering, attending activities, organising events, committee member)? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 379 Skipped: 56

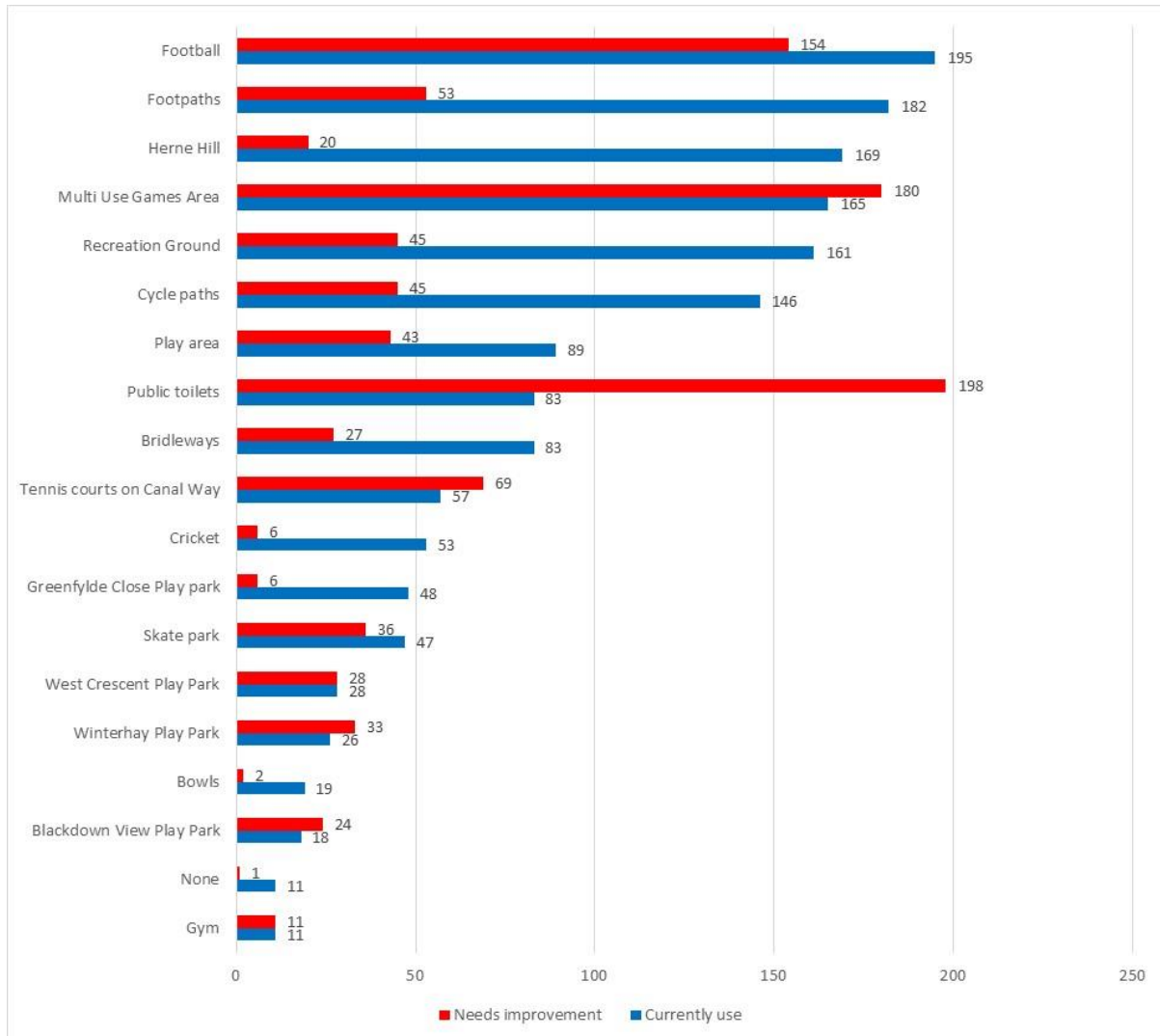


Out of the 379 people who answered the question, 200 engage via Clubs for young people, 186 via clubs for adults, 87 via a shop, 56 via a school, 54 none, 51 via the carnival/fete, 37 via the church, 33 via fundraising, 23 via committee/Town Council.

The 33 other replies included the Arts Centre, Ilminster Share and Repair, the Warehouse Theatre, and Ilminster Literary Festival.

It is encouraging that only 14% do not engage with the community in any way.

Q5: Which leisure activities and recreation facilities do you currently use in Ilminster, and where are improvements needed? (tick any that apply) Answered: 380 Skipped: 55



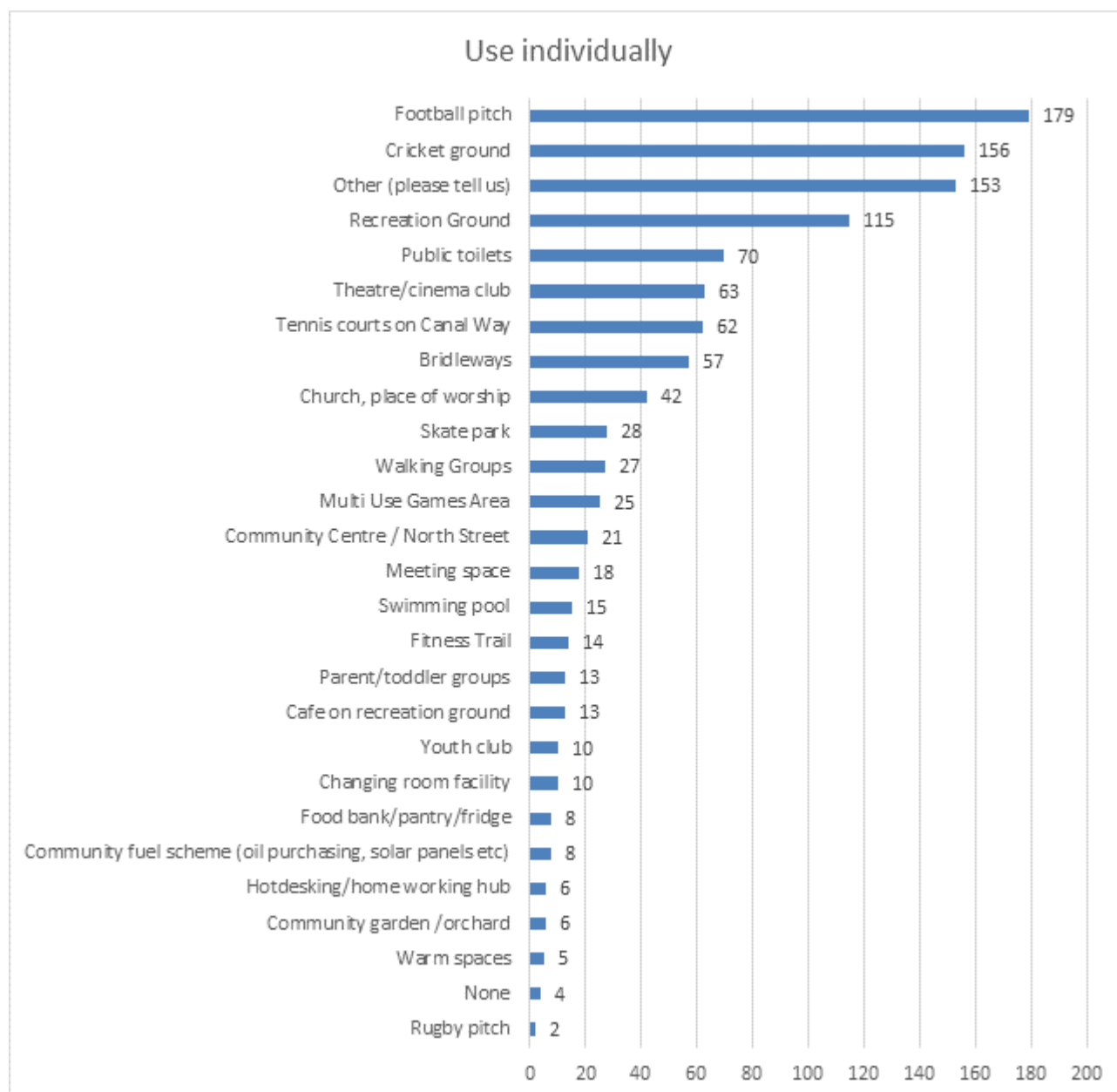
The results show that 88% (169) of respondents are content with Herne Hill nature reserve and an average 67% are satisfied with the bridleways, footpaths and cycle paths.

- 195 respondents use the football facilities with 154 stating that they need improving.
- 83 respondents currently use the public toilets but 198 of respondents think the public toilets need improving. We need to look at why, are there enough toilets, are they in the right location or longer opening times.
- The results showed that Winterhay play park 79% and West Crescent play park 100% considered that they both need improvements.
- The Greenfylde Close play park and the Blackdown View play park are owned and managed by Somerset Council. The Greenfylde Close play park 88% of respondents are happy with the facilities. It is interesting to note that more people stated Blackdown View Playpark needs refurbishment than actually stated that they use it.
- There is a MUGA within the grounds of Herne View School 92% of the respondents to this option would like to see it improved.

More people stated that the tennis courts needed refurbishing (69) than actually admitted to using them (57)

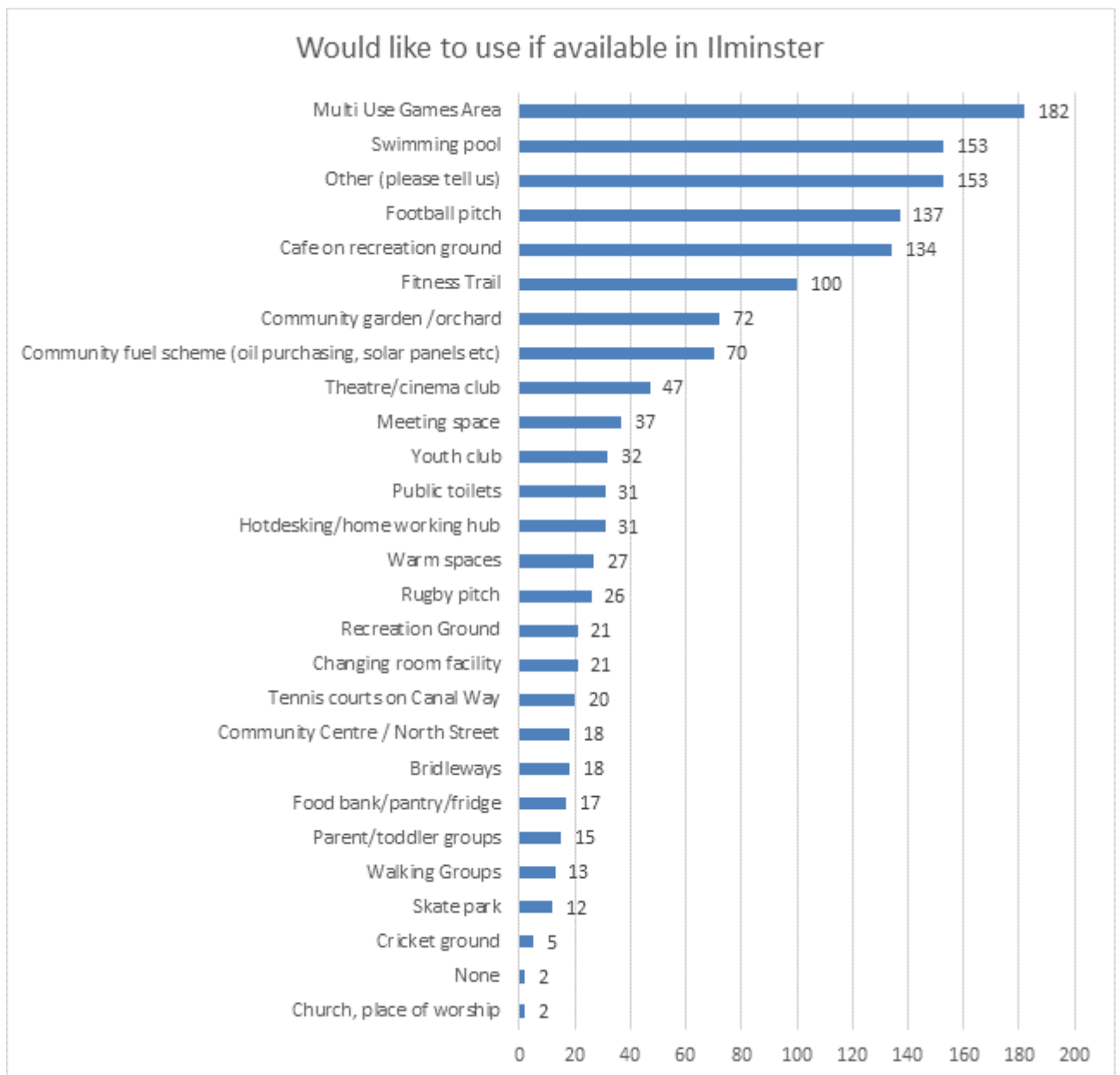
Q6: Which other resources in Ilminster do you currently use either individually or as a household, or would like to use if they were available in Ilminster? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 374 Skipped: 61



374 people responded to this question. The football pitches (179 responses), cricket ground (156) and recreation grounds (115) are the most used resources in Ilminster.

The 'other' comments mostly relate to improvements required/ resources people would use if available as explained below.



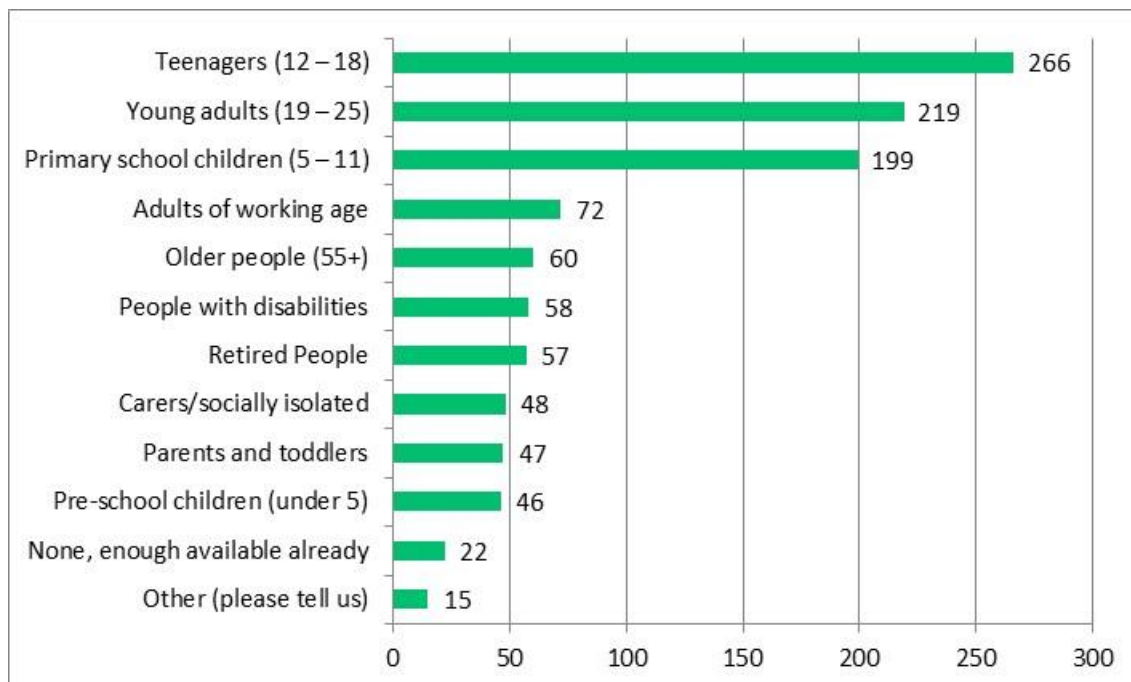
The resources which people would use if they were available highlighted multi-use games area (182), swimming pool (153), football pitches (137) and café on recreation ground (134). It should be noted that whilst there are football pitches the comments in the 'other' section highlight the need for improvements to provide multi-surface / all year use, floodlights and improved facilities and parking. Of the 153 'other comments' 110 mentioned these improvements.

Other resources mentioned in the 'other' comments included the need for a restaurant, especially with evening opening, improvements to the multi-use games area, the need for a youth club/provision. The results show that the organisers of the locations and groups above need to look at advertising these facilities and groups to the wider community.

From a Town Council perspective there are only limited ways in which these matters can be addressed. One aspect that does need greater Investigation is the use of the S106/CIL funding to improve a wider range of activities.

Q7: Do you think there should be more /new leisure and recreation provision in Ilminster for specific ages or groups? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 358 Skipped: 77



A high percentage of respondents requested more recreation provision for the age groups of children between 5 and 25 years.

Of the 358 people who answered the question, more facilities were requested for 72 adults of working age, 60 older people 55+, 58 people with disabilities, 57 retired people, 48 carers/socially isolated, 47 parents and toddlers, 46 preschool children.

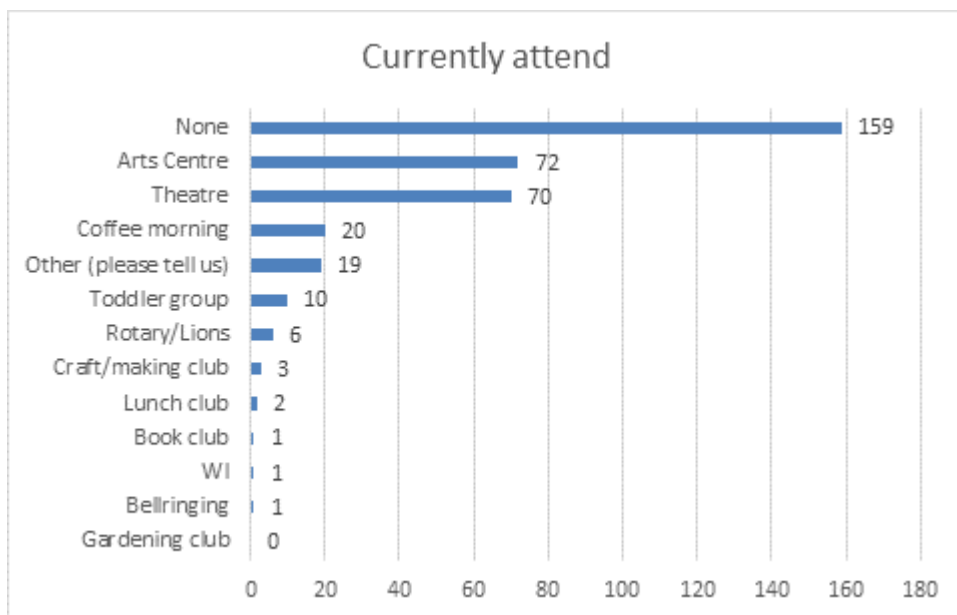
Of the 15 that replied 'other', comments included more recreation provision for all and more female oriented sports.

22 respondents believed there is enough available already.

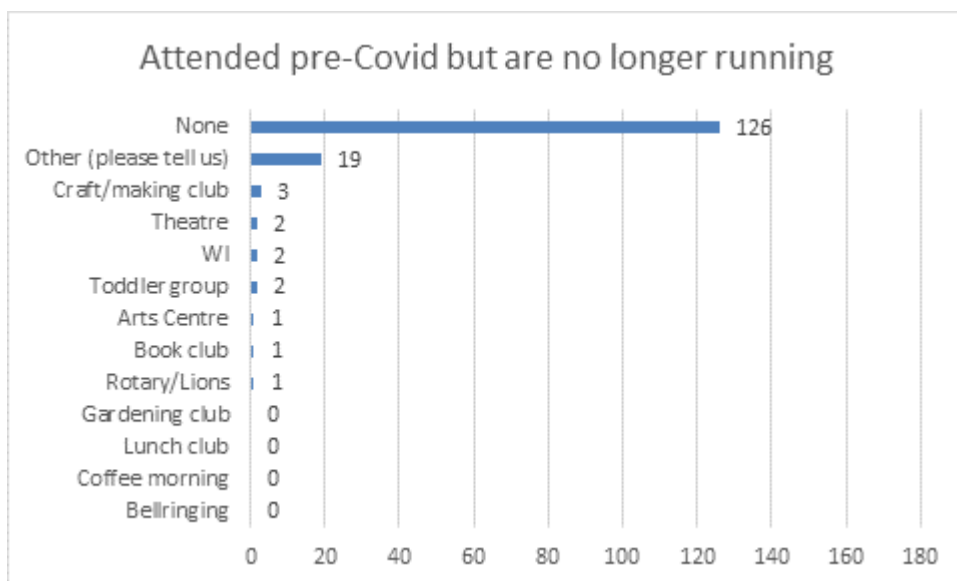
The Town Council has allocated in previous and current budgets sums of funds that can be used to identify how to address some of these issues for the young people between 5 and 25. Answers to other questions also indicate that the range of activities need further exploration by not only the council but also groups that work with the youth in the town.

Q8: Which community activities do you currently attend or would like to attend in Ilminster? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 308 Skipped: 127

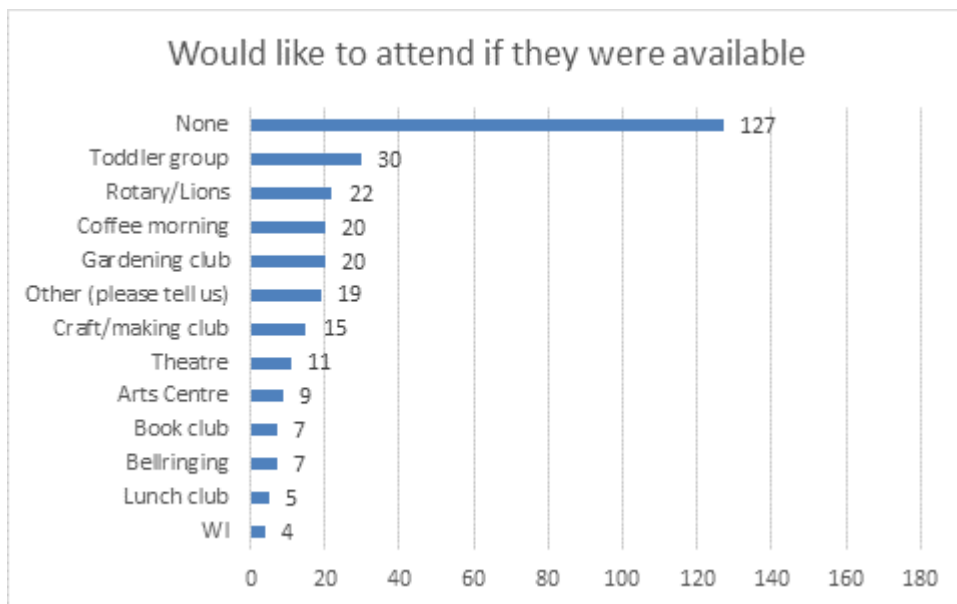


Of the 308 responses, 159 attend no community activities. However, the Arts centre and Theatre are attended by 72 and 70 respondents respectively.



There were a few responses to this question highlighting a small reduction in a few people attending activities such as Craft/making club (3), Theatre and WI (2 each).

It is encouraging that the results show that covid had little impact on the numbers of people attending community activities.



127 people would not like to attend any additional activities if they were available but 30 identified a toddler group, 22 Rotary/Lions, 20 coffee morning and 20 gardening club.

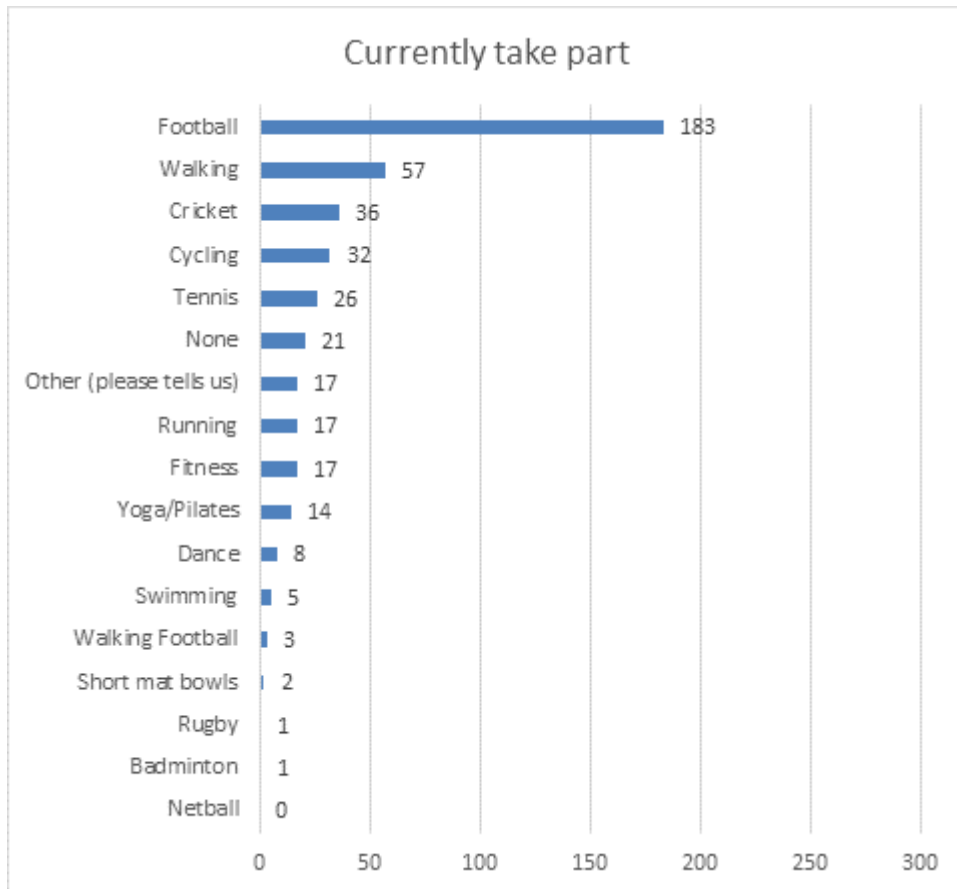
Of the 'other' responses, there were individual comments but nothing that substantially adds to the responses in the charts.

These three questions clearly indicate that there are large numbers of people who do not wish to engage with what is currently on offer.



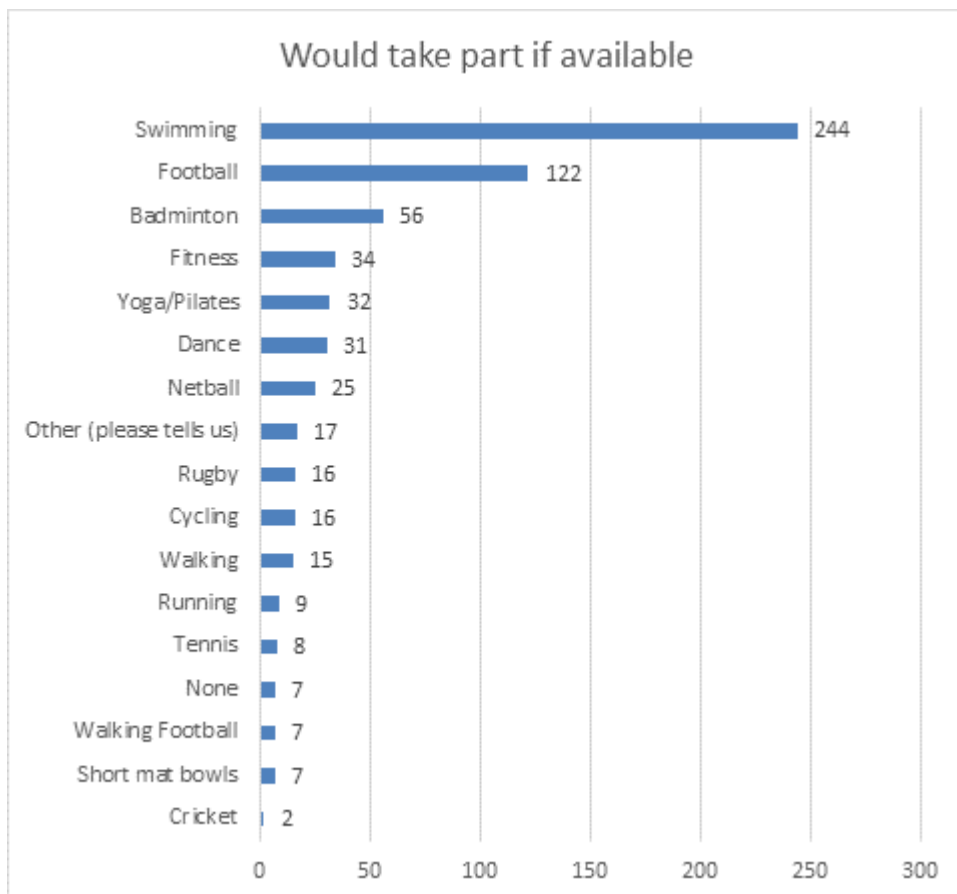
Q9: Do you already attend, or would you like to attend in future any of these sports clubs in Iminster? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 355 Skipped: 80



The most popular activity to take part in was football (183 of the 355 respondents), followed by walking (57), cricket (36), cycling (32) and tennis (26).





In terms of what respondents would take part in if it was available, the highest request was for swimming to be available within the town (244). The nearest pool is 6 miles away in Chard where a new Leisure Centre was opened in 2021.

There is already football provision within the town. However, football may have been raised by 122 respondents in respect of all year-round availability linked with the comments and suggestions highlighted in question 6.

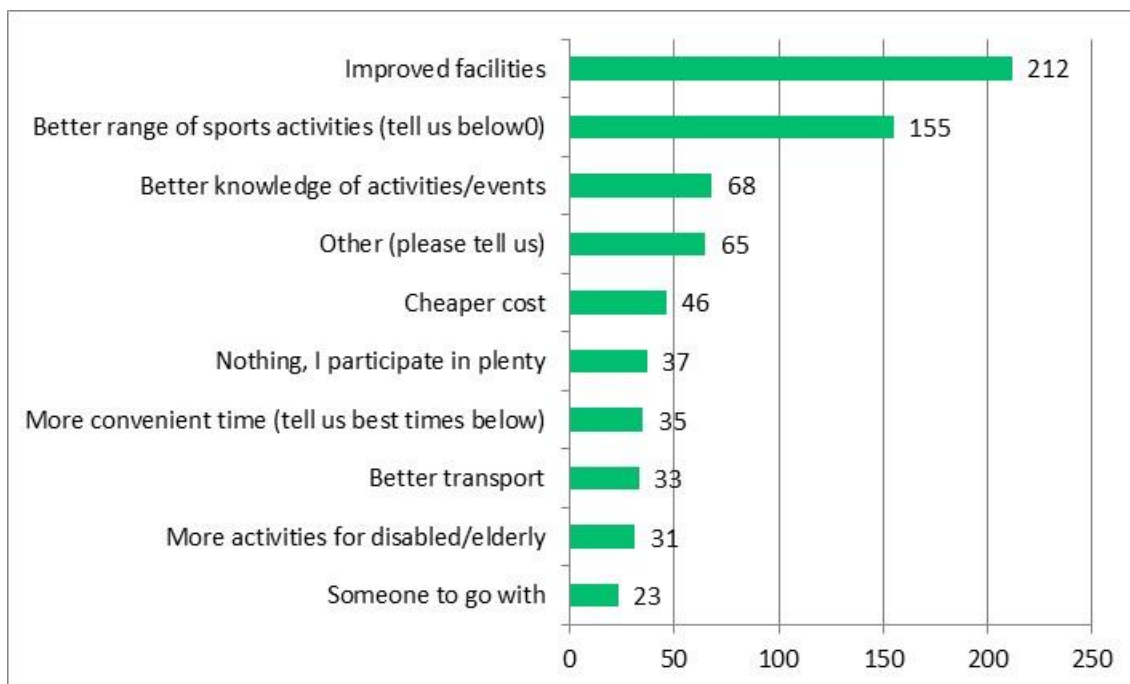
The fact that a large number of people do take part in football raises questions over why some people feel that football is not available to them.

The 'other' replies included table tennis, basketball, horse riding and hockey.



Q10: What would help you to take part in more sport or physical activities? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 340 Skipped: 95



Out of the 340 people who responded 212 requested improved facilities, 155 better range of sports, 68 better knowledge of activities/events, 46 cheaper cost, 37 nothing, 35 more convenient time, 33 better transport, 31 more activities for disabled/elderly and 23 someone to go with.

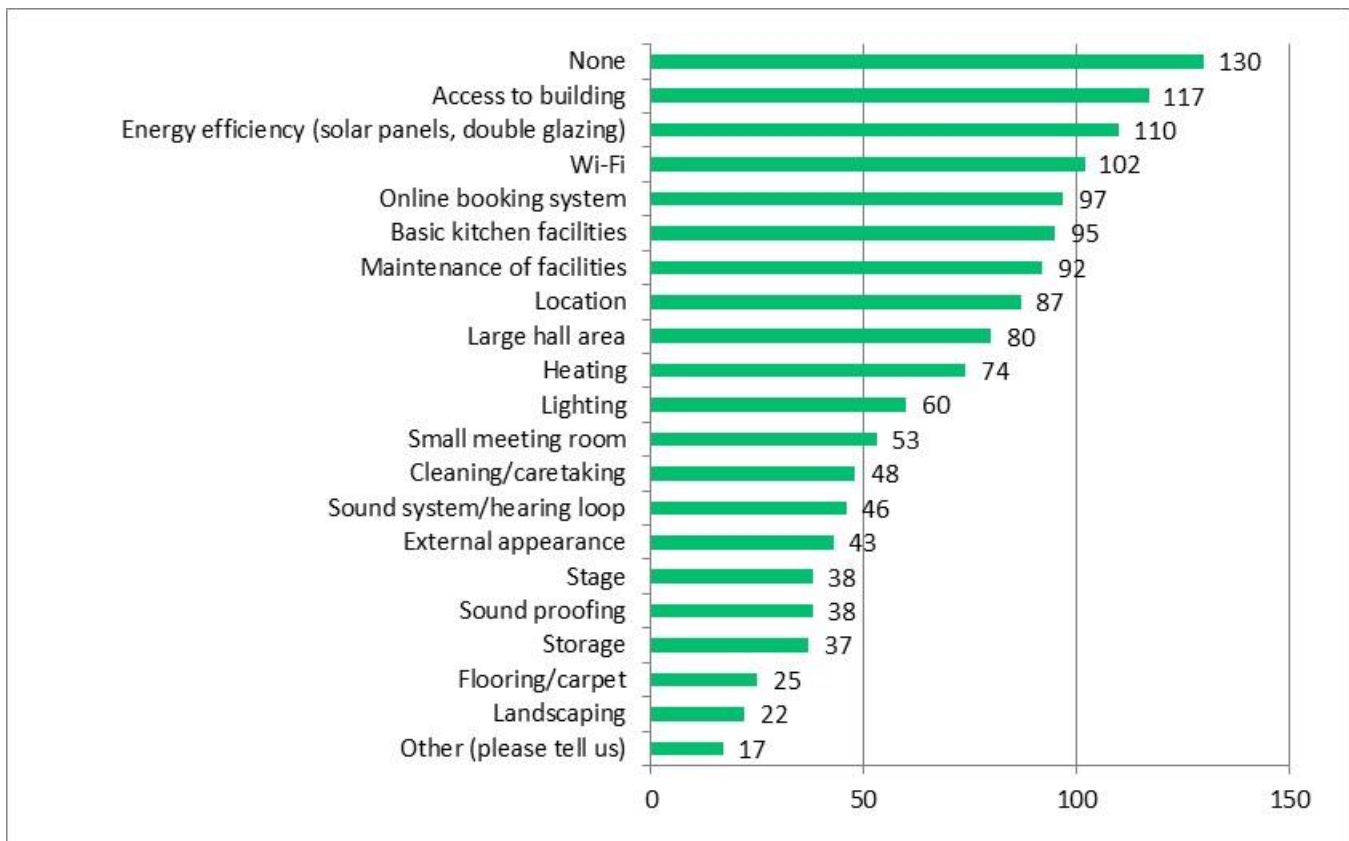
The 65 people who choose other replies included, time, more private lessons, being able to fit it in around work/childcare commitments, and disability prevents people from attending.

Taking into account the responses to question 6 it is clear that a wider range of activities, as well as better promotion of those activities that do take place, is wanted.



Q11 What things do you think are important to plan for in the future of your community buildings? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 344 Skipped: 91



Of the 344 people who responded 130 replied none, 117 access to the building, 110 energy efficient, 102 wi-fi, 97 online booking system, 95 basic kitchen facilities, 87 location, 80 large hall area, 74 heating, 60 lighting, 53 small meeting room, 48 cleaning/caretaking, 46 sound system/hearing loop, 43 external appearance, 38 stage, 38 sound proofing, 37 storage, 25 flooring/carpet and 22 landscaping.

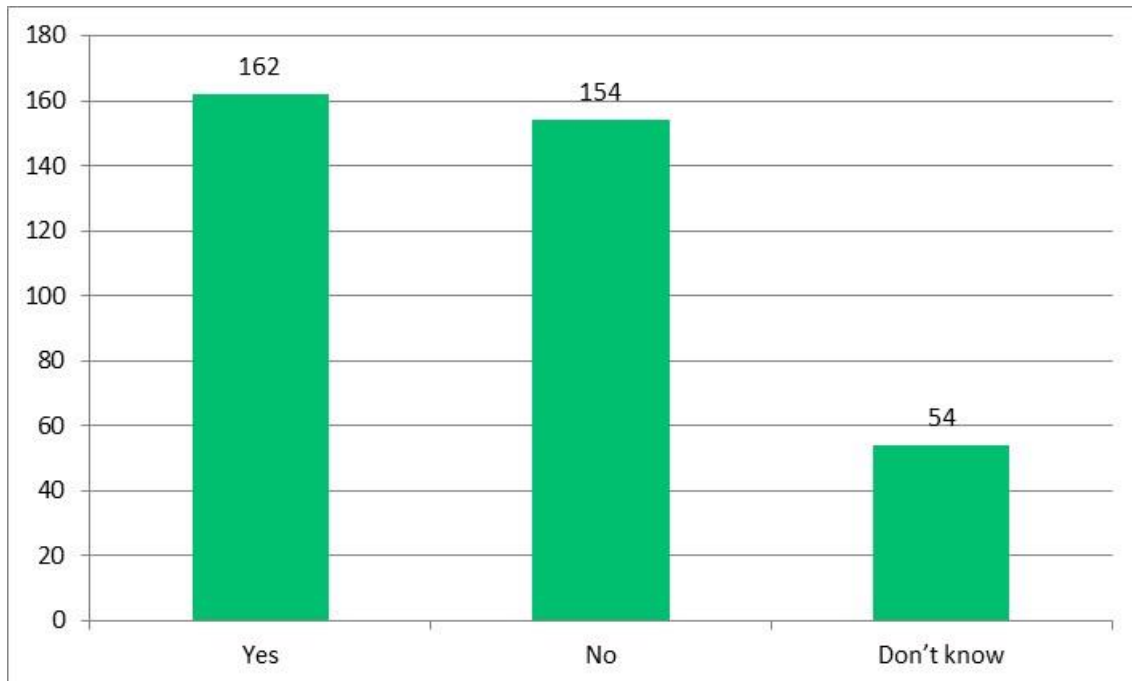
The 17 respondents who replied 'other', comments included flexible spaces, parking, and low hire costs.

In response to this question 130 people (37%) are not interested in community buildings or don't wish to see any resources spent on a community building.

The 3 most important things are access to buildings, energy efficiently and wi fi.

Q12: Do you agree that there is a need for a hub/ community centre to provide a flexible building for use by the whole community?

Answered: 370 Skipped: 65

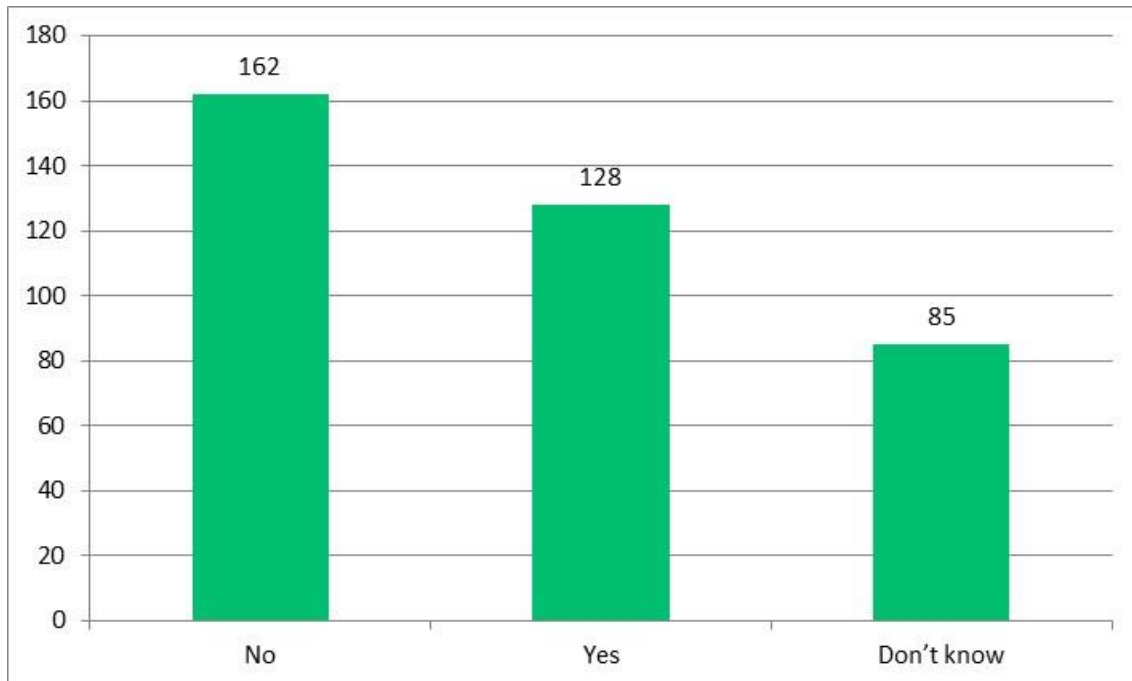


Of the 370 people who answered the question 162 replied yes, 154 no and 54 don't know.



Q13: Do you agree that the Old Council Offices in North Street should be purchased by the Town Council to become a Community Facility?

Answered: 375 Skipped: 60



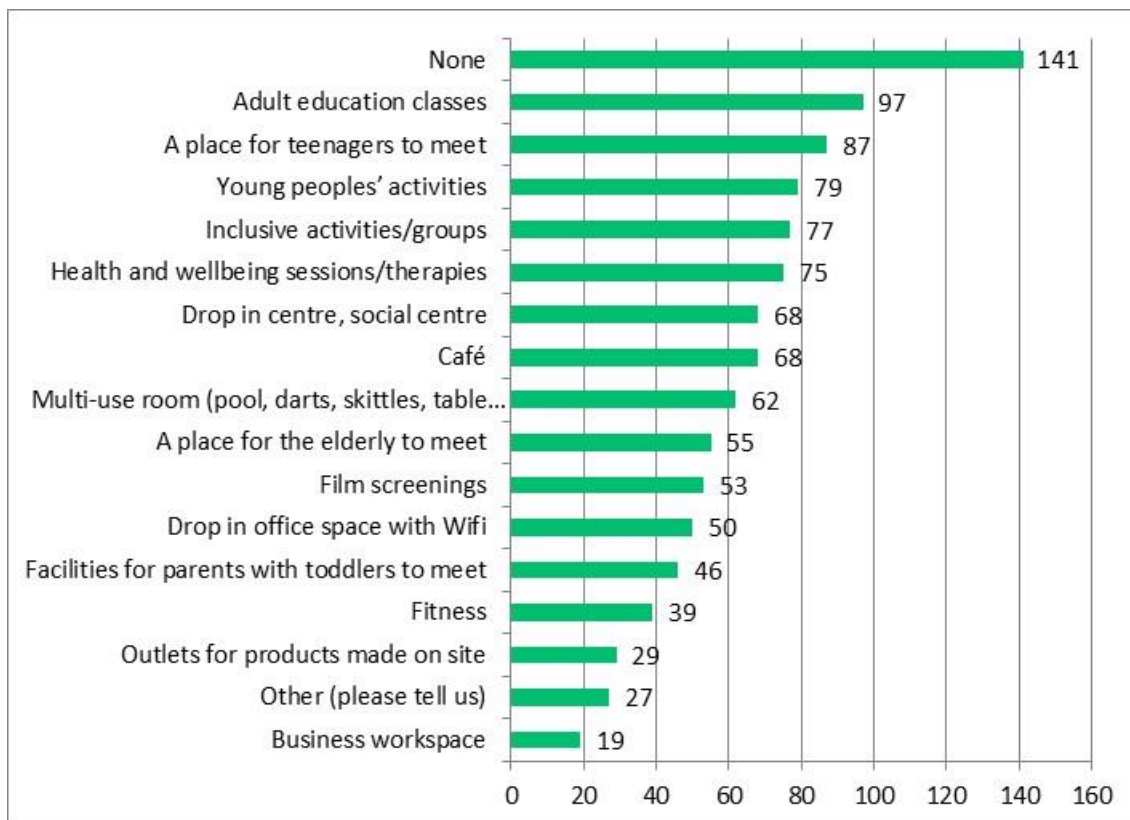
Of the 375 people who answered the question 162 responded no, 128 yes and 85 don't know.

Overall, the responses to this question would indicate that there is a significant proportion of people surveyed who feel that there is no need for a Community facility. It would be worth additional research to establish whether this is because they believe Ilminster is already catered for sufficiently or because they just would not use it.



Q14 Which of the following would you be most likely to use the Old Council Offices for? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 362 Skipped: 73



The responses were very mixed regarding what residents would like to see the Old Council Offices used for.

The most popular ideas were nothing, adult education classes, a place for young people/teenagers to meet and health and wellbeing sessions. Of the 362 people who answered the question 141 said none, 97 adult education classes, 87 a place for teenagers to meet, 79 young peoples' activities, 77 inclusive activities/groups, 75 health and wellbeing sessions/therapies, 68 drop in centre/social care, 68 café, 62 multi use room, 55 a place for the elderly to meet, 53 film screenings, 50 drop in office space with Wi-Fi, 46 parent and toddlers to meet, 39 fitness, 29 outlets for products made onsite and 19 business workspace.

The 27 respondents who replied other ideas included a heritage centre/museum and sold for housing.

Q15 What equipment and facilities do you think the play parks at Winterhay and West Crescent should have? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 164 Skipped: 271

	Winterhay Play Park	West Crescent Play Park
Benches	112	101
Picnic tables	104	98
Disability friendly / buggy friendly paths	97	93
Bins	124	114
Balancing equipment e.g rope bridge, stepping snake	94	87
Climbing e.g. climbing nets, timber climber	101	84
Rocking e.g. see saw, springers	85	74
Swinging e.g. flat swings, basket swings and cradle swings	102	89
Sliding e.g. slides	99	88
Spinning e.g. roundabout, whirlwind	90	81
Accessible play equipment	98	87
None	10	10
Other (please specify)		

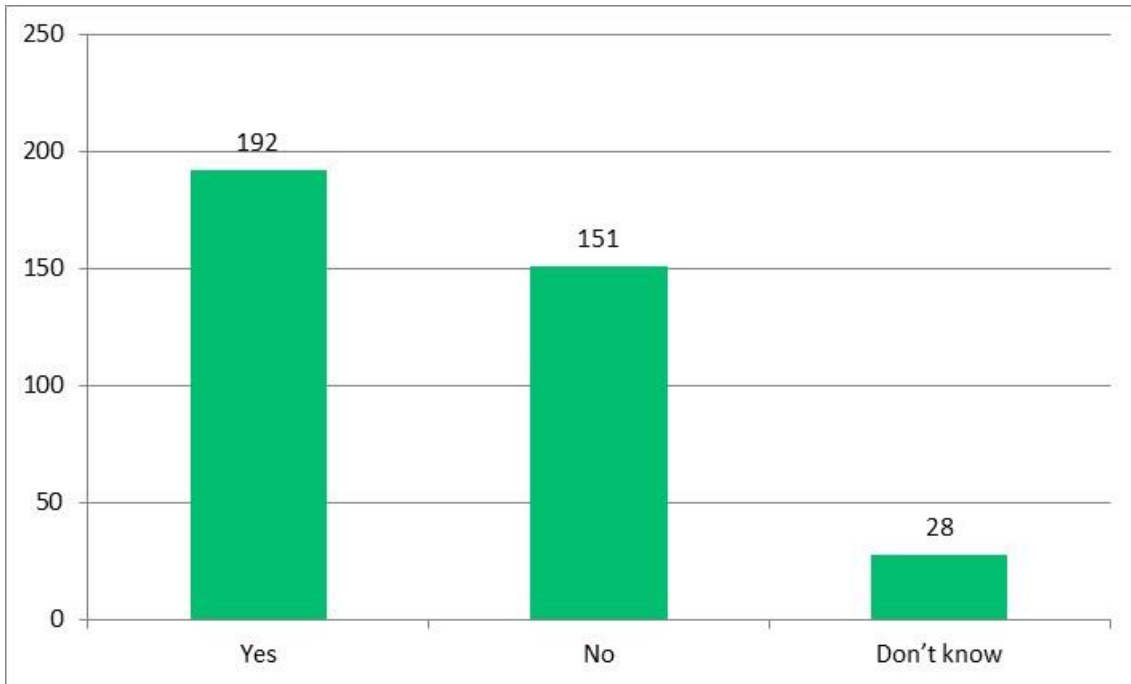
The replies for both play parks are very similar with 164 responses to the options given. Generally respondents were interested in all the equipment options with benches, picnic tables and bins also identified as facilities needed.

The respondents who replied with 'other' ideas included: the play areas being fenced, basketball hoop and football goals.



Q16 The Town Council is planning to install a fitness trail at the Recreation Ground. This would be different pieces of outdoor gym equipment around a path for use by teenagers and adults. Do you agree that this should be installed?

Answered: 371 Skipped: 64

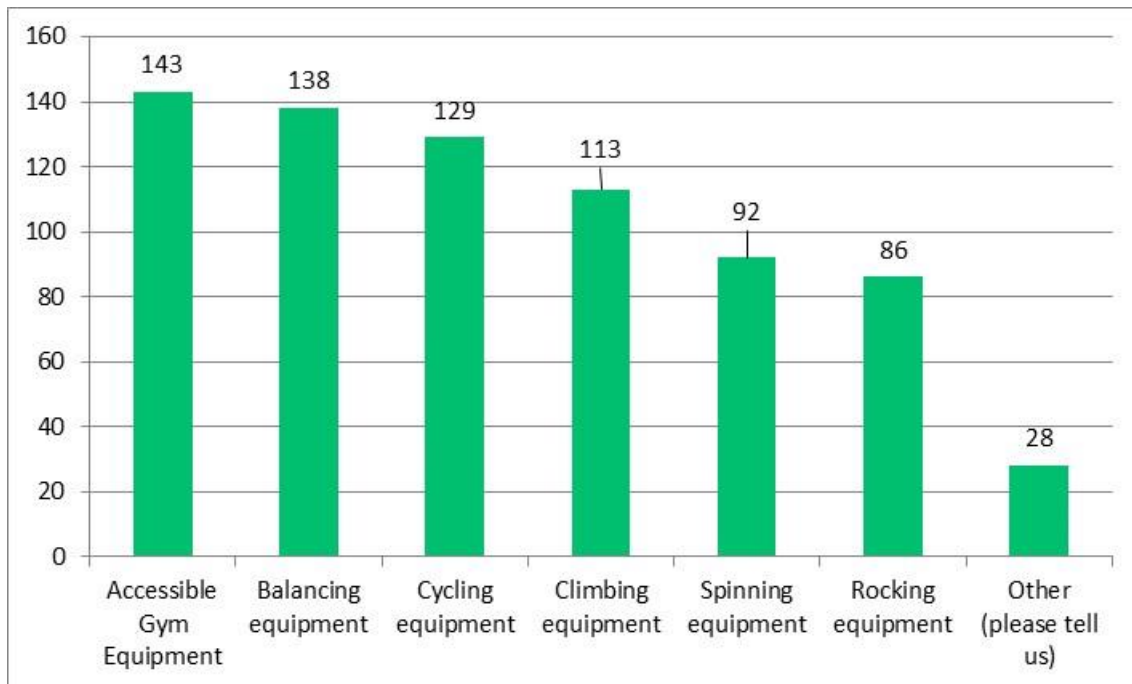


Of the 371 people who answered the question 192 replied yes, 151 no and 28 don't know.



Q17 What type of equipment would you like the fitness trail to include? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 200 Skipped: 235



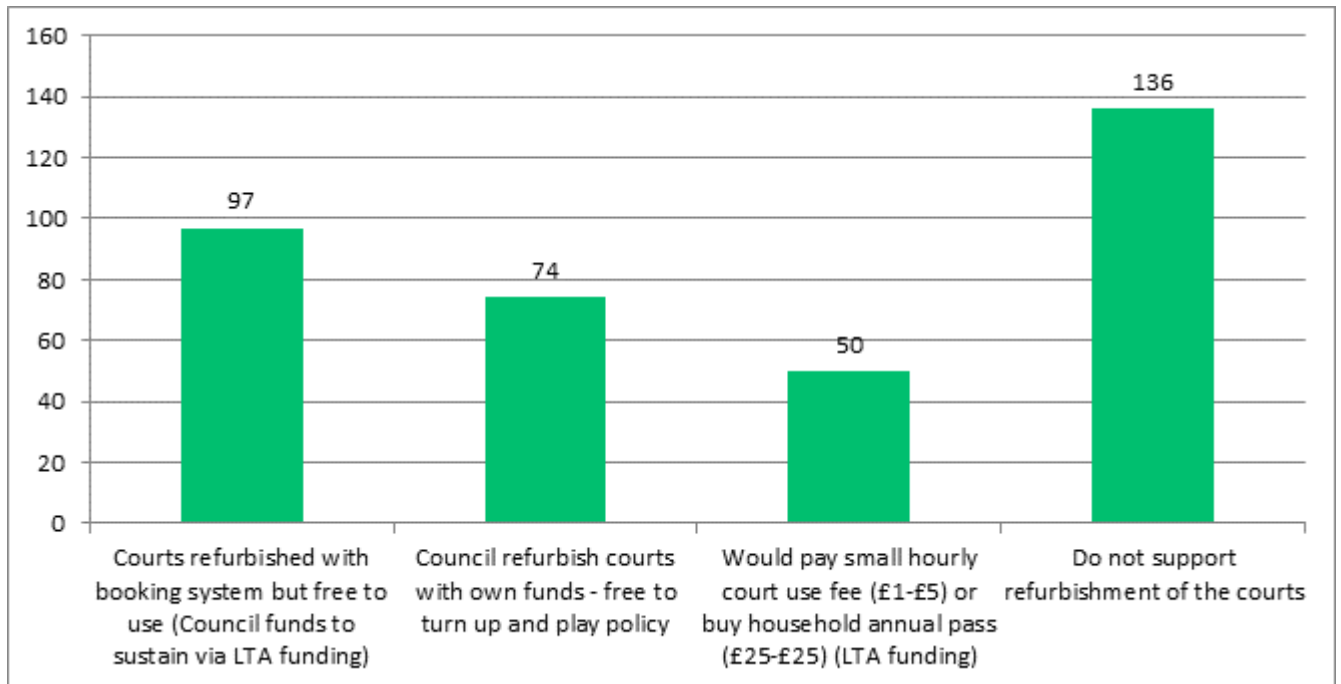
Of the 200 people that responded 143 replied accessible gym equipment, 138 balancing equipment, 129 cycling equipment, 113 climbing equipment, 92 spinning equipment and 86 rocking equipment.

The 28 people who responded 'other', ideas included leg and arm exercising, body weights, strengthening equipment, orienteering routes, and rowing equipment.



Q18 The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) can provide funding over the next few months to totally refurbish the tennis courts at minimal cost to the council due to the courts nearing the end of their life. There may be a requirement to pay a access and a booking system will be introduced in order that any future refurbishment and maintenance can take place. Any fee will depend upon council allocating funds for maintenance. Alternatively, the Town Council can refurbish the courts over the next 5-8 years and the courts would remain free to use once completed. This would be achieved through using council tax and if possible other possible sources. Which option for the tennis courts refurbishment would you prefer? (tick one option)

Answered: 357 Skipped: 78



Of the 357 people who responded, the graph shows that the highest number of responses 136 did not support the refurbishment of the tennis courts, 74 supported the refurbishment with the Councils own funds, 50 would pay a small hourly court use fee and 97 with a booking system but free to use.

Therefore a total of 62% supported the refurbishment and a booking system in some form.



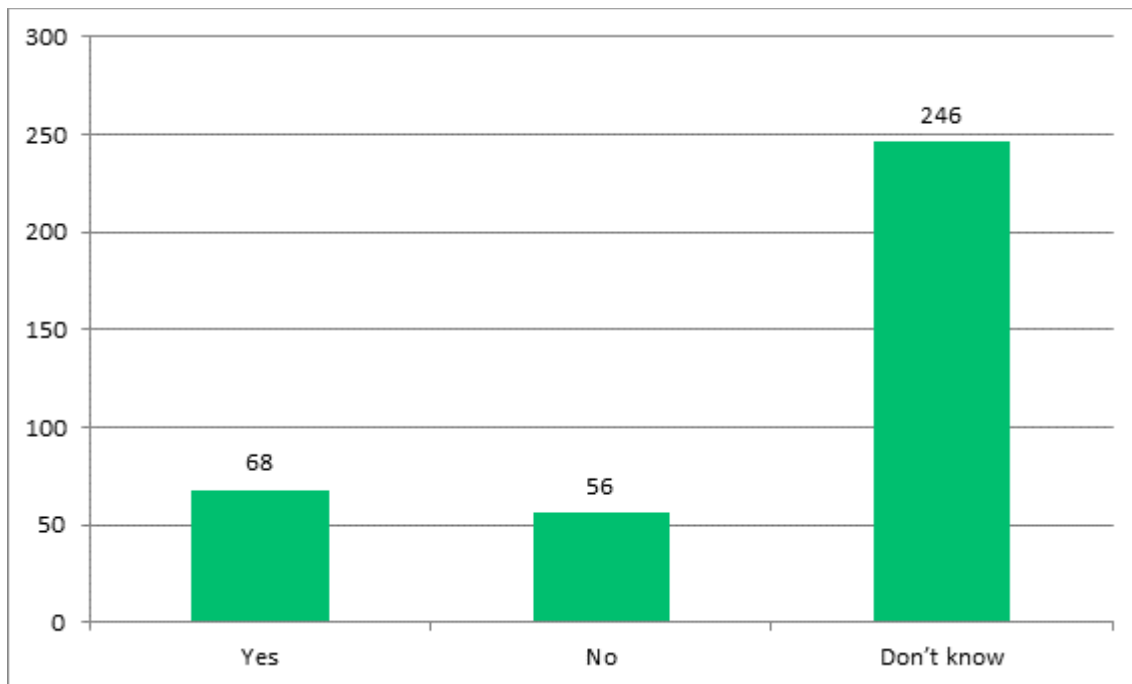


Retired and Older People

Many people post-retirement are often very active in their community and provide a valuable resource for action. However, we must acknowledge the challenges Somerset's ageing population will present to health, social care and housing providers.

Q19: Do you feel there are enough activities and support within Ilminster to enable retired and older people to stay active and engaged with your local community?

Answered: 370 Skipped: 65



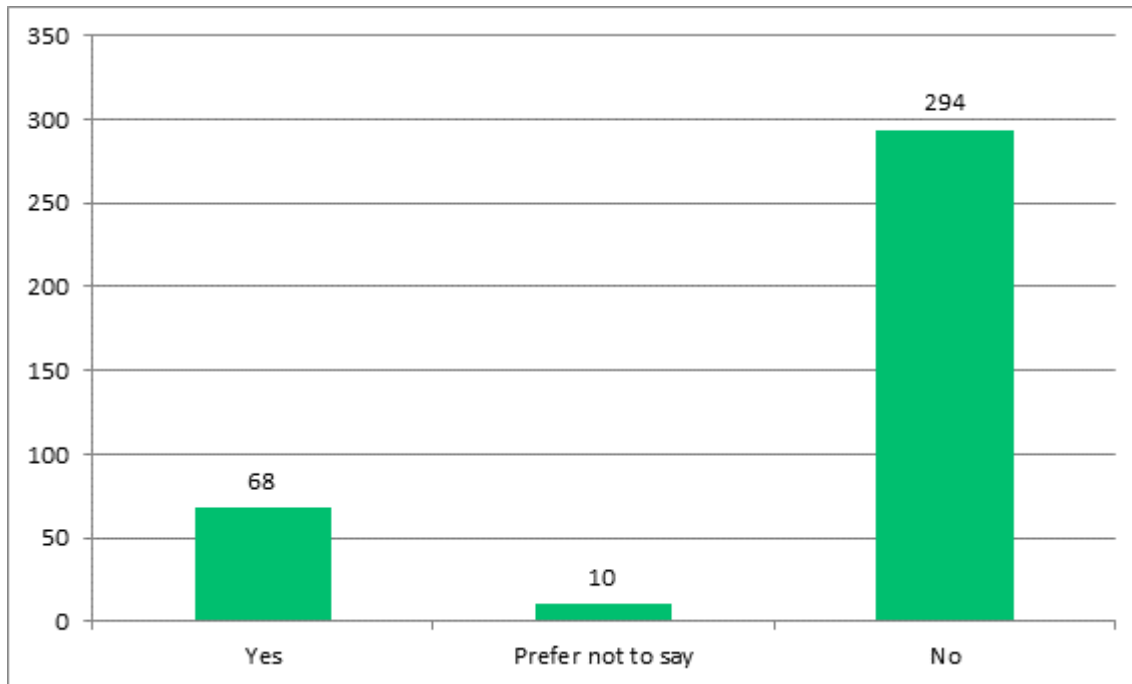
Whilst 246 of the 370 respondents didn't know if there is enough activities and support within Ilminster for retired and older people, 68 respondents said yes and 56 said no.

It should be noted that in question two (What age are you?), 74 people said they were aged 65 and above.

It is clear from earlier questions that a large proportion of the people completing the consultation may not be aware due to them having no personal need for such activities. This would appear to be supported by the following responses to the following question.

Q20 Are you retired?

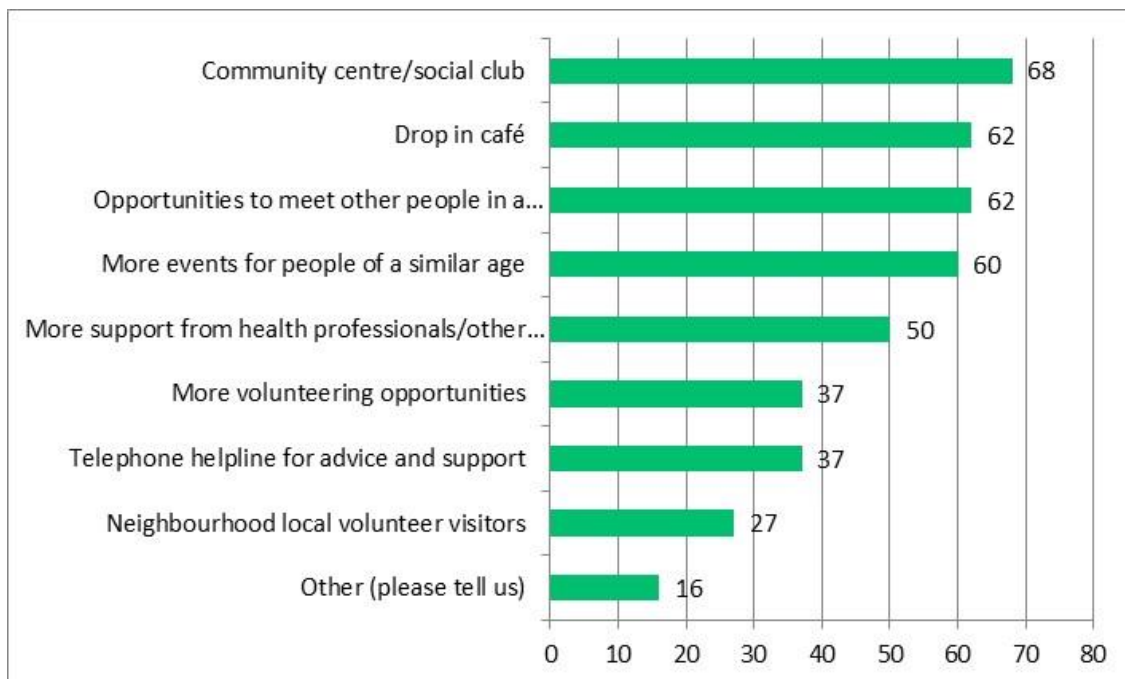
Answered: 372 Skipped: 63



Of the 372 people who responded to the question 68 replied yes, 294 replied no and 10 preferred not to say.

Q21 What could the community or other professionals provide to give you more support? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 143 Skipped: 292



Of the 143 who responded 68 replied community centre/social club, 62 drop in café, 62 opportunity to meet others, 60 more events for people of a similar age, 50 more support from health professionals, 37 more volunteering opportunities, 37 telephone helpline for advice and support and 27 neighbourhood local volunteer visitors.

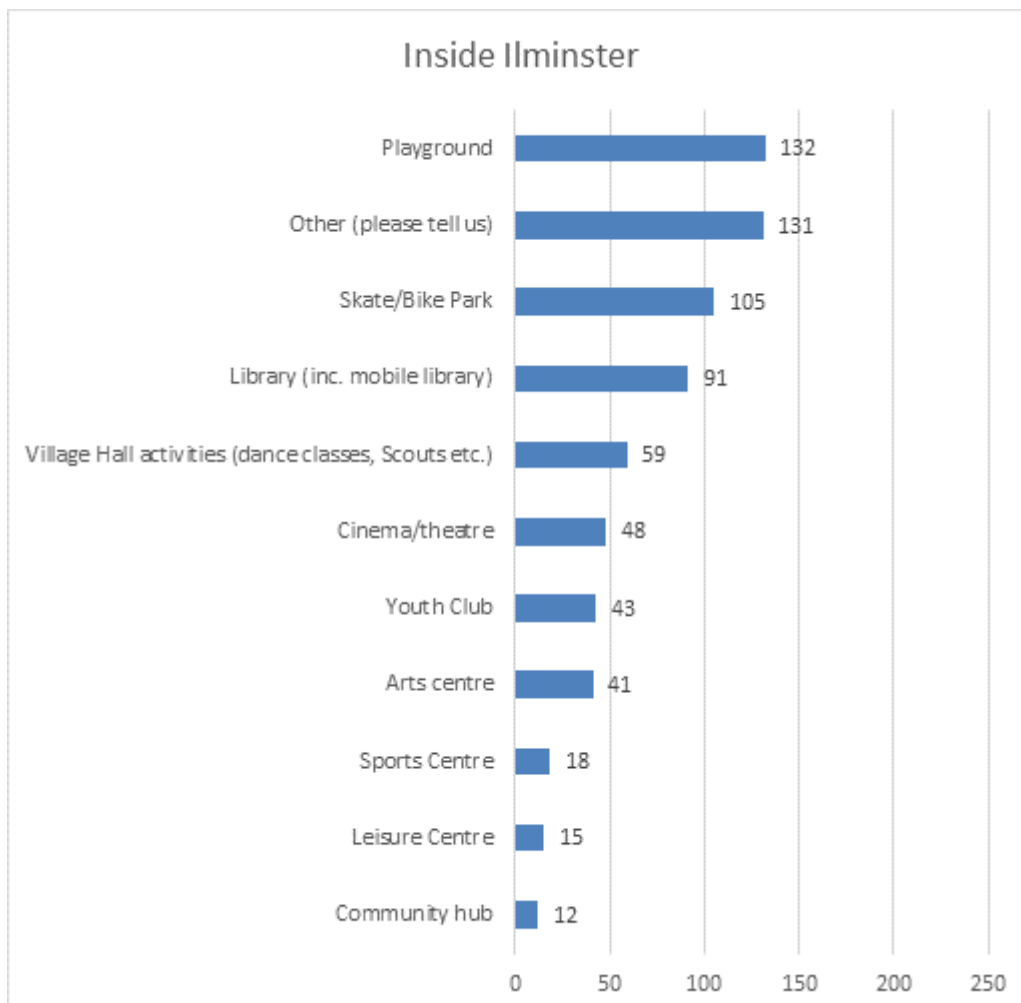
The 16 respondents who replied 'other' requested no support, free parking, transport to take older residents to and from activities, and a men's shed.

The top 4 responses all related to meeting people in a social context.

Young People and Children

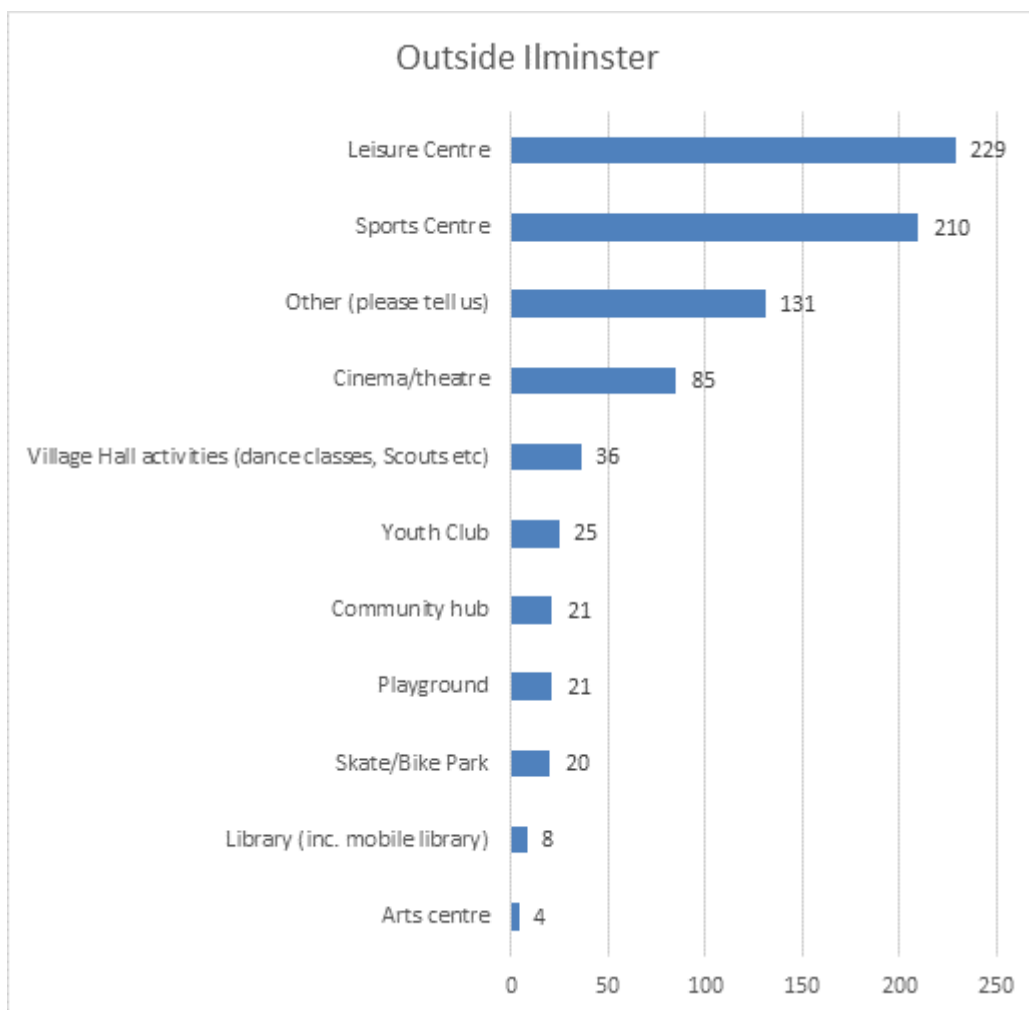
We want to offer children and young people in Ilminster or who visit the town the best possible services so we can provide families with an enriching experience. Having your opinions on current services and facilities now enables us to plan future services for children and young people.

Q22 Which of these facilities do children and young people use inside and outside Ilminster?



The playgrounds (132), skate/bike park (131) and library (91) are the most used facilities by children and young people in Ilminster.

Some comments stated they did not know as they did not have children/young people and a few comments highlighted the need for a youth club.



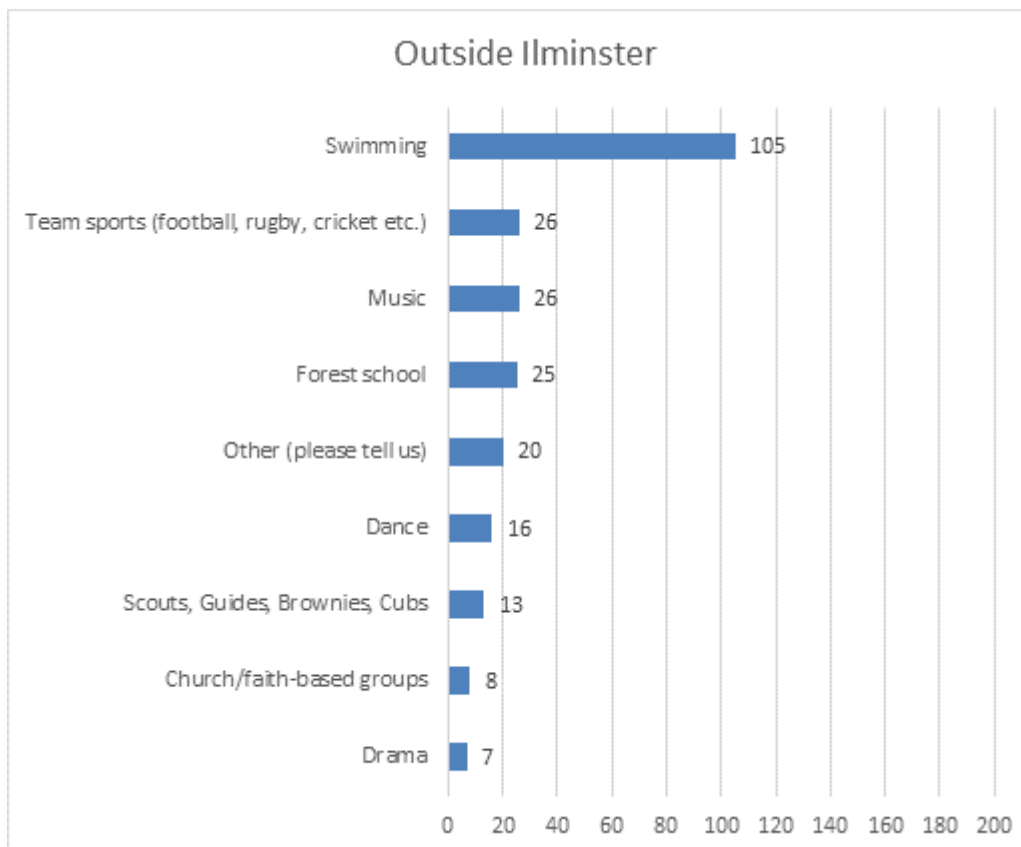
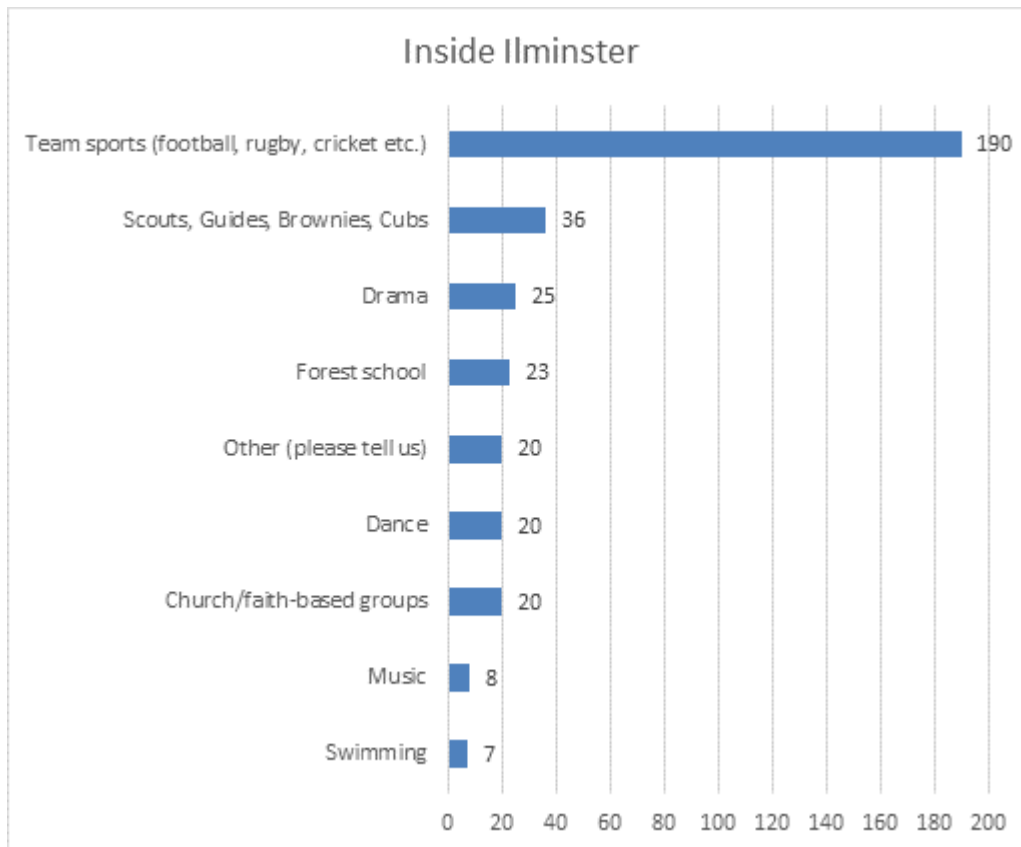
Leisure centre (229) and sports centre (210) are the most used facilities outside of Ilminster by children and young people followed by cinema/theatre (85)

Some comments stated they did not know as they did not have children/young people and a few comments highlighted the need for a youth club.



Q23 What regular activities do you take children and young people to that are inside and outside Ilminster? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 259 Skipped: 176

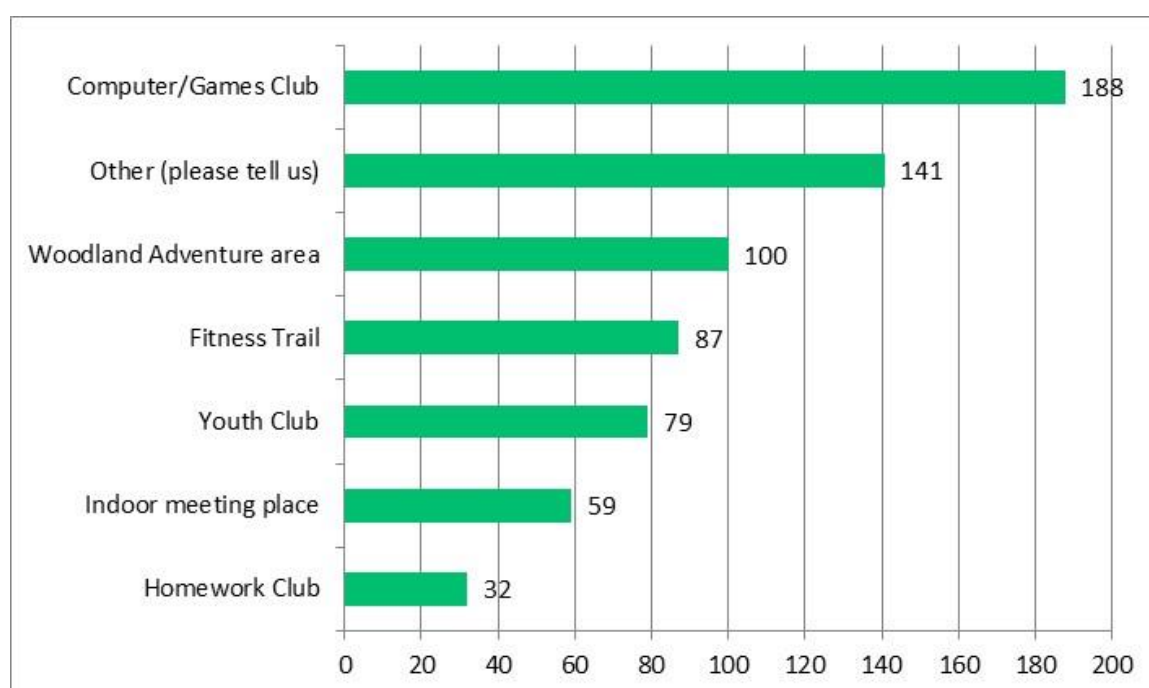


Of the 259 responses, 190 children and young people take part in team sports in Iminster, therefore showing that there are opportunities in Iminster and there may be a lack of promotion/knowledge that these clubs are available. 105 children and young people take part in swimming outside of Iminster reflecting the lack of a swimming pool in the town.

In the 'other' comments many respondents confirmed that they did not have children or young people in their households. However, comments included taking part in air cadets in Iminster, other activities especially in Chard – swimming, hockey, rugby, trampolining, martial arts.

Q24 Would the children and young people use any of the following facilities if they were to be provided in Iminster? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 272 Skipped: 163

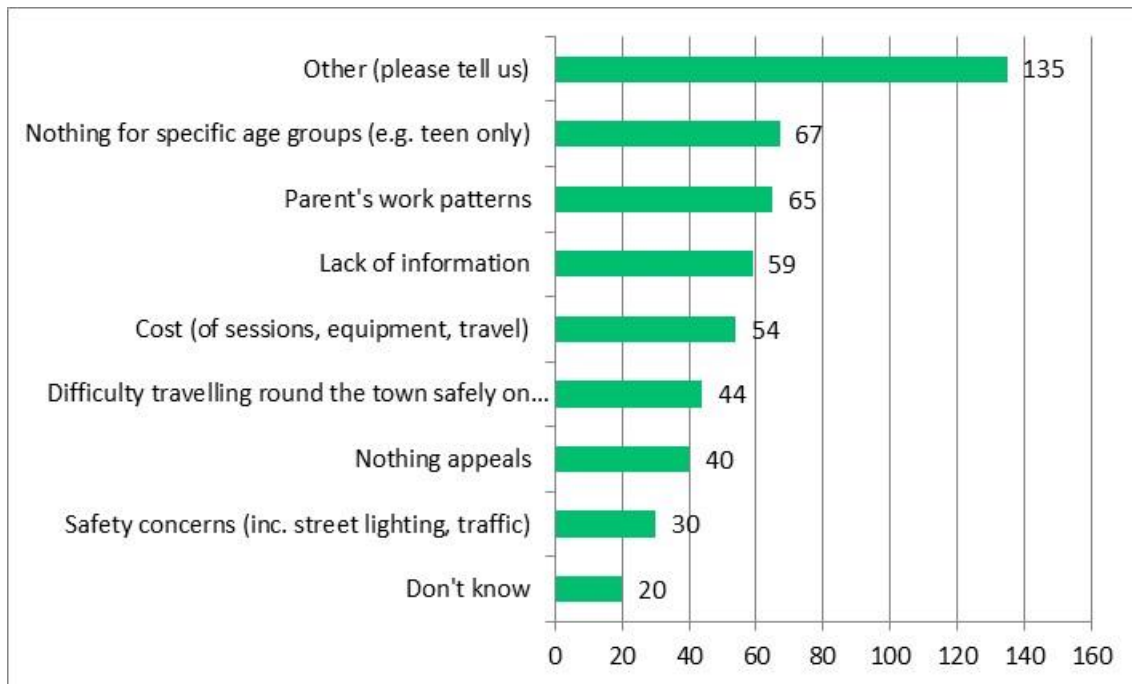


Of the 272 people who responded to the question 188 replied computer/games club, 100 woodland adventure area, 87 fitness trail, 79 youth club, and 32 homework club.

141 who replied 'other' comments included floodlit 4g pitches, a MUGA, an astroturf pitch, all weather training facility, swimming pool, breakfast club, bike pump track and youth club.

Q25 Is there anything that prevents children/young people from engaging in activities more generally? (tick any that apply)

Answered: 279 Skipped: 156



Of the 279 people who responded 67 replied nothing, 65 parents work patterns, 59 lack of information, 54 costs, 44 difficulty of travelling around town safely on foot/bike, 40 nothing appeals, 30 safety concerns and 20 don't know.

Of the 135 people who responded 'other', comments included a 3g/4g pitch, floodlights on the football pitch, a MUGA, and Winterhay Playpark needs updating.

Evidence throughout the survey indicates that both West Crescent and Winterhay play park needs updating.

The MUGA needs to be advertised and more accessible as respondents are not aware of this facility in Ilminster.



Additional Comments

Q26 Are there any other issues you would like to raise (maximum 100 words)

Answered: 107 Skipped: 328

107 people responded to the question, comments included,

- More space for football pitches, MUGA, 4g/3g all weather sports pitch and floodlights.
- Reasons to visit Ilminster primarily revolve around retail shopping and entertainment (including restaurants).
- Reduction in energy use across the town.
- Formation of a youth group to environmental campaigning/action.
- Improved/electric public transport.
- Better advertising of the Herne View pool for community use.
- Storage/display area for historical information.
- Improved Town Council communication with the residents of Ilminster.
- Play park needs to be fenced off.
- Lack of swimming pool in town.
- Lack of Town Centre parking.
- Any future plans need to be fully inclusive to all individuals and non-discriminatory.
- Ilminster needs a youth club/youth centre.
- Investments into community spaces are done so in a sustainable way.
- Improvement of the play parks and skate parks.
- More seating including tables in the parks.
- A community newsletter.
- Clubs to help get people through the winter months.
- A community/ sensory garden.
- A history trail around the town leaflet.
- Playparks and equipment that is accessible to all.
- Community café like the Waffle House in Axminster.
- Adult education classes.
- 20mph speed limit on town centre roads.
- A regular weekend volunteer group to keep our town and its environment clean and tidy.
- More activities centred around the market house.
- Improved town centre mobile phone signal.
- Solar panels on public buildings.
- Better access to/knowledge of public services.
- A flat path all the way around the Recreation ground.
- The present council do a good job.
- Signs to be put up at the entrances to the recreation grounds that dogs must be kept on a lead and more information as to where the dog bins are located.
- A museum to showcase the rich and varied heritage of Ilminster.
- The flood resilience team shouldn't just be reactive.
- An Ilminster community warden who can deal with dog fouling and parking problems

Conclusion

Respondents provided very useful feedback on a range of issues. It is clear that while existing facilities and activities are well used, there are some key areas for improvement which would engage a wider number of people. These include improvements to sports pitches, play facilities, meeting opportunities for older people and young people. A lack of information about existing activities and social opportunities was mentioned by many throughout the survey.

Taking into account the responses an Action Plan has been created as a working document to address ideas and solutions.

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