

PLANNING COMMITTEE

DATE April 2016

SUBJECT RESULTS OF PLANNING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY FROM (Jan – March)

REPORT OF Anna Clare Specialist Advisor - Planning

WARDS All

PURPOSE This report provides a summary of responses to the Customer Satisfaction Survey for the period January 16 to March 16.

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RECOMMENDATION That Members note the content of this report

1. Introduction

1.1 Since June 2015 we have been taking part in a National Project to improve the way local council planning departments work. Run by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) we carry out a Customer Satisfaction Survey, which is sent to all Applicants and Agents following our decision on their planning applications, and also those who made representations on applications (where email address is available) for their views on how well we had dealt with the applications. The results of this survey were previously reported to Planning Committee in January 2016 for the year end 2015. The purpose of this report is to update on subsequent responses and improvements which have been implemented to our service following survey responses.

2. Improvements/Recommendations raised in previous report

2.1 Together with our service/software providers a new website (showing the planning pages) has been developed to improve how users of the service can view applications and comment online. At present the roll out of this enhancement is planned for later in the spring.

2.2 Improvements to the neighbour consultation letter to make it clearer how to comment online and view the application documents and decision has been carried out. This will be further updated once the new 'Planning' website is launched.

2.3 Our new 'Householder Validation Checklist' is available online as is our updated Local Validation List. Both of these documents aim to ensure that Applicants/Agents have a clear guide as to what documents/plans etc. would be required for each type of application which will cut down on applications submitted and found to be 'invalid'.

2.4 A link to this section of the website <http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/residents/planning/make-planning-application> is to be included on all pre-application advice responses made by Caseworkers/Specialist Advisors. Training has been concluded on this matter.

3. New comments from last quarter responses

Comments	Action
<p>3.1 Acknowledgements of comments are received but no further correspondence from caseworker/specialist advisor is given and therefore neighbours are not sure that comments were taken into account. It is not common practice to engage in correspondence with objectors, the neighbour notification letter outlines this. Comments are outlined in the Officers report which is publically available following the decision</p>	<p>No change to current practices</p>
<p>3.2 Lack of clarity over who was/was not allowed to speak at committee. This has been clarified internally between Civic Services and Planning Caseworker and Specialists, and our Neighbour consultation letter has been</p>	<p>Change has been implemented</p>

<p>updated to outline the policy in relation to talking at committee.</p>	
<p>3.3 No information was given about when the application would be decided. This should be improved when the new website is launched as we have requested the expiry date for comments/ and the expiry date for the application to be included in the online details of the application.</p>	<p>Change has been programmed with the new website pages</p>
<p>3.4 Reports and consultations being carried out over the Christmas holidays. This is noted as being undesirable, and we endeavour to allow more time at this time of year, taking into account the holiday season. However, we have no control over when applications are submitted and therefore when the consultation needs to be carried out.</p>	<p>Change has been implemented</p>
<p>3.5 Two comments were received in relation to reports not clear enough to a lay person. Case Officer Reports should be able to be understood by all members of the public and this has been relayed to individuals writing reports to keep them simple and concise.</p>	<p>Change implemented training Change programmed review of Officer report template.</p>
<p>3.6 Neighbours commented that no reasons were given for the decision. There is a large variation between Agents who in the last survey period 100% stated that the reason for the decision was clear, and Neighbours who in the last survey period 5% said the reason for the decision was clear. The reasons for the decision are outlined in the Case Officer Report</p>	<p>Change to template later is programmed</p>

<p>and/or on the decision notice. Agents could find that this is clearer to them as they are more aware of the process, and as they sent a copy of the decision notice. The Neighbour notification letter states that those commenting will not be sent a copy of the decision but this will be available online to view. The Letter could be updated to be clearer how to find the reasoning for the decision but it is not recommended that a decision notice is sent to neighbours, given most engage with the online system and the time/resources that would be involved</p>	
<p>3.8 An objector commended that at committee it was felt that applications were presented in different ways depending on who presented the case</p>	<p>Change This is noted and the Senior Specialist Advisor will ensure that all presentations are set out and presented in a similar manner.</p>
<p>3.9 In addition to the comments above we received a positive comment from a Neighbour who was happy that a caseworker/specialist advisor visited their property and they were given opportunity to demonstrate the implication of the development</p>	<p>Change Training to be given to CW/SA to highlight the importance in the determination process of neighbour site visits.</p>
<p>GENERAL OBSERVATIONS</p>	<p>COMMENTS</p>
<p>It should be noted that the survey period contained a number of decisions which were relatively controversial in terms of neighbour objections which is evident in the responses. When a neighbour has commented on an application the majority of the time it would be in objection and if the application is thereafter approved they are understandably unlikely to be happy with the process.</p>	<p>None other than feedback to officers concerned</p>
<p>Three comments were also</p>	<p>None other than feedback to</p>

received from Agents praising the helpfulness and quick responses to emails by Case Workers/Specialists and providing a 'quick' turn around on decisions.	officers concerned.

4. Survey Response Data

4.1 The following charts show the outcomes of the survey comparing the whole survey period date with the last quarter responses.

4.2 In order to highlight progress (positive or negative) we are using the responses of the previous quarter set as a benchmark against which we will be able to monitor variables across the 'very helpful' responses received.

Year	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9
Responses up to Dec 15	72%	66%	59%	89%	-	15%	42%	8%	24%
Responses up to March 2016	66%	97%	93%	100%	-	16%	16%	5%	5%

4.3 Attached below are a series of graphs that show the survey data

Contd...

Agents

Table 1 - How helpful were the council in dealing with your application?

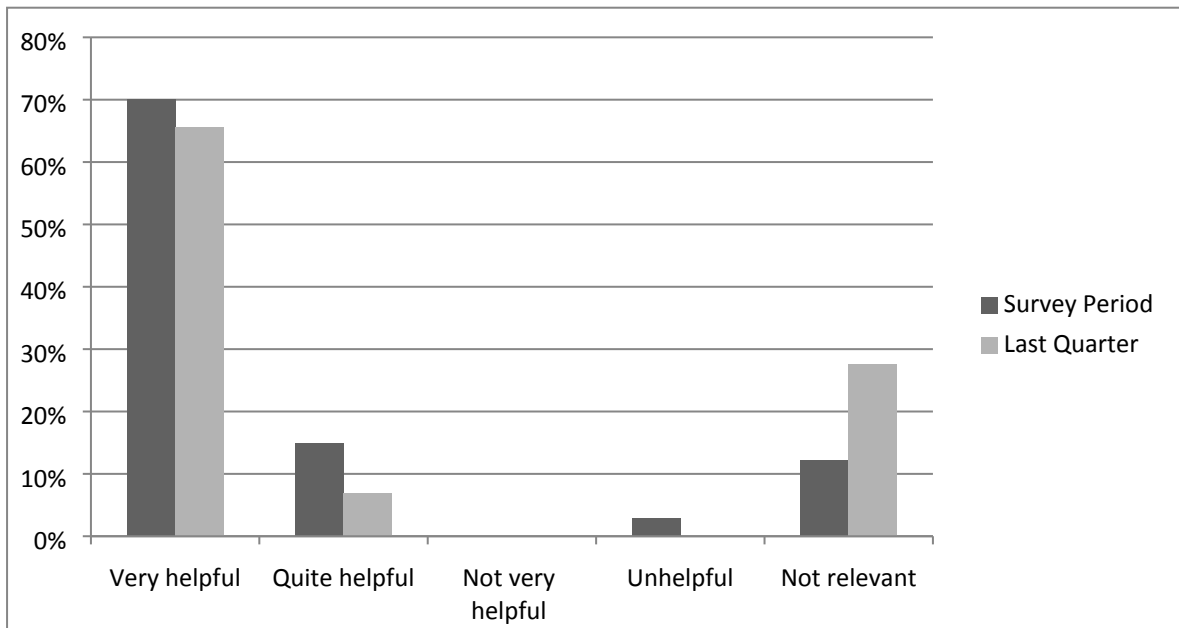


Table 2 - How well did the council manage the time taken to make a decision?

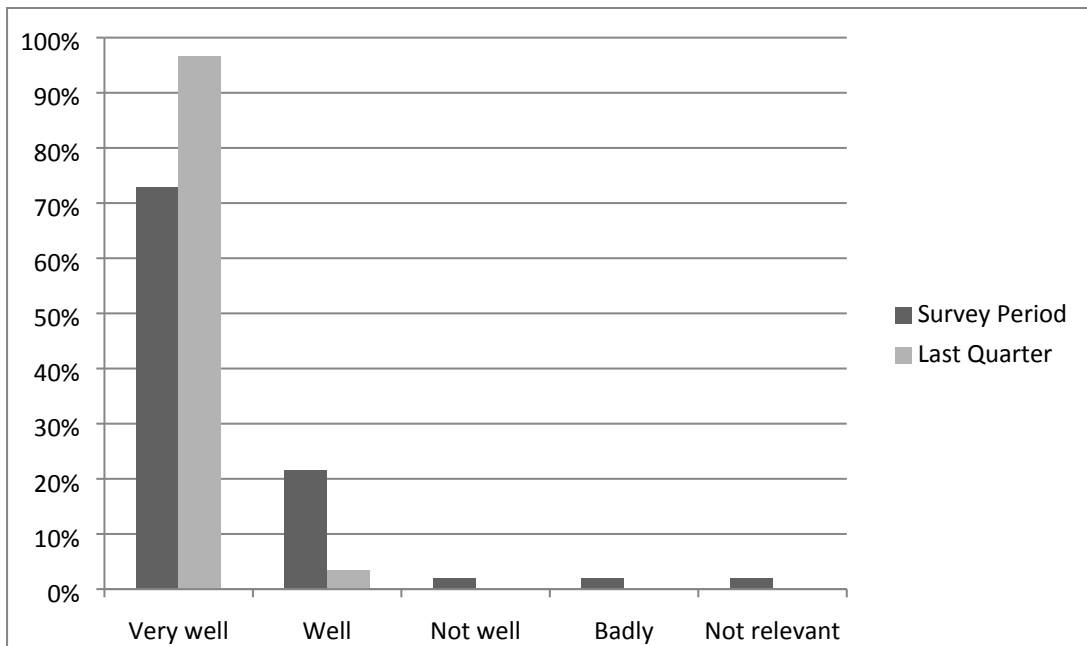


Table 3 - The council usually asks you to send in supporting information with the planning application. Did they use this supporting information well?

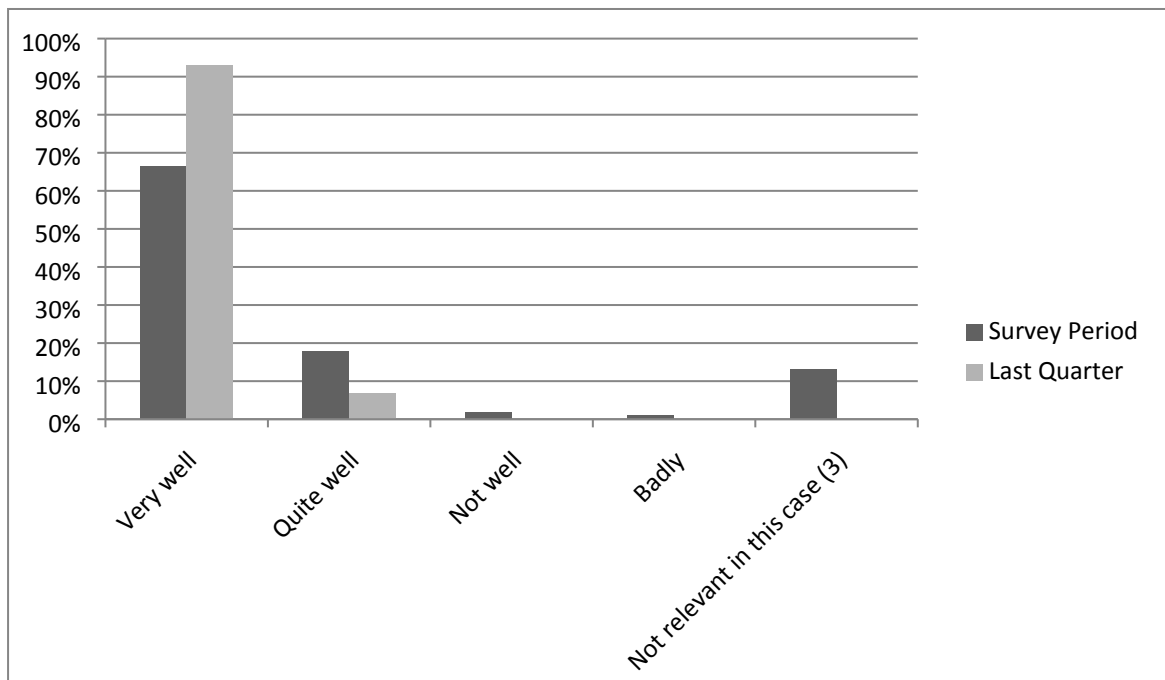
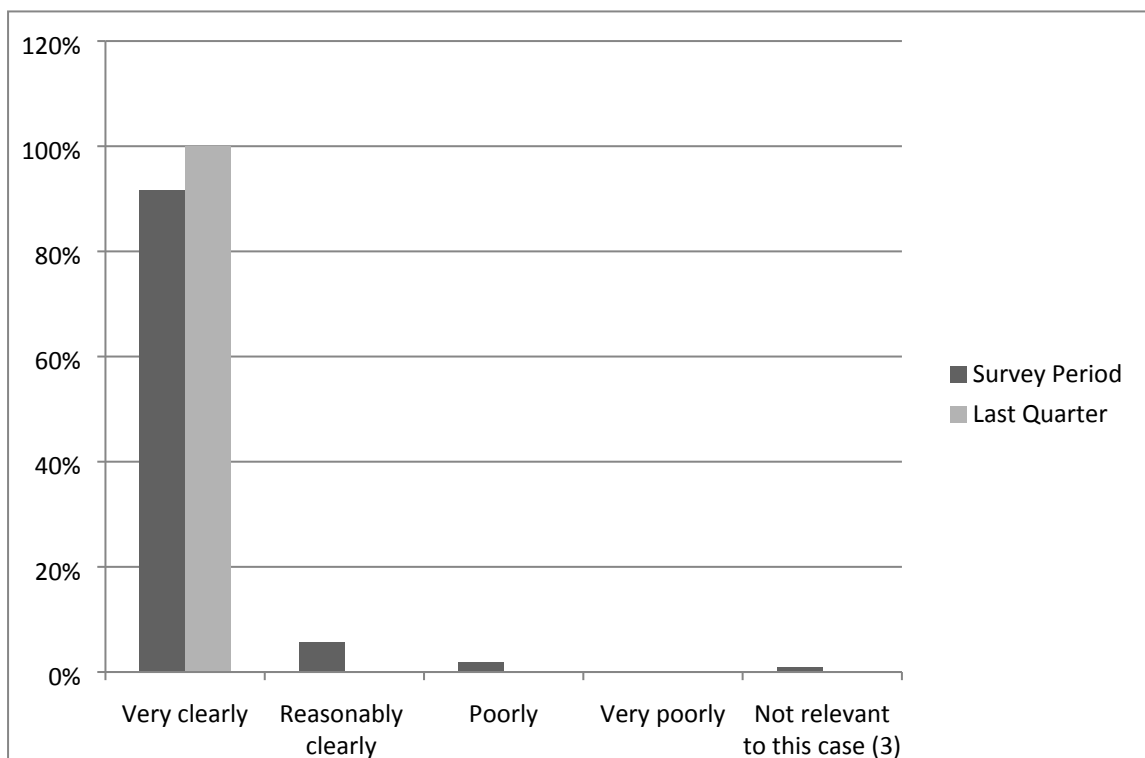


Table 4 - How clearly did the council explain its decision?



Those who commented on applications (Neighbours)

Table 5 - How did you find out about this application?

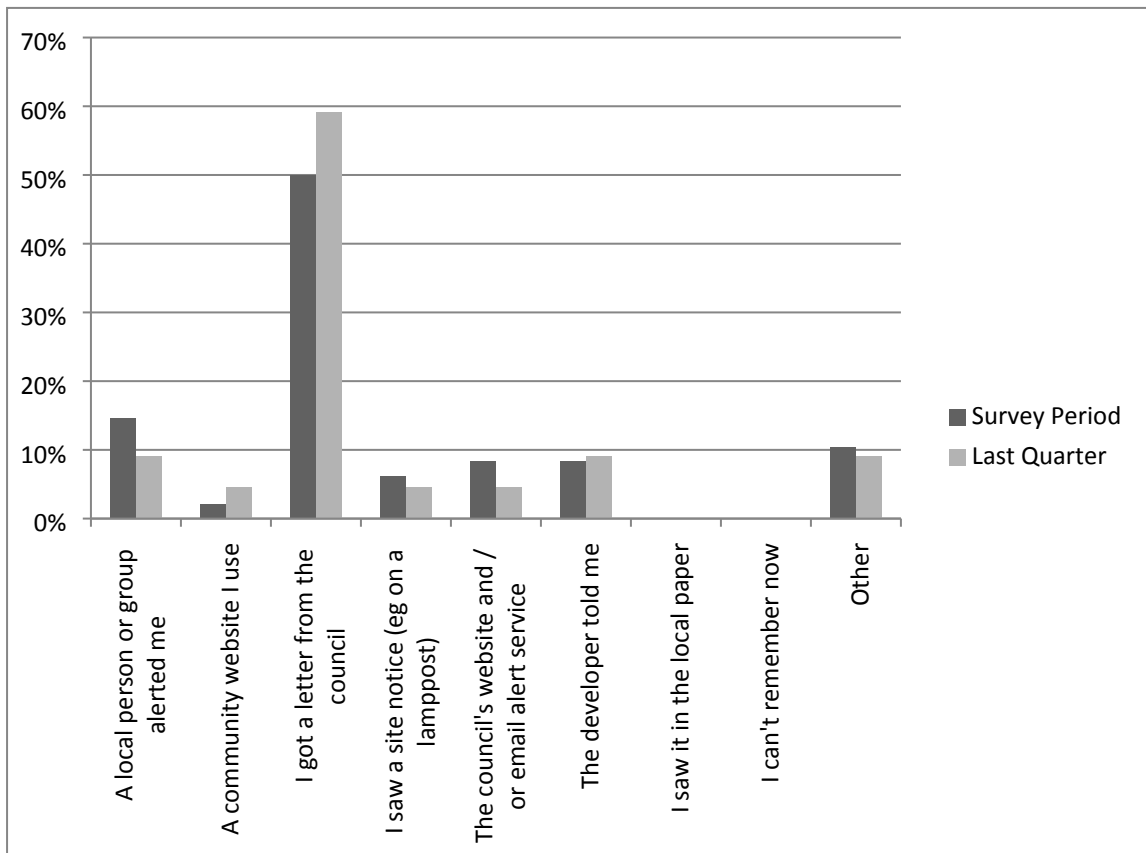


Table 6 - How we assess planning applications can sometimes be difficult to comprehend. How well did we help you understand the planning process and engage with it?

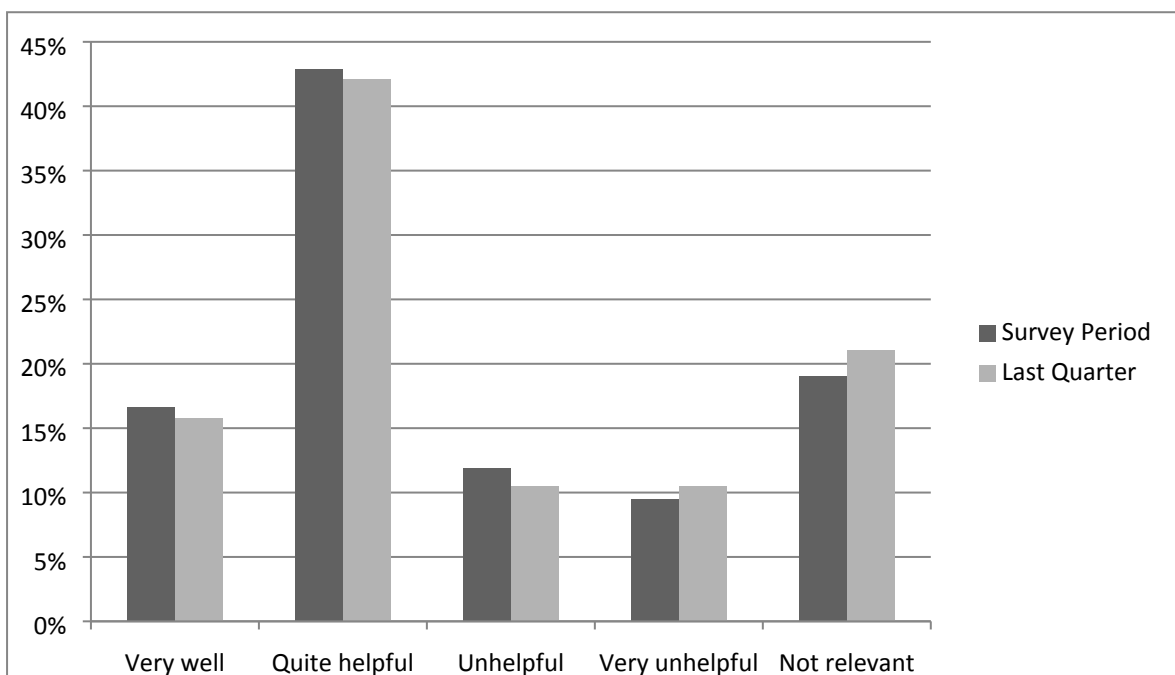


Table 7 - Our job is to make a decision as quickly as possible but also to listen to people's views. Did we get this balance right in this case?

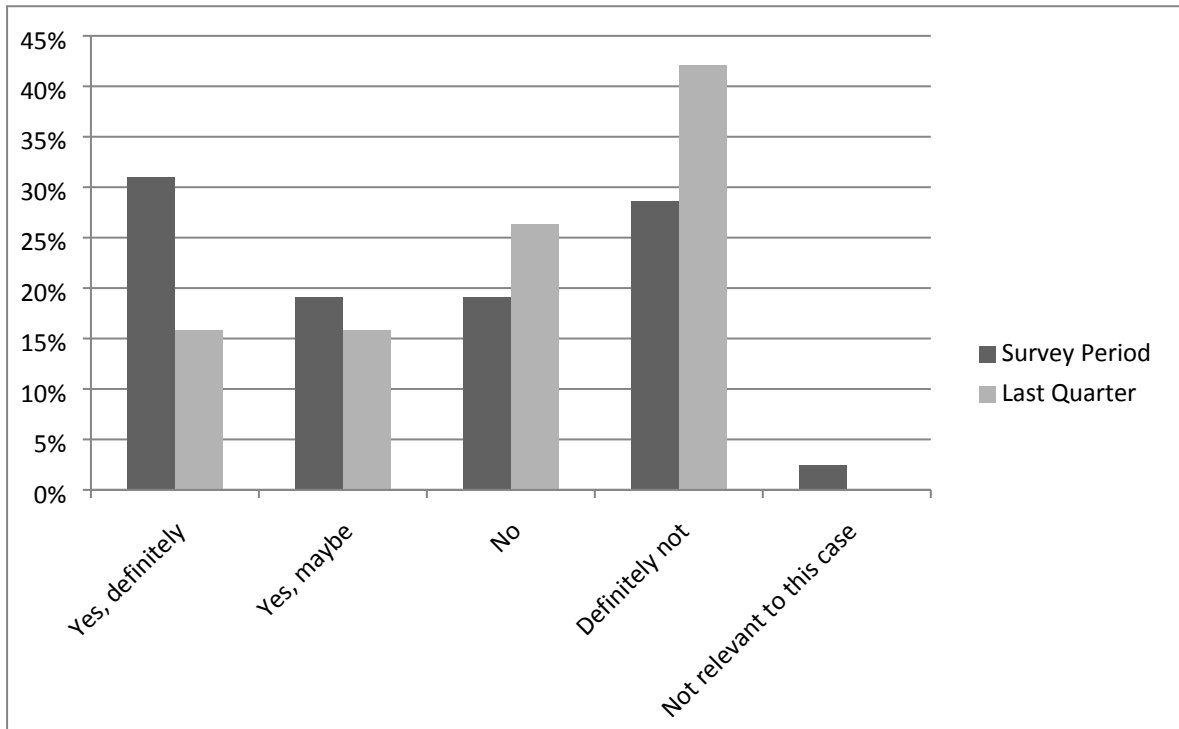


Table 8 - Did our website and the paperwork from the application help you understand the proposal?

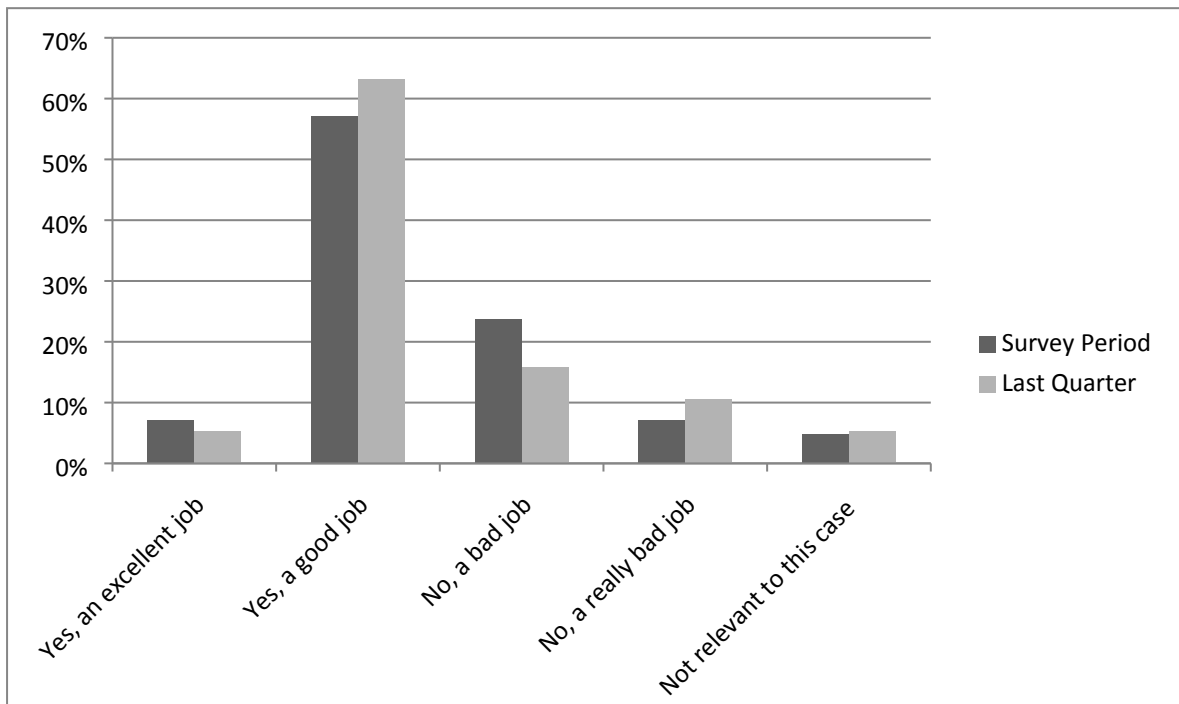


Table 9 - How clearly did we explain the reasons for the decision we made?

