



Social Inclusion and Housing Select Committee

**Reducing Inequality
Affordable Homes for all**



Strategic Housing



Housing Services: Strategic & Operational roles separated

Strategic housing functions (housing services for the whole community) are now separated from the landlord functions (services for Council housing)

2004

Housing Strategy, Private Sector Housing & Housing Advice join Regeneration Division

2006

Homelessness joins Planning & Regeneration Division



Strategic Housing: What the service covers

- Identifying then coordinating how to tackle the major housing issues facing the District – the Housing Strategy
- Provision of additional affordable housing
- Delivering decent homes in the private sector (an emphasis on tackling the worst first, housing our most vulnerable people)
- Enforcement action on housing conditions
- Homelessness & Housing Options advice
- Disabled adaptations & managing the Home Improvement Agency
- Home security



Strategic Housing: Key Issues

- Need for additional affordable housing
- Decent homes in the private sector housing vulnerable people
- Tackling poor housing conditions on former coalfield estates
- Reducing homelessness and improving housing options
- Housing Strategy which meets Government 'fit for purpose' criteria



Strategic Housing: Performance Issues

BVPIs

- All 2005-06 BVPIs achieved better than target (excluding homelessness)

Homelessness

- Below target performance on the use of temporary accommodation in 2005-06
 - BVPI 183a stay in B&B 45days against 30day target
 - BVPI 183b stay in hostels 153days against a 50day target
- Priority for improvement in 2006-07



Strategic Housing: Budget Issues

Private Housing Capital Resources

- £150k private sector homes; £350k private sector DFG's
- Council to consider provision beyond 2007-08

Cost of Temporary Accommodation

- Homelessness - c£45K spend on temporary Bed & Breakfast accommodation
- Implemented a dedicated Officer, increased use of temporary Council housing & better rates with B&Bs

Spend on Disabled Adaptations

- High demand for disabled adaptations
- Capacity of Home Improvement Agency & Social Services limiting our ability to spend budget



Strategic Housing: Improvement Plan

- Prepare for the Inspection by the Audit Commission in January 2007
- Achieve a 'fit for purpose' Housing Strategy setting out the Council's priorities and how they will be achieved
- Private Sector Housing Strategy – the Council's approach to new enforcement legislation; and establishing a programme for delivering decent homes in the private sector housing vulnerable people
- Locally binding planning document to secure increases in affordable housing provision
- Homelessness Strategy – focus on reducing homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation



HOUSING SERVICES



Housing Services - Role

- Management of the Council's housing stock
 - 5797 Dwellings
 - 1332 Garages
- Housing landlord services to tenants
- Pre-tenancy services to applicants and administration of the Housing Register



Housing Services – Key Activities

- Rent collection and arrears recovery
- Housing applications and the Housing Register
- Allocation and letting of vacant dwellings
- Estate management
- Responsive repairs and repair works to vacant dwellings
- Planned and cyclical maintenance



The Housing Revenue Account 2006-07

Income

£000's

Rents (Council Houses)

15,576

Rents (Shops and Garages)

430

Interest

17

£16,023

Expenditure

Capital Charges

4,431

Housing Repairs

3,860

Supervision and Management

3,419

Housing Subsidy

2,387

Revenue Contribution to Capital

2,283

£16,380

Transfer from HRA balances

(357)



The HRA Capital Programme 2006-07

<u>Resources</u>	<u>£000's</u>
Resources brought forward	5,998
Regional Housing Pot	920
Capital Receipts	2,285
Major Repairs Allowance	3,133
Revenue Contribution to Capital	2,283
Other	50
	<u>£14,669</u>
<u>Agreed Programme</u>	
Disabled Facilities	318
External Envelope Works	2,069
Central Heating	1,044
Kitchen and Bathroom Replacement	2,956
Electrical Upgrading	605
PRC Dwellings	946
Other	169
	<u>£8,107</u>
Resources carried forward	£6,562



Performance – Key Indicators

	<u>2004-05</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>2005-06</u> <u>Target</u>	<u>2005-06</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>2006-07</u> <u>Target</u>
Rent arrears	£491,971	£475,000	£478,795	£464,000
Percentage of repairs as an emergency	16%	10%	11%	10%
Percentage of urgent repairs completed in Government time limits	100%	99%	99%	99%
Average time taken to Complete non-urgent repairs	11 days	15 days	12 days	12 days
Average re-let time for vacant dwellings	39 days	29 days	30 days	28 days



Performance – Improving the Housing Stock

	<u>2004-05</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>2005-06</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>2006-07</u> <u>Target</u>
External Envelope Works	955	957	823	800
Central Heating	437	335	344	255
Kitchen Replacement	427	360	366	440
Bathroom Replacement	133	240	240	480
Electrical Upgrading	647	400	533	600
Percentage of dwellings which are non-decent	66%	53%	39%	31%



Key Issues 2006-07

- Progress the implementation of the Council's Housing Investment Plan to achieve the decent homes standard for the Council's housing stock by 2010
- Continue the implementation of the redevelopment scheme for the Smith houses on the Bevan Lee Estate in partnership with the Beth Johnson Housing Association
- Further develop the Council's housing landlord service by developing and commencing the implementation of an Improvement Plan which will secure a two-star rating (with promising prospects for improvement) for the housing service as a whole by 2009



Key Improvement Activities

- Formulate a Housing Revenue Account Business Plan which meets ODPM 'fit for purpose' criteria
- Introduce a comprehensive appointments system for responsive repairs through the implementation of the 'opti-time' job scheduling system
- Assess and evaluate the options for procuring repair works to major voids
- Review the use of garage sites to identify those which are surplus to requirements
- Submit in partnership with other housing agencies a bid for additional resources to assist with the formulation and implementation of a sub-regional choice based lettings scheme
- Review the estate management activities to ensure that they meet the benchmark set by the Government's 'Respect Standard for Housing Management'



HOUSING & COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT SERVICE



Housing and Council Tax Benefit Functions

- The main functions include:
 - the day to day administration and processing of Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) claims;
 - the prevention and detection of fraudulent benefit claims; and
 - The recovery of overpaid Housing and Council Tax benefit



Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits Functions

- Verification, assessment and determination of claimants' entitlement
- notification and accurate payment of benefit
- provision of information and advice about available benefits and entitlement
- management of in year changes
- Preparation and submission of appeals
- calculation of overpaid benefits and referral of potential fraudulent claims to Counter Fraud team



Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits Functions

...Continued

- Invoicing, collection and recovery of overpaid benefit
- prevention detection and investigation of potential fraudulent claims including the issue of sanctions (administrative penalties, formal cautions and prosecution)





Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

- What we do.
- Each year we will:-
 - Process over 4,700 new claims from customers who become entitled to benefit,
 - Deal with around 7,500 change in circumstances from existing claimants,
 - Handle over 45,000 items of correspondence from claimants,
 - Issue 31,000 benefit notification and general enquiry letters,
 - Answer over 21,250 telephone calls
 - Pay in excess of £ 21 million in HB and CTB



Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

- £ 10 million to Council Tenants in the form of Rent Rebate
- £ 5 million to Private Tenants in the form of Rent Allowance
- £ 6 million to Council Tax payers in the form of Council Tax benefit



Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits Role

- *" Benefits has a significant role to play in reducing inequality within the District and in ensuring that those who are disadvantaged can take a full part in community life. Paying the right money to the right people at the right time remains crucial. We must never lose sight of that"*
(Service Business Plan 2006-07)



Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits Role

- Our Aims are to:-
- Place claimants at the heart of the service by focussing on
 - Minimising processing times
 - Making payments accurately
 - Maximising benefit take-up
 - Providing accessible and responsive services, with forms and letters that are easy to understand and
 - Addressing the needs of specific claimants
 - Deterring, detecting and acting against fraudsters



Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits

- How we have performed
- Minimising processing times
 - Last year all new claims for HB and CTB were dealt with, on average within 36 days,
 - Over 78% of claims were processed within 14 days of receipt of all required information and
 - All changes in circumstances were dealt with, on average within 14 days of the council being told about them
- Making payments accurately
 - In 2005-06 we achieved an accuracy rate of 98.6% a 1.4% improvement on the previous year



Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits

- How we have performed
- Maximising benefit take-up
 - Conducted a targeted campaign as part of the council's Concessionary Travel Scheme aimed specifically at the elderly and disabled.
 - As a result over 200 residents applied for a variety of welfare benefits including HB, CTB (35) Attendance Allowance (100), Disability Living Allowance (17) and Pension Credit (65).
- Providing accessible and responsive services with forms and letter that are easy to understand
 - Provide an appointment service at area offices in Rugeley and Hednesford
 - Installation of document scanning equipment at area offices
 - Provide a home visiting service to the housebound
 - Crystal Mark accreditation for our Benefit Application Form and "Plain English" for a number of our leaflets.



Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits

- How we have performed
- Addressing the needs of specific claimants
 - Provide notification letters in large print upon request
 - Use translation and interpretation services through “Language Line”
- Deterring, detecting and acting against fraudsters
 - Last year we issued 27 sanctions against benefit fraudsters compared to 1 in 2004-05



Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits

- What we aim to do this year.
- We must continue to:-
 - Reduce our processing times
 - Improve our accuracy rate
 - Fully implement Verification Framework
 - Implement legislation changes
 - Improve our customer satisfaction rate (BVPI Survey for 2006-07)
 - Further develop our service in respect of mobile working, payment of benefit by BACS, implementation of on line Remote Access Technology
 - Review our Performance Standards Action Plan and implement
 - Implement our Benefit Fraud Action Plan



Social Inclusion



At Risk Groups

- Young Unemployed
- Lone Parents
- Long term unemployed
- Disabled
- Elderly People
- Homeless People
- People from black and other ethnic minority groups



What we said we would do

- Work towards achieving the higher levels of the Equality Standard for Local Government
- Continue to seek the views of our residents through the Council's Citizens' Panel and in particular we will continue to meet with a number of 'hard to reach' groups such as ethnic minorities, people in receipt of benefit and young people

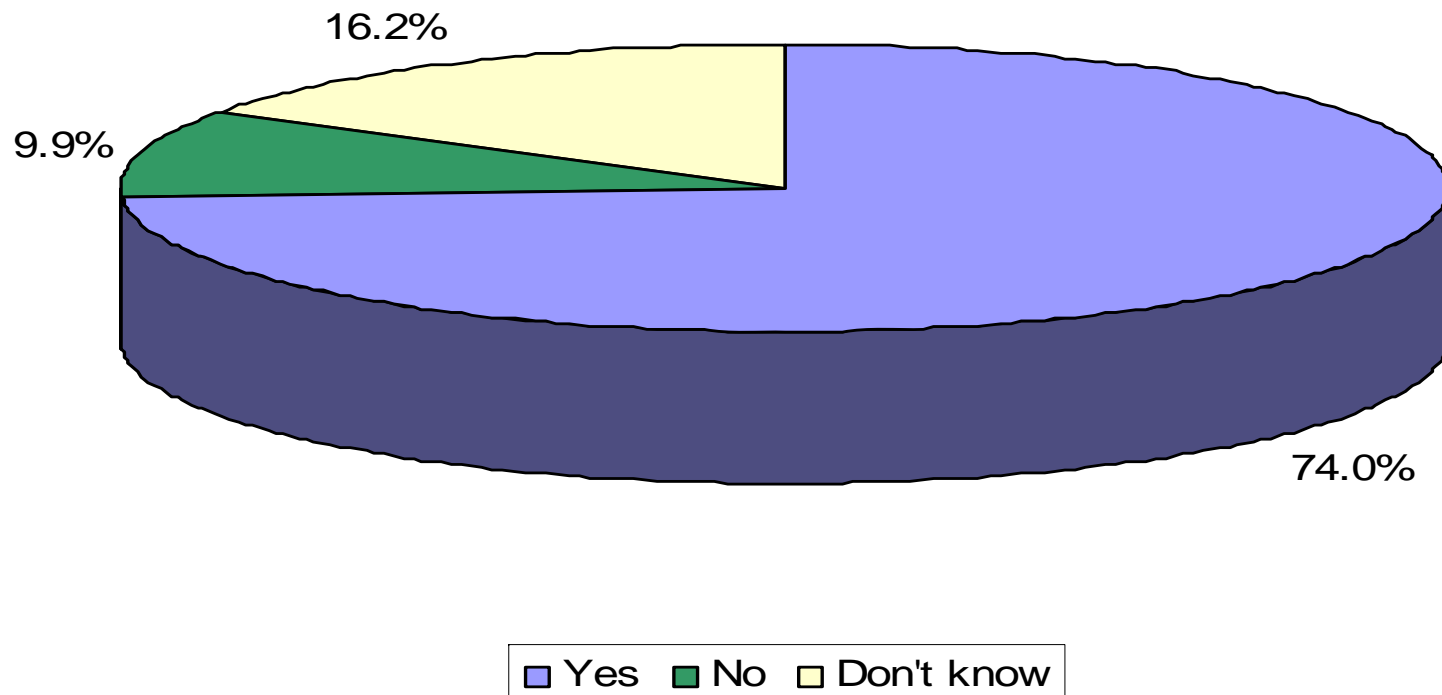


Our Performance

- No Improvement - Level 1 of the Equality Standard
- Continued to consult with our Citizens' Panel and through focus groups

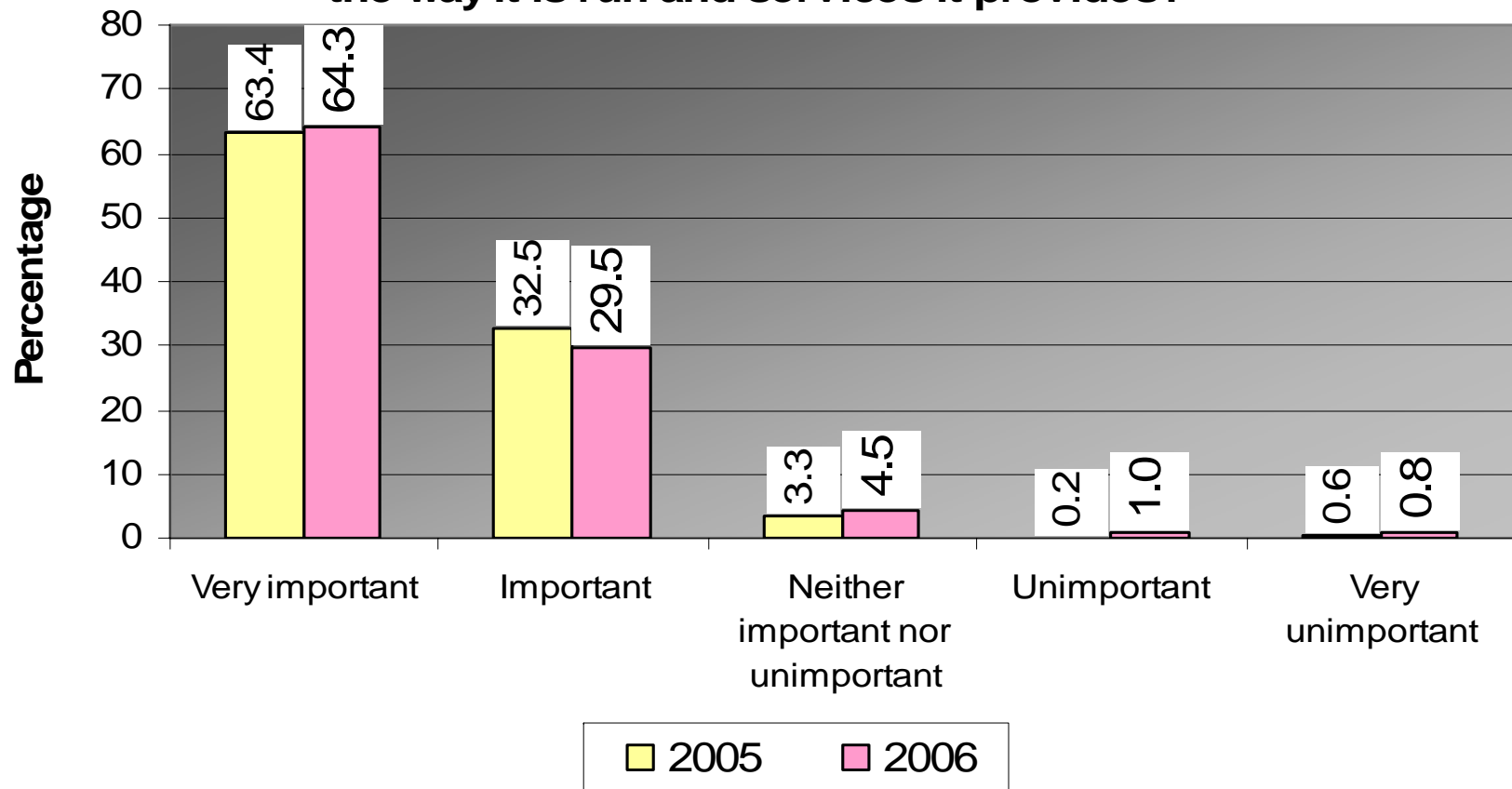


Do you believe that Cannock Chase is a place where people from different backgrounds can live and get on well together?



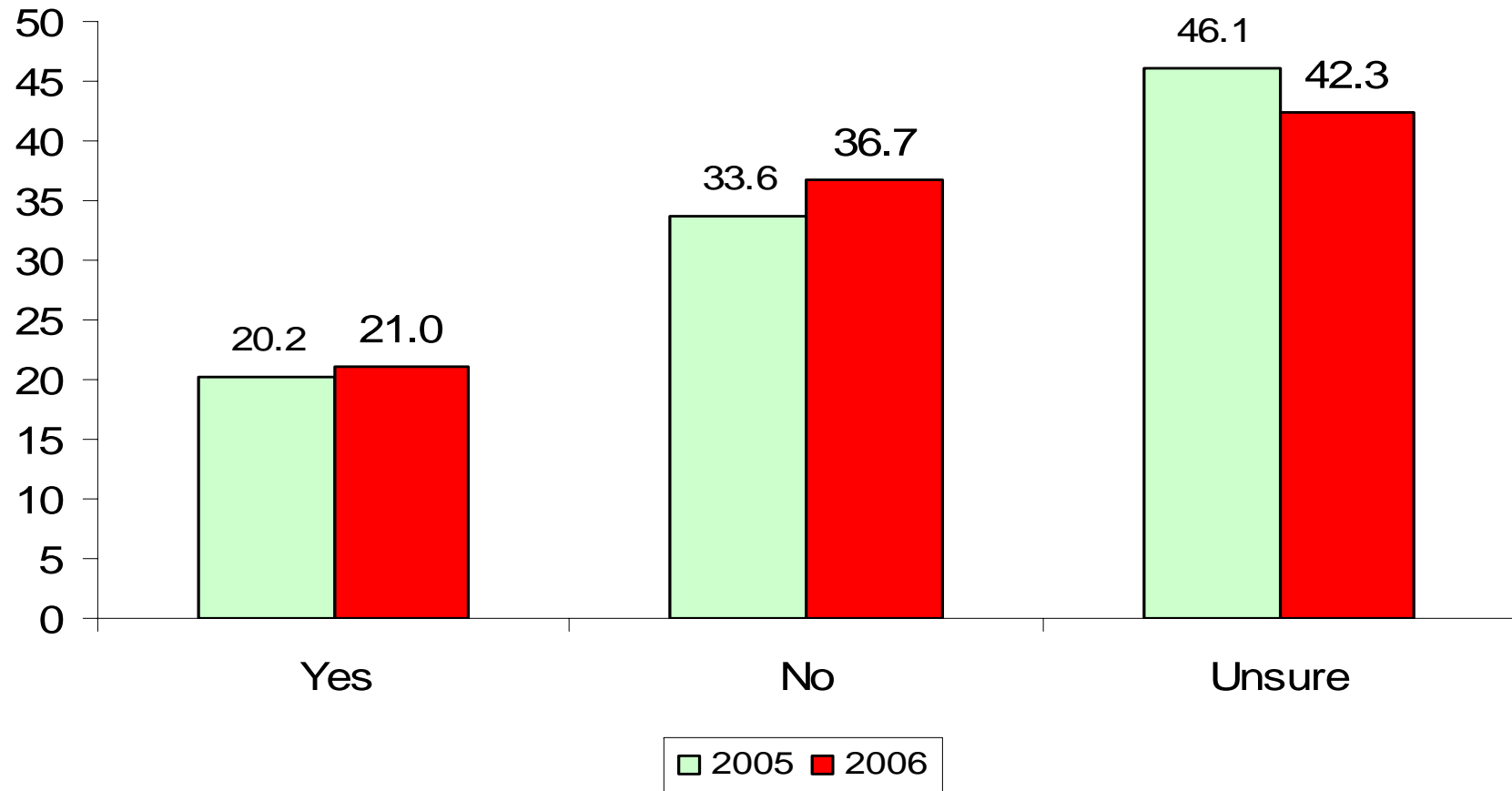


How important is it for the Council to seek your views on the way it is run and services it provides?



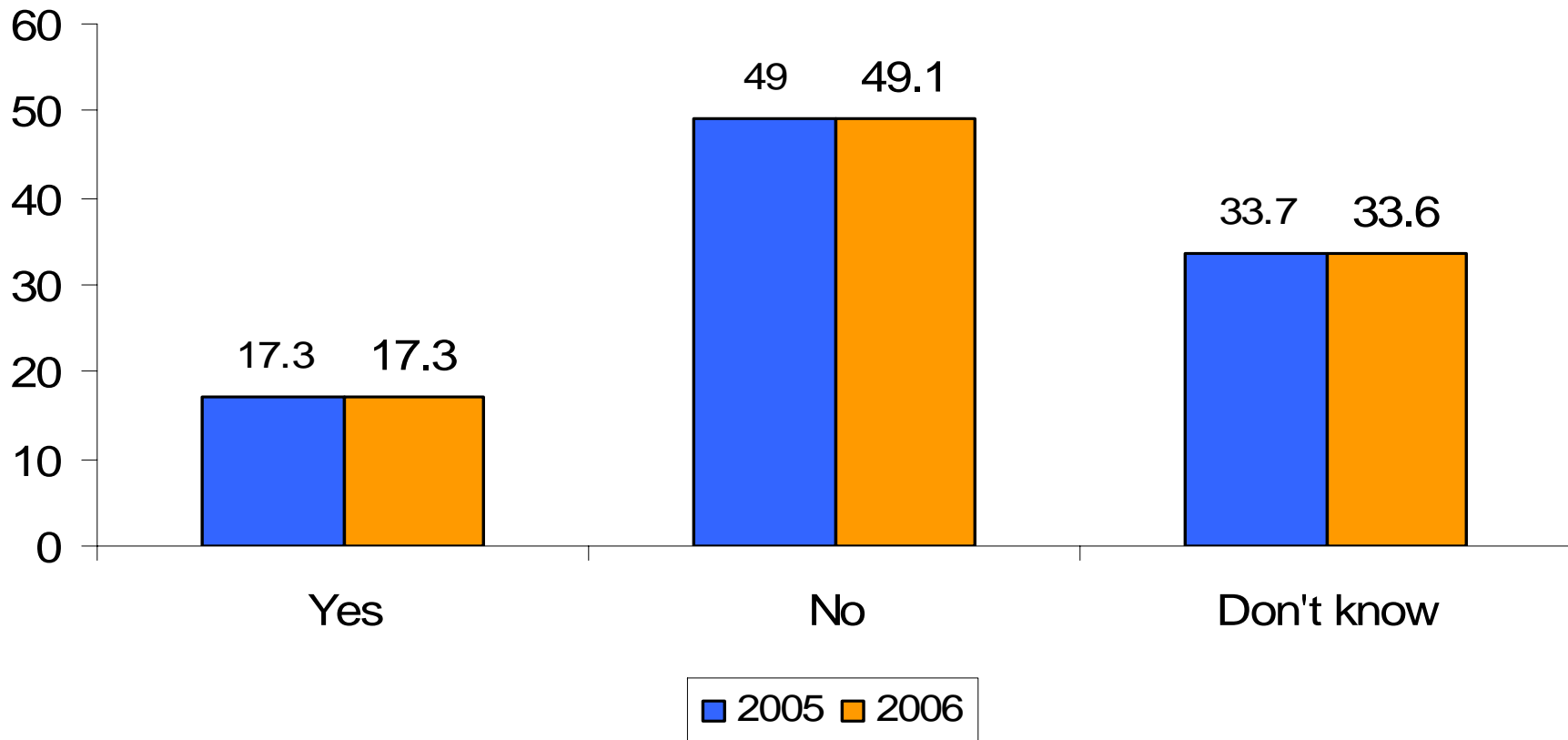


Do you believe that the Council listens to your views?





Do you believe if you gave your views to the Council, your opinions would influence decisions?





Issues

- Improving our performance against Equality Standard
- Develop a two-way dialogue with our communities in particular need to develop dialogue with 'hard to reach' groups and those that are at risk of being socially excluded.



Ideas for Review Topics?