

# State of the Market Survey 2021

Local Authority Parks and Green Spaces Services



Briefing 21-20  
March 2021



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# Local Authority Parks and Green Spaces Services State of the Market 2021

APSE conducted an online survey between December and February 2019. This follows on from the 2020,2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2013, 2012, Parks and Green Spaces State of the Market survey where similar questions were asked to allow for trend comparisons. Earlier briefings are available on the APSE website. The most recent briefings can be accessed at the links below:

- [2020 results briefing](#)
- [2019 results briefing](#)
- [2018 results briefing](#)
- [2017 results briefing](#)
- [2016 results briefing](#)
- [2015 results briefing](#)
- [2013 results briefing](#)
- [2012 results briefing](#)

78 responses were received from local authorities throughout the UK, this report identifies the key findings of the survey compared with previous findings.

## Results from the survey

### Your opinions

The table below shows the number of respondents who agree/disagree with the statements:

Answer Options	Agree strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	No opinion
The squeeze on public sector resources is affecting parks and green spaces disproportionately to other service areas	33%	35%	23%	0%	7%
Reductions in funding has resulted in a withdrawal of maintenance from some land and an increase in unmaintained land	29%	42%	24%	0%	3%
Lack of investment in parks and green spaces will have health and social impacts	69%	28%	1%	0%	1%
There is a clear link between parks/play provision and levels of crime/anti-social behaviour	19%	42%	8%	0%	29%
There's a limit to the extent to which volunteers can be involved in delivering parks and green space services	51%	35%	10%	2%	0%
The public should get free access to all parks	67%	25%	2%	1%	2%

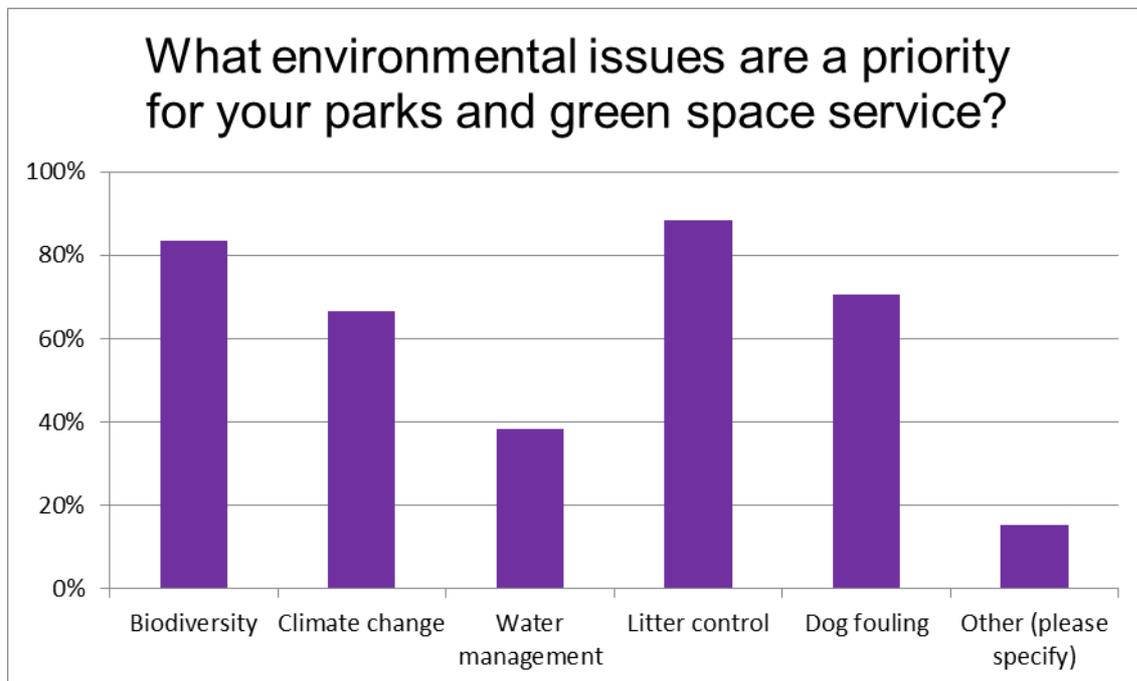
There has been a further **fall** from 77 % to 68% regarding respondents who either 'agree', or 'agree strongly' that 'the squeeze on public sector resources is affecting parks and green spaces disproportionately to other service areas, perhaps a reflection of the fact all services have been affected by the impacts of the pandemic. Equally, there has been a slight fall in the number of people who either 'agree' or 'agree strongly' that reductions in funding have resulted in a withdrawal of maintenance from some land and an increase in unmaintained land. Coupled together these two results show that there seems to be a lessening in concerns about both budgets reductions and the negative impact these have previously been having on the quality of parks maintenance. However, it will be interesting to see whether as a result of the added costs of the pandemic to local authorities, there will be further budgetary cuts in order to balance the books, and whether as a non-statutory service parks may in the short term, be more adversely affected.

97% of respondents either 'agree' or 'agree strongly' that the 'lack of investment in parks and green spaces will have health and social impacts' This is a 2% increase on last year's results. This slight increase could be a result of parks managers seeing the huge increase in people using parks during lockdowns, thus showing the importance of parks and greenspaces in providing health-related experiences.

61% either 'agree' or 'agree strongly' that 'there is a clear link between parks / play provision and levels of crime / anti-social behaviour' which is a significant fall on 2020 when the figure was 76%. This is suggesting that the provision of parks / play provision reduces anti-social behaviour. Considering the incidents of anti-social behaviour during lockdown, whether this be refusing to abide by social distancing requirements, littering, breaking into closed playgrounds, verbal abuse to staff etc. this is perhaps not unexpected. However, these are strange and challenging times and this view may change once some semblance of normality returns.

86% of respondents either 'agree' or 'agree strongly' that 'there's a limit to the extent to which volunteers can be involved in delivering parks and green space services' (95% in 2020). Therefore, there does appear to be a slight change in views on the increasing values of volunteers, which although not changing the opinion regards the importance of the continued need for a strong horticultural skills base being provided through local authority employees, volunteers are now adding increasing value to the parks sector.

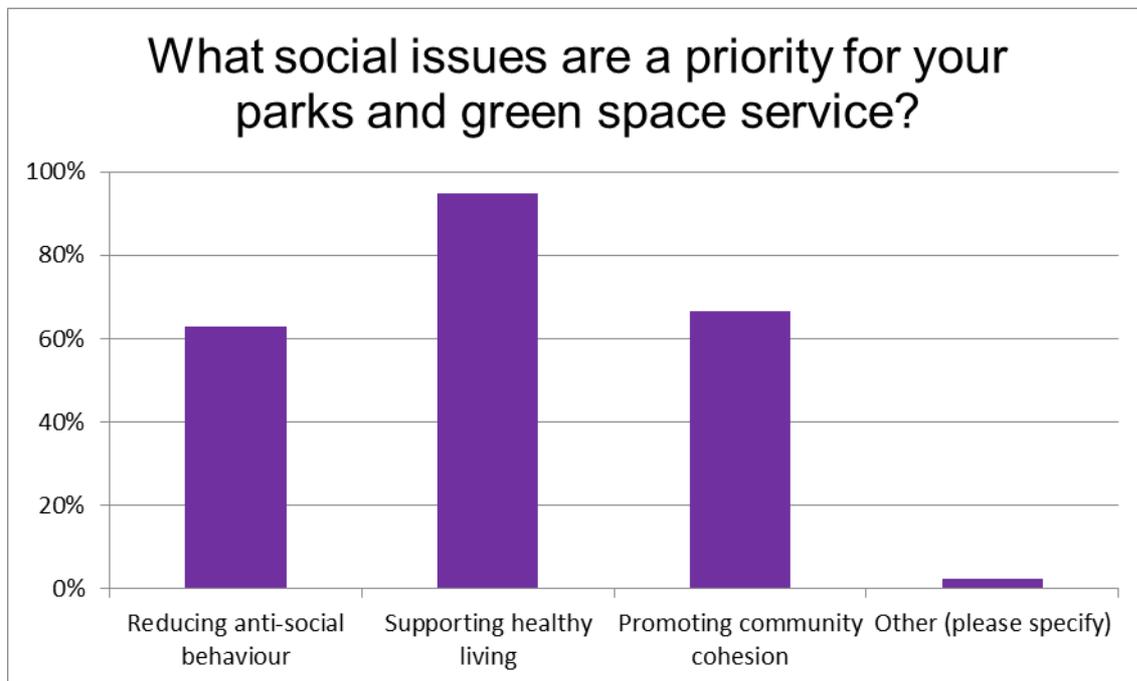
96% either 'agree' or 'agree strongly' that 'the public should get free access to all parks, which is a 4% increase on 2020. This rise re-enforces the view that Parks should remain free for the public to enter and the heavy reliance on parks during the current pandemic has no doubt further strengthened this view.



There have been two markedly significant changes in this year's results with respect to the importance of climate change and biodiversity.

The main environmental priority for parks and green space services is now litter removal at 88% as opposed to 76% in 2020, and similarly dog fouling concerns have risen from 62% to 70%. This is clearly a reaction to the increased number of visitors parks have experienced since the pandemic when such areas have been the only outlet for public exercise and recreation largely for the last twelve months. Therefore, many people who previously did not use parks are now visiting parks and many more dog walker's too. Unfortunately, many are failing to abide by the need to take litter home and clear up after their dogs. It is anticipated that this will be a short-lived event and hopefully this will improve post-pandemic. Encouragingly both biodiversity and climate change have remained high on the environmental priority list. Although not shown on this chart it was noticeable that reducing the use of pesticides and improving tree health as a result of the impacts of ash die back were also growing priorities.

The continued appearance of climate change and improving biodiversity as environmental priorities shows the recognised role parks and greenspaces have in helping ameliorating the effects of climate change and providing habitats for flora and fauna. This is perhaps no surprise considering the increasing amount of climate emergency declarations and biodiversity action plans now being seen as corporate priorities and parks and greenspaces being recognised as critical in achieving the aims of these plans.



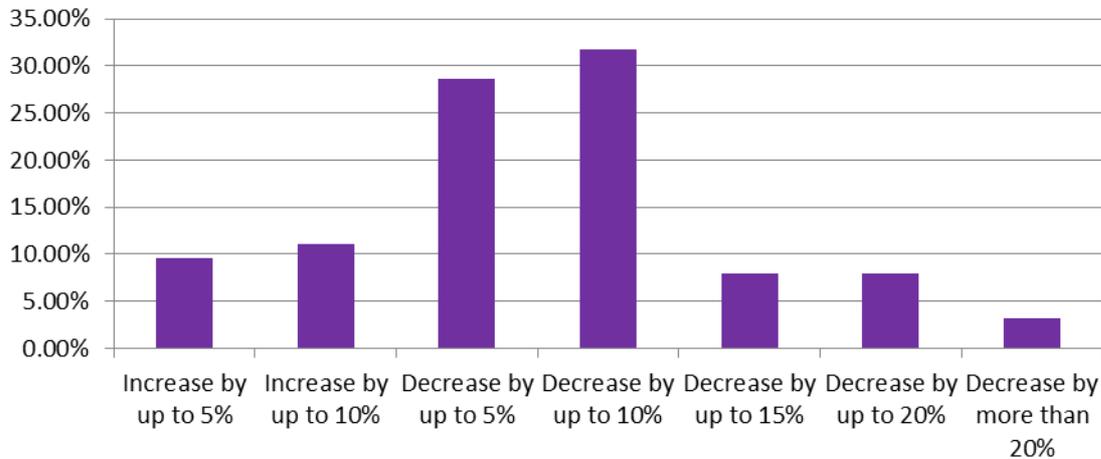
In the 2015 survey, we added a question on the types of social issues that are a priority for local authority parks and green space service. The most frequent response was 'supporting healthy living' which this year again recorded 95%, no doubt strengthened by the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic. This shows the recognition of the importance of parks and greenspaces to delivering significant benefits to the public's health and well-being. The value of parks to community cohesion and reducing anti-social behaviour are still recognised as having significant value, and this value will have only been added to as a consequence of the social mixing, albeit, socially-distanced, caused by recent events.

## Budget expectations

The number of respondents who expect the parks and green space budget to change over the next year has risen from last year, decreasing from 76% in 2020 to 69% in 2021. However, of those who expected a change in the budget, 83% expect a decrease in revenue (76% in 2020), and 60%, expect a decrease in capital which is an increase on 2020, when 55% expected a decrease.

In the next 5 years, the expectation of the level of funding in budgets are as follows:

## What is your expectation of the level of funding in your service budget in the coming five years?



Relatively little has changed on 2020 with most respondents expecting budget cuts of between 5-10% for the coming year which considering the extra costs of the pandemic is not as worrying as may have been expected. The major change has been with those respondents expecting increases. In 2020 2% of respondents were expecting increases of 10% whereas in 2021, this has risen to 10% which adding together with others who expect budget increases, now means 15% of respondents are expecting budget increases of between 5% -10%.

There has been a change in those expecting decreases in budgets from 20% and above. In 2020 this figure was 21% and in 2021 this has now fallen to 11%.

This suggests that those expecting harsher cuts are now much fewer, with most cuts now being around the 5% - 10% mark as in 2020.

This reduction in the level of cuts and a growth in those expecting budget increases hopefully will be something which will improve in the coming years as the value of our parks and greenspaces are more widely appreciated. However, it must be remembered that these figures relate to the next five years and there may be further short-term cuts in 2021 to balance the additional costs of the pandemic

### Service Efficiencies

Respondents who are currently looking at a range of efficiencies in order to offset any savings required or improve service improvement in general include:

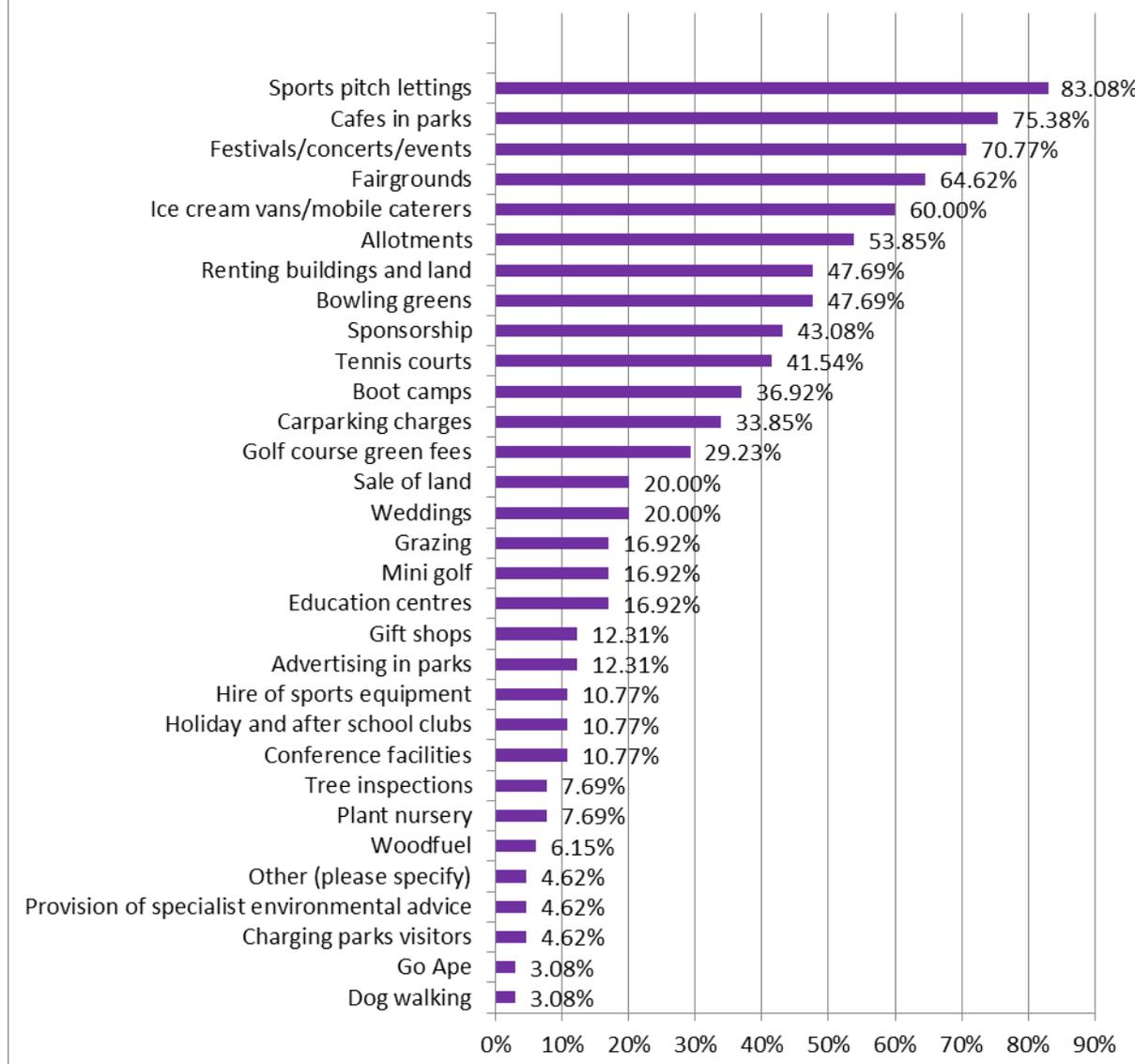
- Rethinking staffing levels through reducing management tiers, cutting administrative staff, reducing IT/communications systems updates, introducing larger seasonal staffing to replace core workforce, increasing volunteering opportunities, introducing role flexibility)
- Commercialisation of operations

- Operational changes (moving allotments to self-management, changing horticultural standards to deliver better biodiversity and sports pitch maintenance, reducing grass cutting and increasing tree planting, reductions in bedding plants and replacing them with use of wild flower meadows, replacing annual planting schemes with perennials, prioritising maintenance on greatest need / impact on Council priorities)
- Shared contract procurement with neighbouring local authorities
- Increased commercialism (encouraging other authorities to contract council services so income generated can be invested back into the service, increasing local business sponsorship, targets for income generation)
- Decreasing subsidised activity (either by increasing allotment / sport charges, charging for car parking)
- Reductions in services (play area and toilet provision)
- Asset transfer of buildings and facilities within parks (cafes, bowling greens, etc.)
- Promotion of sponsorship and donation opportunities
- Introducing new forms of land management such as grazing which results in an income.
- Bringing services back in-house to reduce contractor costs and increased flexibility opportunities.
- more effective location of staff to reduce travel costs
- Increasing Biodiversity through changes to current management operations and the creation of new habitats and reducing carbon footprint.
- More meadow managed grassland in parks and verges as well as stopping grass and weed strimming around obstacles.

## Income generation

Areas where respondents currently generate income through fees and charges (either provided in-house or through a franchise), include the following:-

## What areas do you currently generate income in through fees and charges (either provided in-house or through a franchise)?

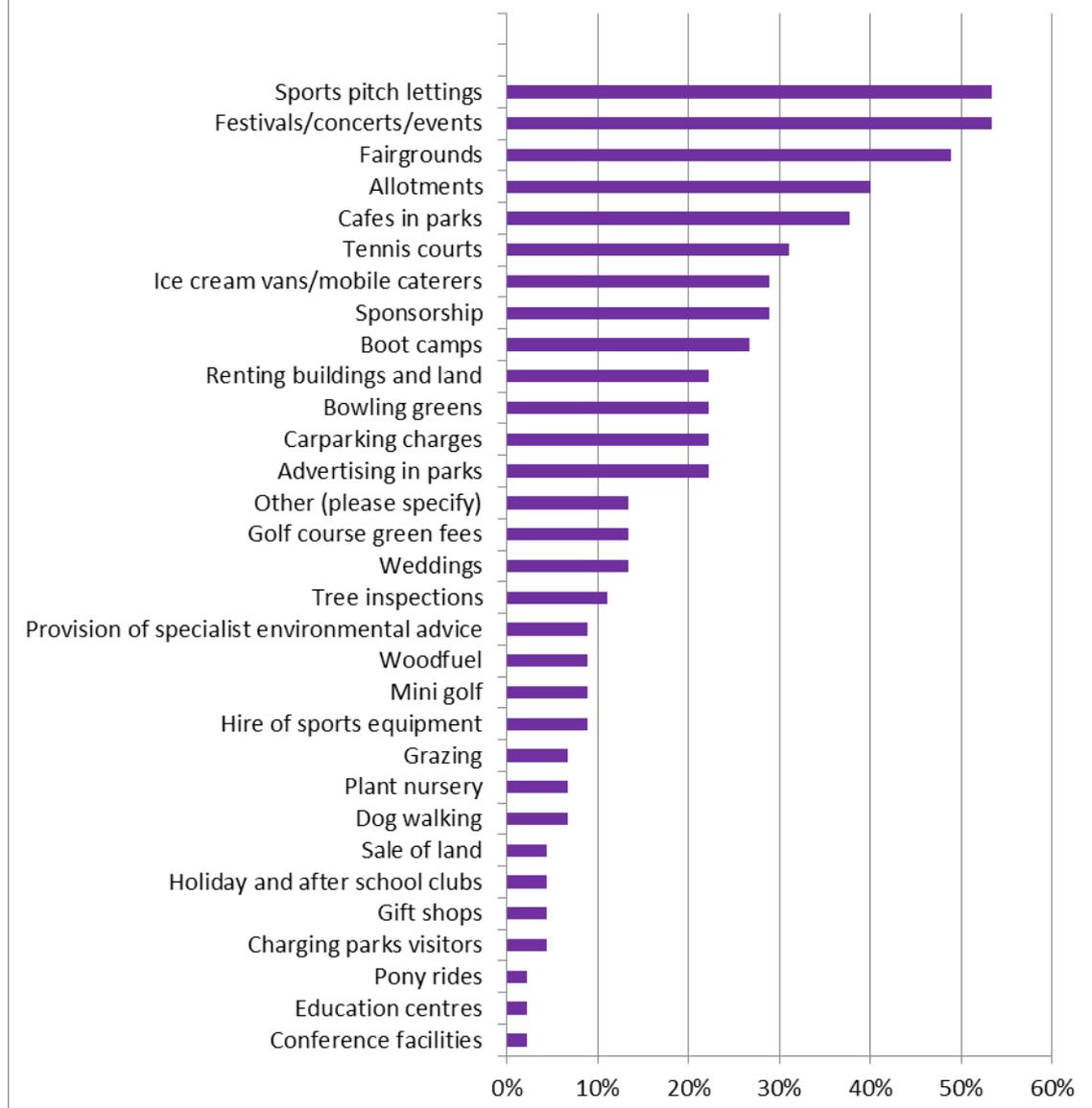


Several areas have shown significant increases in income generation, these include sports pitch lettings, provision of tennis and most notably the increased use of sponsorship for income generation.

However, it is likely that as a result of the pandemic income will have been significantly affected particularly in those areas which have traditionally been the main sources of income such as franchises, cafes, festivals and fairgrounds.

67% of respondents indicated that they would be increasing fees in 2021 and the areas where fees and charges will be increased over the next 2-3 years are shown in the chart below.

## If yes, what areas do you intend to increase fees and charges in over the next 2-3 years?



Respondents identified several barriers to generating income, these included:

- 59% cited 'competing priorities (e.g. budget cuts)' a slight rise on 2020 when the figure was 55%,
- 'experience of staff in bringing in new income' at 36% is a significant reduction on 2020 when the figure was 46 %, (64% in 2019), suggesting staff are now beginning to improve their skills at raising income.
- 'political resistance' 48%, a rise on 2020 when this stood at 38%.
- 'public resistance' at 47% is an increase on 2020 when the figure recorded was 42%. These two rises may be a reflection of the dependency of the public on parks during

the pandemic and especially regards those families who may not be able to afford to spend monies in parks feeling precluded if there are too many income generating schemes present in the parks. It may also be an indication the public are not willing to pay for services within parks.

- 'lack of investment funding' at 53% which is an increase on 2020 when the figure stood at 43%. Potentially this rise could be linked with the fact it is now accepted that in order to raise income, parks need to be able to have attractions which the public are willing to pay for and often this will require to have significant investment. This lack of investment in some parks is overcome by allowing franchises for large investment projects such as Go-Ape to be the responsibility of private sector organisations.
- Other responses included a lack of realistic opportunities available to a small department, a lack of managerial will, the public service ethic being difficult to overcome and reductions in staff numbers.

Aside from income from fees and charging, the majority of parks obtain additional funding from one or more of the following sources

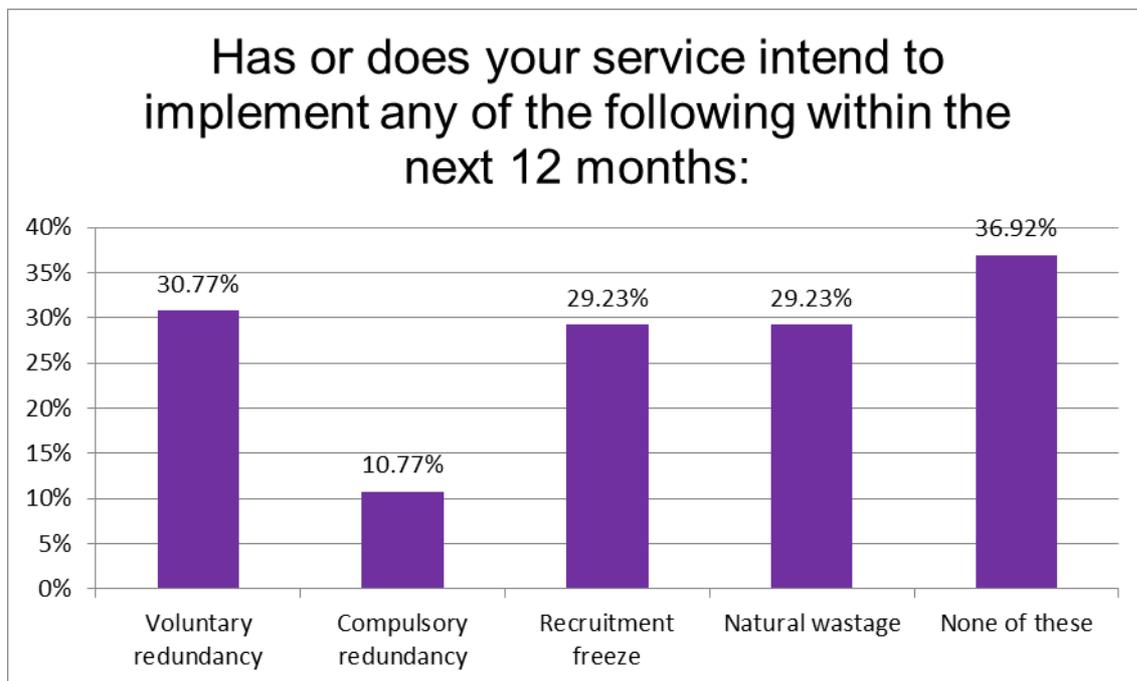
- 77% of respondents have accessed Section 106 money' shows an increase on 2020 when 60% reported monies from S106 funding.
- 'National Lottery Heritage Fund' 45% which is a fall on 2020 when 53% accessed funding from this source. Possibly due to a change in the HLF funding allocation criteria.
- The number of respondents receiving income 'through friends of parks groups' has fallen to 50% as opposed to 78% in 2020, possibly a result of reduced Friend's activity during the pandemic but at 50% this still shows even with such a fall, just how vital such groups are now becoming to their local parks and greenspaces.
- Grant funding from other sources has fallen from 69% to 61% in 2021,
- Sponsorship levels have fallen significantly but this is perhaps not unexpected with the reduction in events during 2020.
- 22% of respondents stated they had funding from health-related activities but again many events will not have occurred during 2020.
- Income from ecosystem services is growing in importance.

Respondents were asked whether they sold their services outside of the Local Authority. 17% currently sell services to the 'private sector', a decrease on 2020 when over 24% recorded selling services outside the local authority, with 14% currently selling services to 'other local authorities', as opposed to 29% in 2020. 17% sell services to 'to other public sector bodies' which has seen a slight rise from 14% in 2020.

When asked about selling local authority services only 38% stated that they did so which is a significant fall on 2020 and this relatively low return is somewhat surprising considering the ongoing level of budget cuts parks continue to receive.

## Staffing

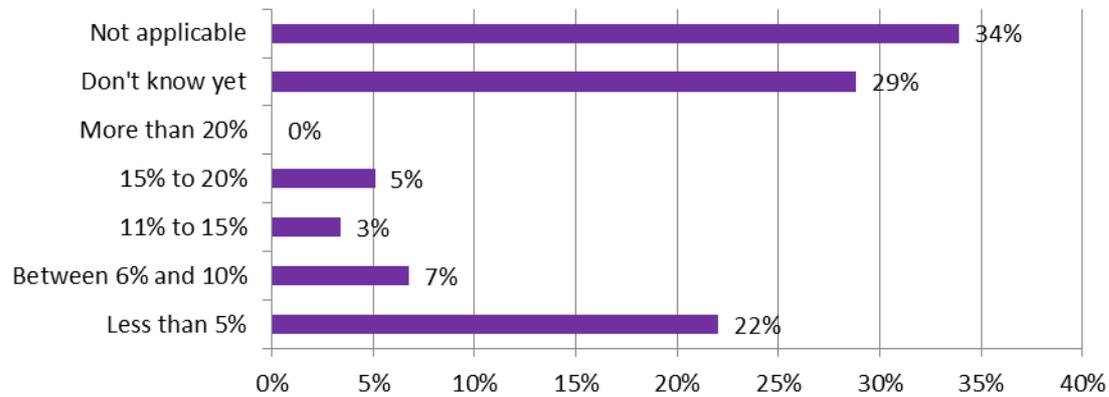
In terms of staffing, the survey asked if respondents have or intend to implement any of the following within the next 12 months and the results are as follows:



What was clear from the returns was that there appears to have been a change in the responses for 2021 with a 10% increase in those considering voluntary redundancies a 6% increase in those looking at compulsory redundancies, a 9% increase in those implementing a recruitment freeze and a 4% fall in those relying on natural wastage. These changes have resulted in a fall in those respondents who state that they will not use any of these approaches to reduce staffing. In 2020 this figure was 47%, in 2021 this has fallen to 37%. This possibly has been impacted upon by the increased costs to local authorities of the pandemic needing savings to be made across all services. APSE will keep a watching brief as to whether these reductions in staffing actually come to fruition.

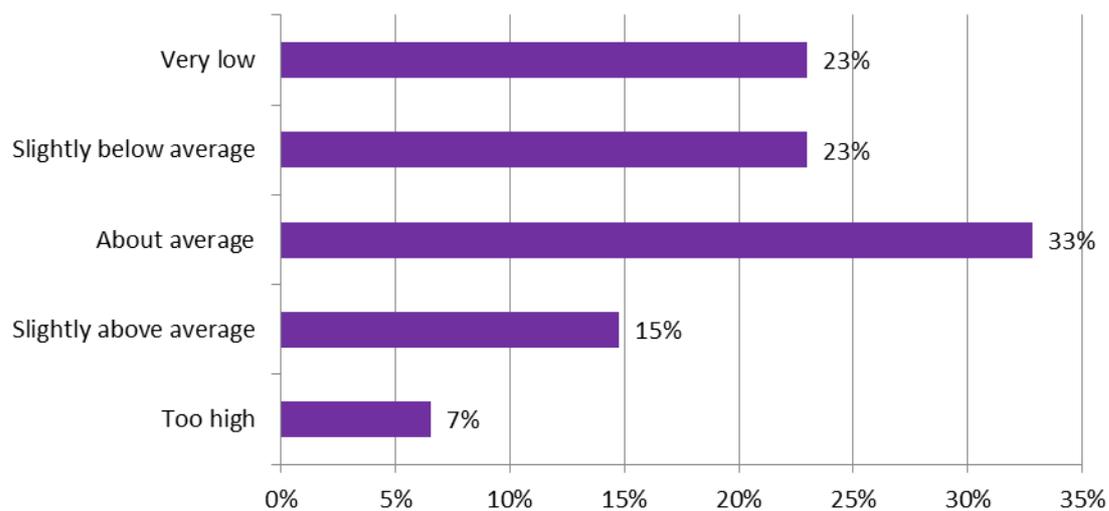
Respondents who were expecting staff reductions were asked what percentage of staff they expect to lose from the service, and the results were as follows:-

## If your service area is subject to workforce reductions, what percentage of staff do you expect to lose from the service?



The outlook of respondents since the 2020 results survey could be seen as somewhat worrying particularly that only just over a third of respondents said workforce reductions were not applicable to them. This could be seen as a sign that staffing levels are under more scrutiny following the cost of the pandemic to local authorities and some degree of reductions in service costs may be necessary. However, on a more positive note, where staffing levels may need to be reduced the largest proportion of staff losses were expected to be less than 5%.

## Are staff absence levels at an acceptable level?



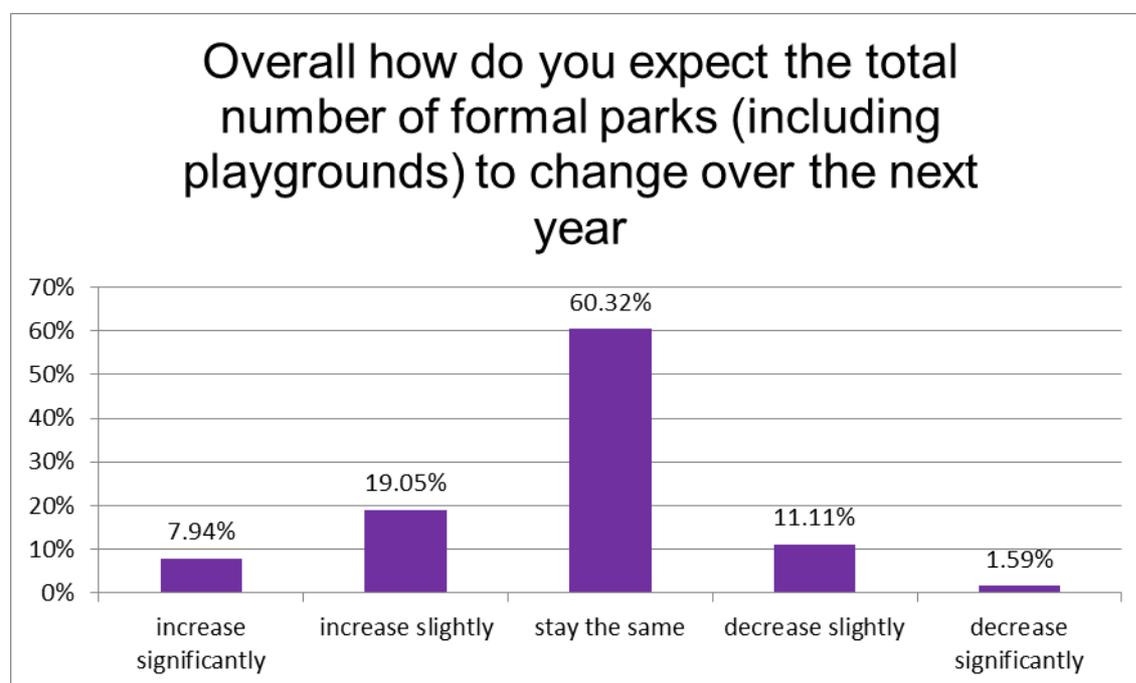
There has been some change in staff absence levels when compared to 2020, and despite the impacts of the pandemic, it is noticeable that 46% of respondents said absence levels were very low or below average in 2021 as opposed to 34% in 2020.

In terms of training, 80% thought that the training budget will stay the same over the next 12 months and 10% thought that it was going to decrease. 10% of respondents said their training budgets would increase perhaps showing the recognition that the changing role of parks professionals is requiring new and additional skills.

45% of respondents stated that they currently have apprentices, which is a significant decrease on 2020 when 59% reported that they had apprentices, and this figure continues to fall. However, 53% are planning to recruit apprentices in 2021/22 which is the same as 2020. Of those that hadn't retained all apprentices from the last recruitment round, they stated that this was dependent on suitable vacancies being available and the achievement of good standards of workmanship. Responses on future plans for apprentices indicated that the majority of respondents are maintaining apprenticeship programmes. Other responses included seeking to increase numbers if budgets allow or in some cases having to either reduce numbers or terminate the programme altogether.

## Numbers of parks and visitor numbers

The State of the Market survey has tracked the change in responses since 2008 to the question 'Overall how do you expect the total number of parks (including playgrounds) to change over the next year?' 60% of respondents expected the total number to stay the same, as opposed to 65% in 2020, with 13% expecting a slight or significant decrease as opposed to 20% in 2020 and the remaining 27% expecting a slight or significant increase over the next year which is a significant rise on 2020 when only 18% expected any level of increase.



When asked about the number of visitors to formal parks during the past year, **94% said they had seen increases** (62% in 2020). 5% felt visitor numbers had remained the same (34% in 2020) and 1% believed visitor numbers had decreased (4% in 2020). This increase in visitors is an important point both as a reflection of how important parks have been during the

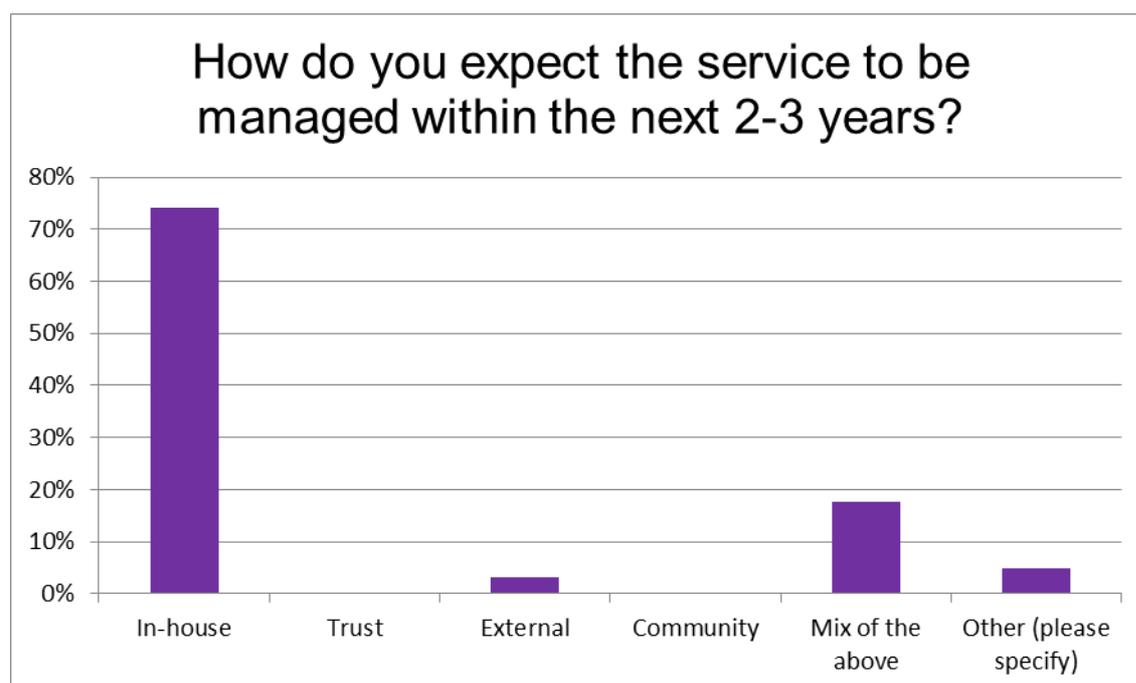
pandemic but also the fact this increased use signifies a greater recognition of the need for such spaces and the proper level of investment and maintenance to what have now been recognised as critical infrastructure for public health and well-being.

Only 37% of survey respondents monitor actual visitor numbers through a mixture of footfall / visitor / gate monitors, car monitors / car park payment monitors, audits and visitor surveys. Better visitor number monitoring is crucial if parks managers are to have auditable statistical evidence that these assets are well used and therefore worthy of ongoing investment and protection.

### **a) Service delivery**

79% % of respondents currently have in-house services and 74% expect this to be the case in 2-3 years' time, which is a slight decrease on 2020 when 79% expected in-house service provision to be the likelihood in 2-3 years' time. When asked how respondents expected the service to be managed in the near future, only 26% expected a mix of in-house, trust, external and community management a slight rise on 2020.

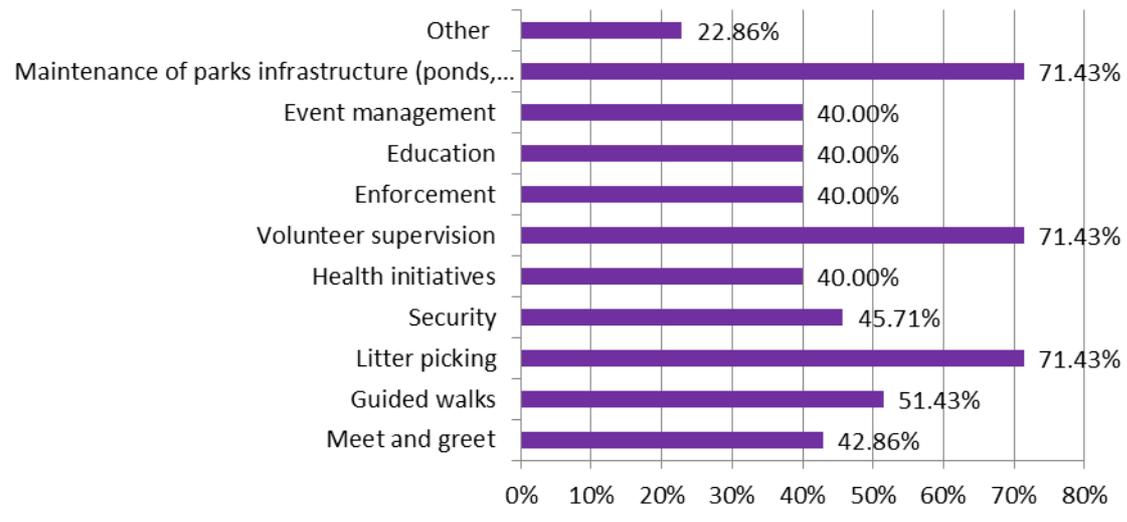
However, of these alternative options, a large percentage expected the management of parks to stay in-house with the maintenance responsibilities being provided by an external contractor.



### **Park Rangers**

50% reported having parks rangers which is a 2% increase on 2020. The roles are varied and the chart below show the variety of responsibilities Rangers carry out,

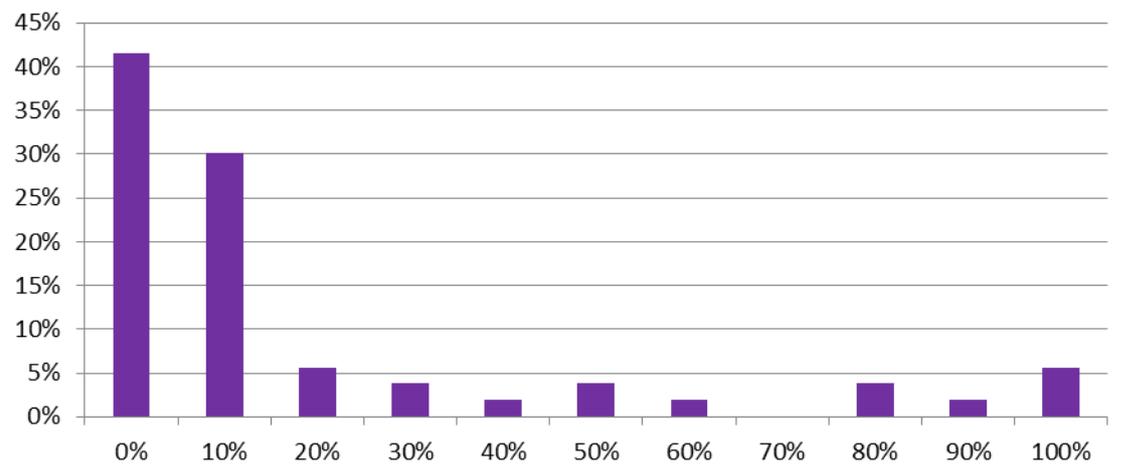
## If yes, what type of activities does the ranger service carry out?



The most significant increase in roles is with regards to managing volunteers with over 70% of rangers involved in this activity. The amount of time being spent on litter picking and infrastructure maintenance duties is still a major part of their roles.

When asked about the proportion of formal parks which have an on-site presence the chart below shows the responses received.

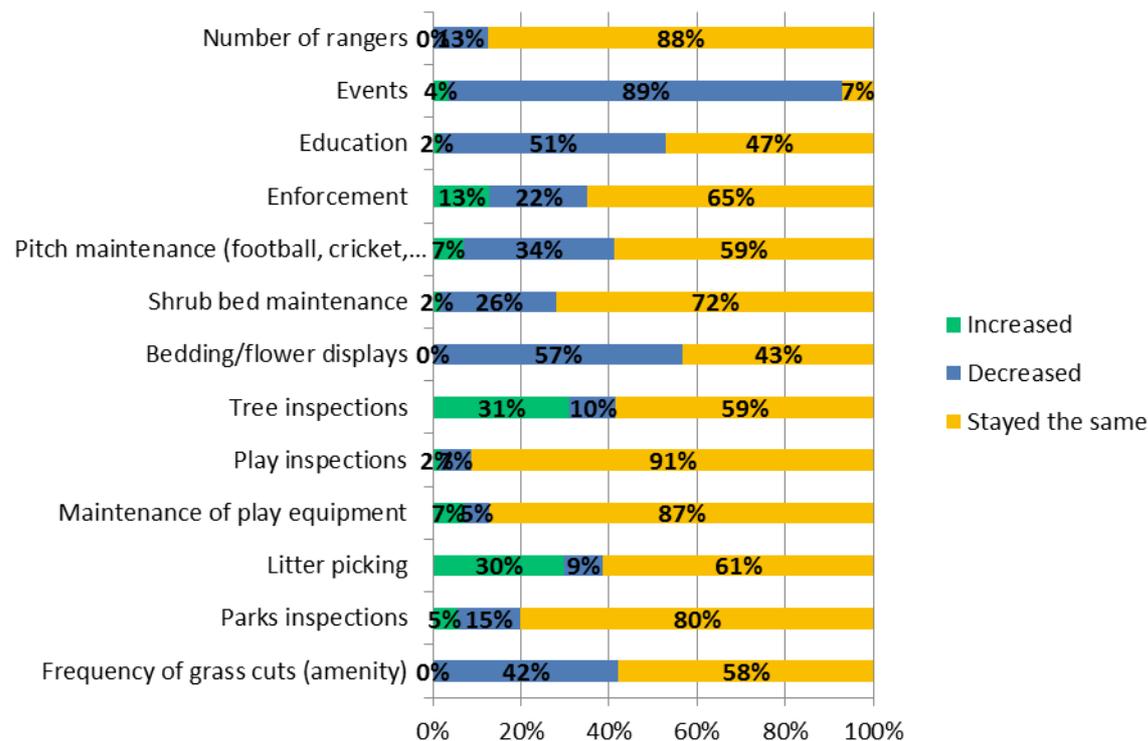
## What is the proportion of your formal parks which have an on-site presence (%)?



## Service standards and quality of service

The survey asked, over the past year, which services have increased, decreased or stayed the same. The respondents answered:

## Over the past year, have the following increased, decreased or stayed the same



The main areas of increase were linked very much to increased visitor numbers, the need to ensure social distancing and also the ability to carry out single person inspections. These were:

- Litter picking
- Tree inspections
- Enforcement

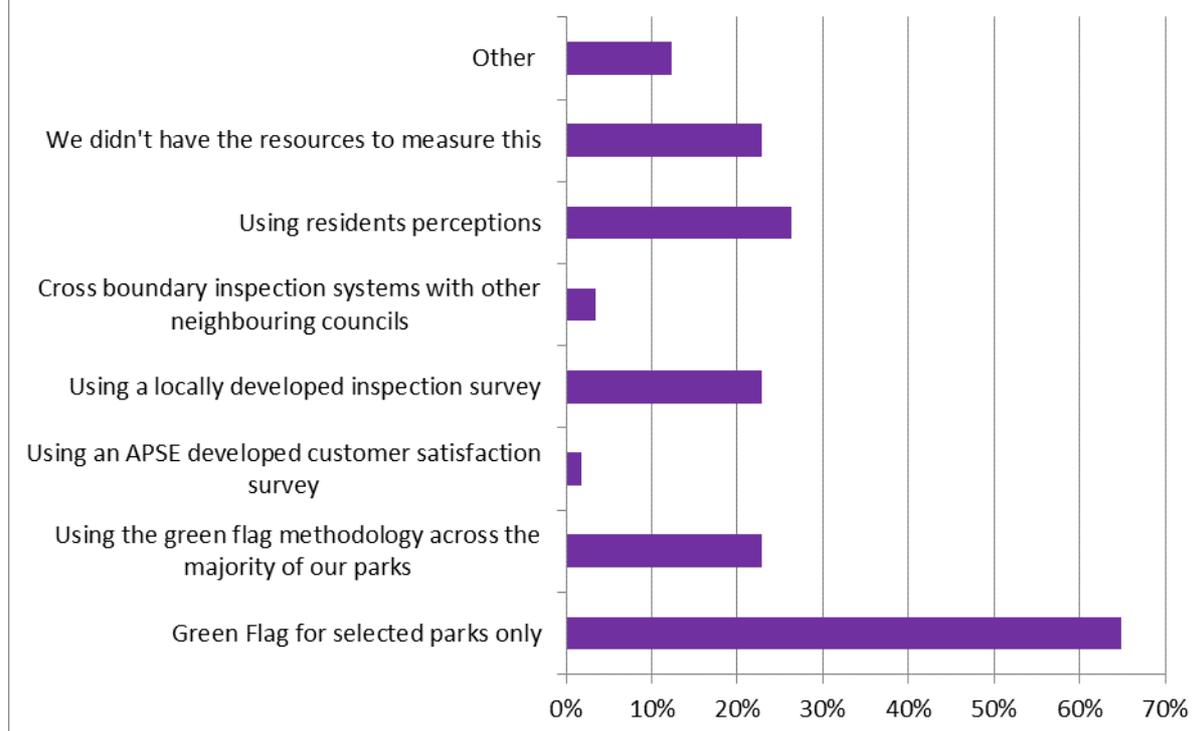
Perhaps not surprisingly the main areas of decrease were in relation to events, educational experiences, shrub and flower bed maintenance and frequency of grass cutting, all of which would have impacted on the ability to socially distance and the fact employees were being redeployed to support other services such as waste collection and bereavement services.

In this years' survey, we asked for respondents to state their average number of grass cuts (amenity) per annum. Although a number of cuts depends on a range of factors from weather conditions and land use. The highest return showed that 49% of respondents were undertaking 9-14 cuts, 28% stating 15-18 cuts (the average in 2020), a further 18% stating 8 cuts or less, and finally, 5% stating more than 18 cuts.

11% used Cylinder machines for estate and highways grass cuts, 28% used Rotary, 21% used Flail and 65% used a mixture of the above. For the first time respondents mentioned the use of robotic mowers being used.

The survey asked how quality of parks was measured during 2018/19 and how respondents intended to measure this in 2020/21 and the results were as follows:

## How did you measure the quality of parks during 2020-21?

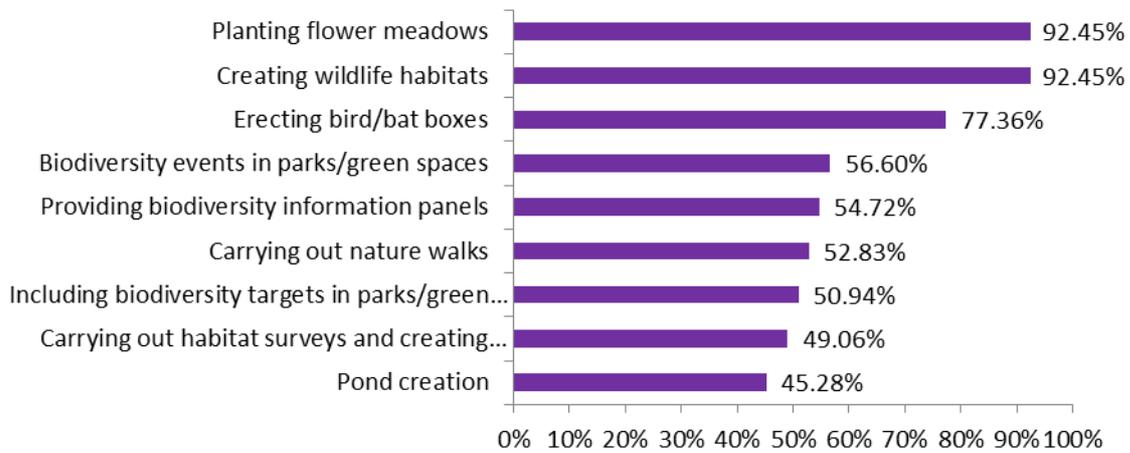


APSE believes it is vitally important within the current economic climate for Councils to continue to measure the quality, cost-effectiveness and customer satisfaction of parks. APSE offers a performance benchmarking service for parks, horticulture and open spaces called Performance Networks and runs the Land Audit Management System (LAMS), which allows local authorities to closely monitor their parks and green space performance. The use of APSE's LAMS system has tripled over the past two years and with the introduction of an App to reduce paper recording requirements, it is expected this will lead to further increased usage over the next twelve months.

### **b) Biodiversity**

Over 91 %% of respondents make a specific provision for promoting biodiversity in parks and green spaces (8% in 2020). Of those that make specific provisions, the respondents have carried out the following:-

## If you make a specific provision for the promotion of biodiversity, which of the following have you carried out?



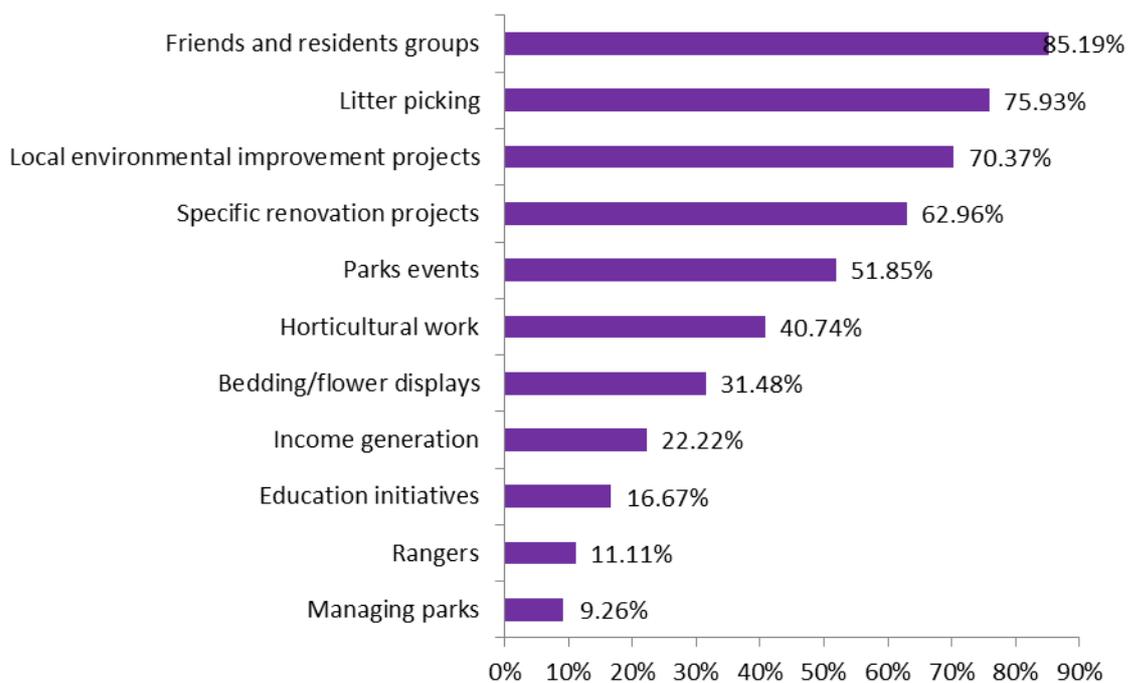
There has been increases in biodiversity provision, although there has been a slight fall in biodiversity events in parks due to the pandemic.

### Community and volunteer involvement

85% of respondents had friends of parks groups operating in their localities.

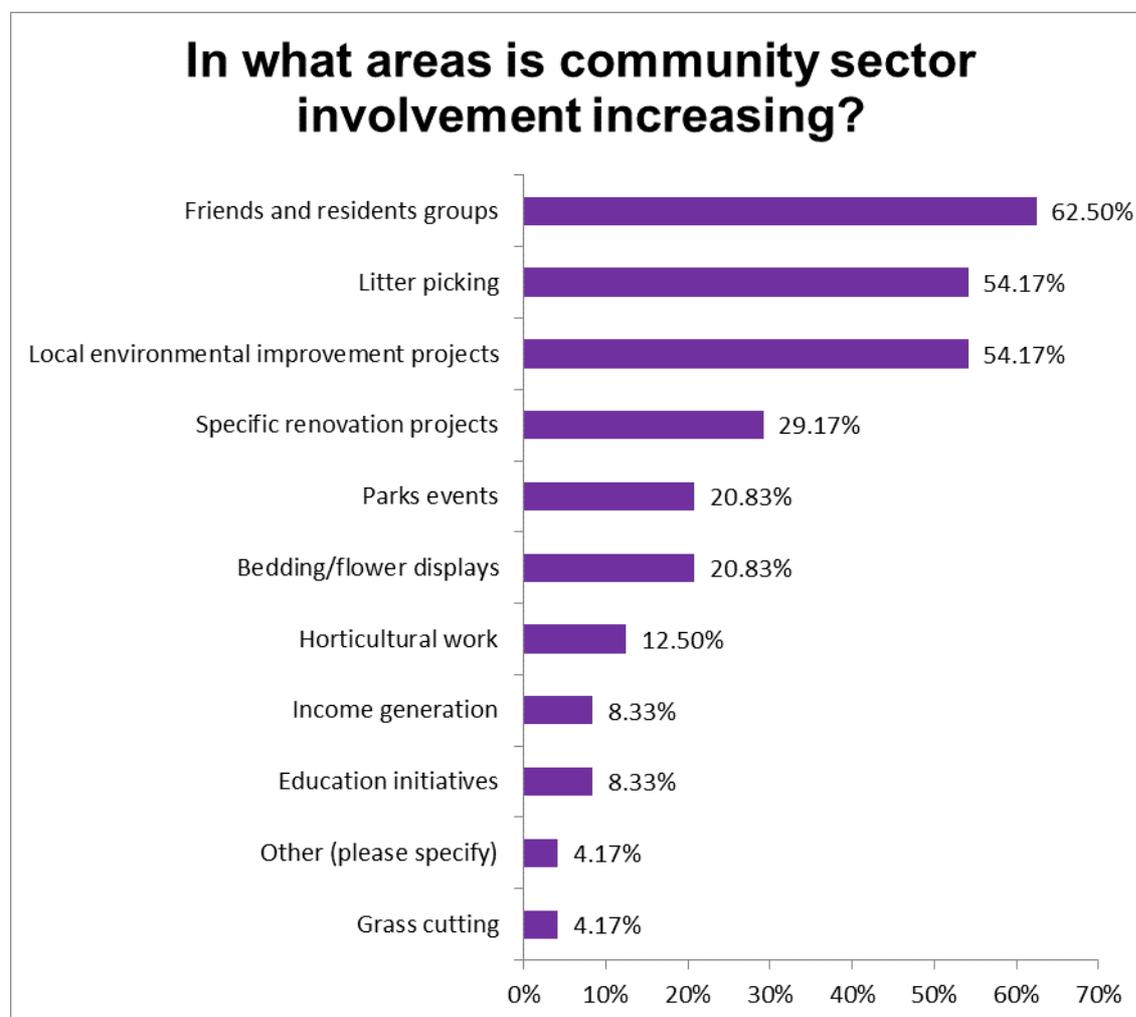
The survey asked how volunteers are involved in the parks service and results were as follows:

## How are volunteers involved in the parks service?

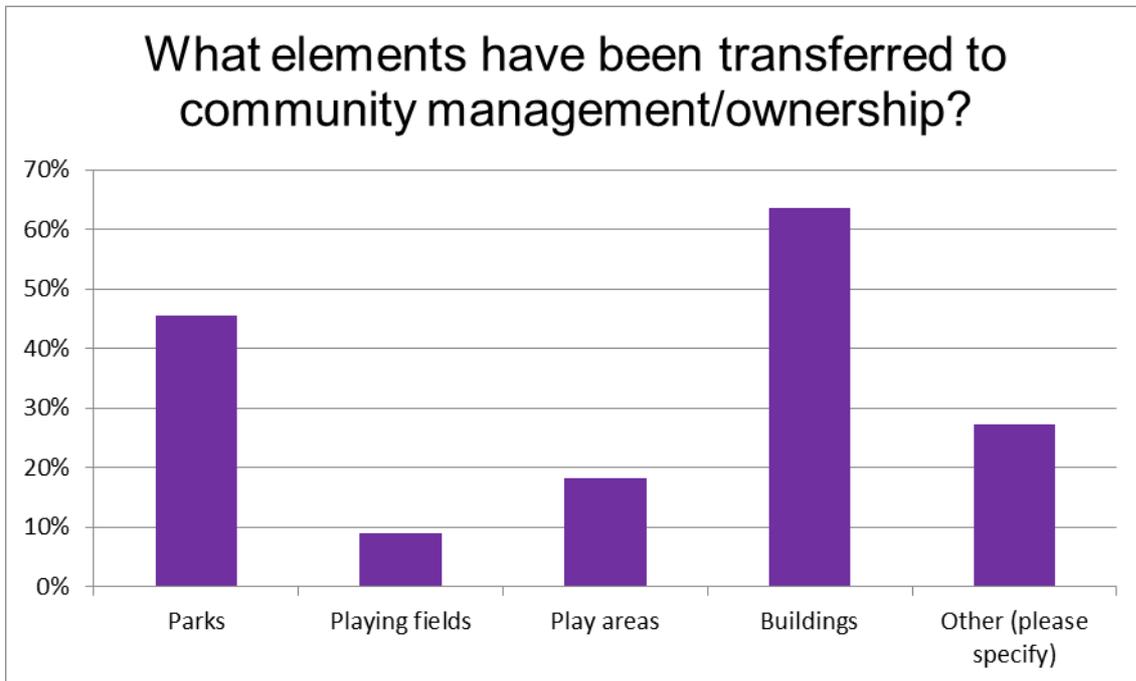


The results show that volunteers tend to be involved more in friends and residents' groups and specific projects like parks events. There has been a rise in the number of volunteers involved in litter picking, education initiatives, income generation and specific renovation projects.

53% of respondents thought that community sector involvement in parks is increasing either slightly or significantly in the following areas:

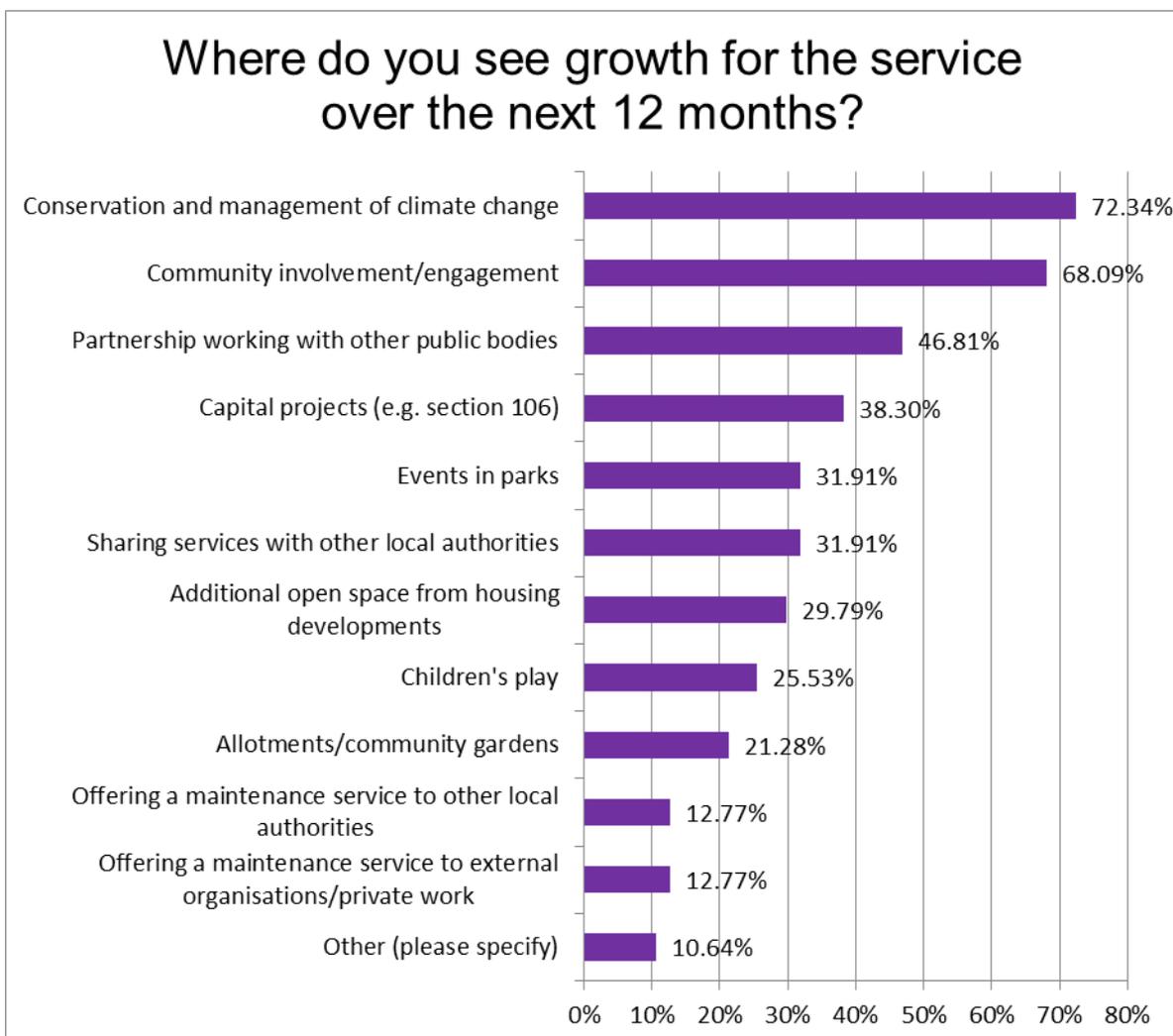


When asked 'during the past 2 years whether your council transferred any of its Park's assets to community management / ownership', 19% said yes, a fall of 1% on 2020) and 19% said their council is looking at this (a 1% fall on 2019). Respondents stated that the following elements had been transferred to community ownership:



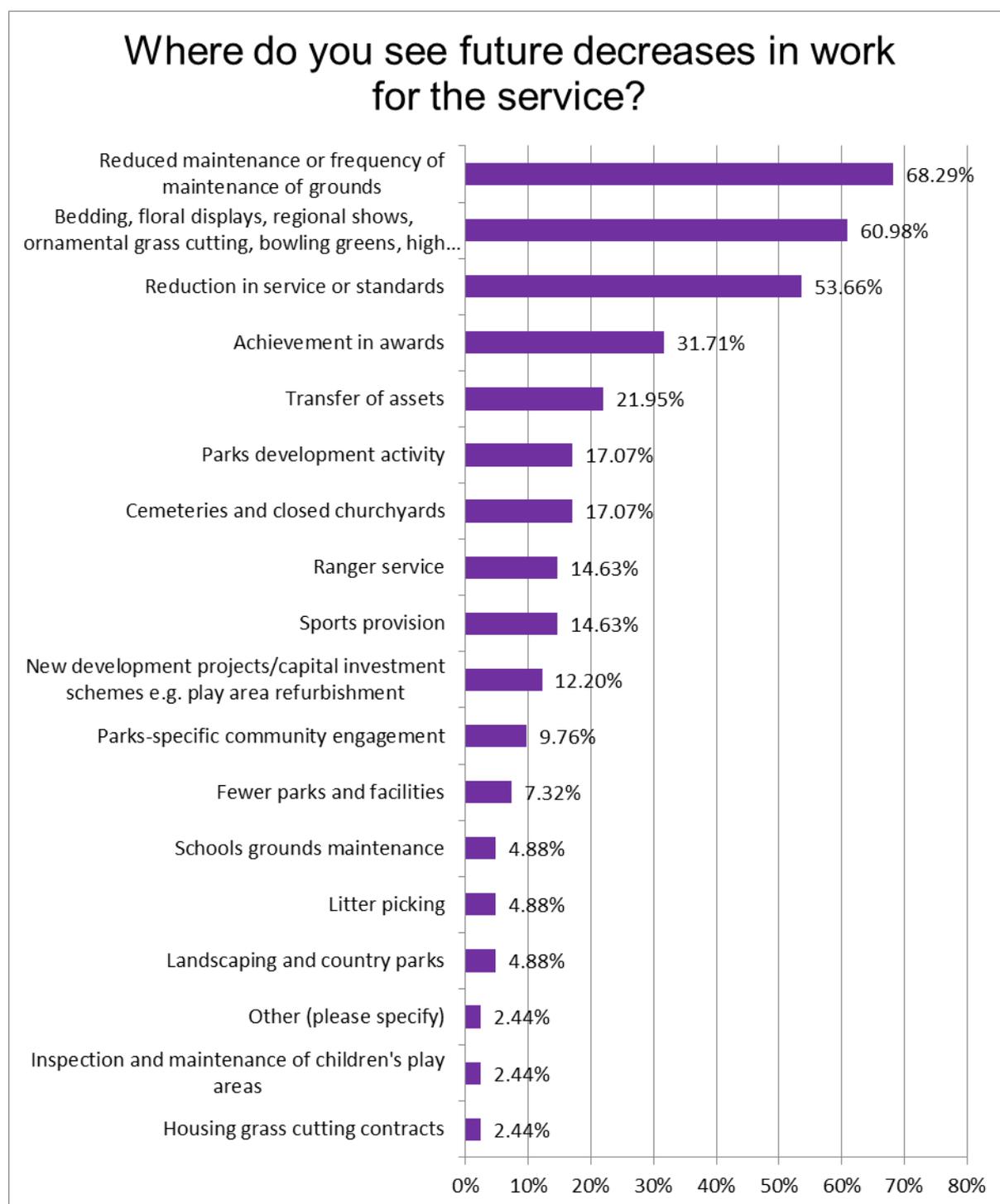
### Future growth and decreases in work for the service

Respondents were asked where they saw growth for the service over the next 12 months and the results were as follows:



The most notable change on 2020 are with regards to growth in the areas of conservation and management of climate change rising from 39% in 2019, 64% in 2020 to 72% in 2021

The survey also asked where they saw future decreases in work for the service and the breakdown is as follows:



The most notable elements of this table when compared with 2020 results is that there are slight increases in reductions in core work such as reductions in service standards, reduced

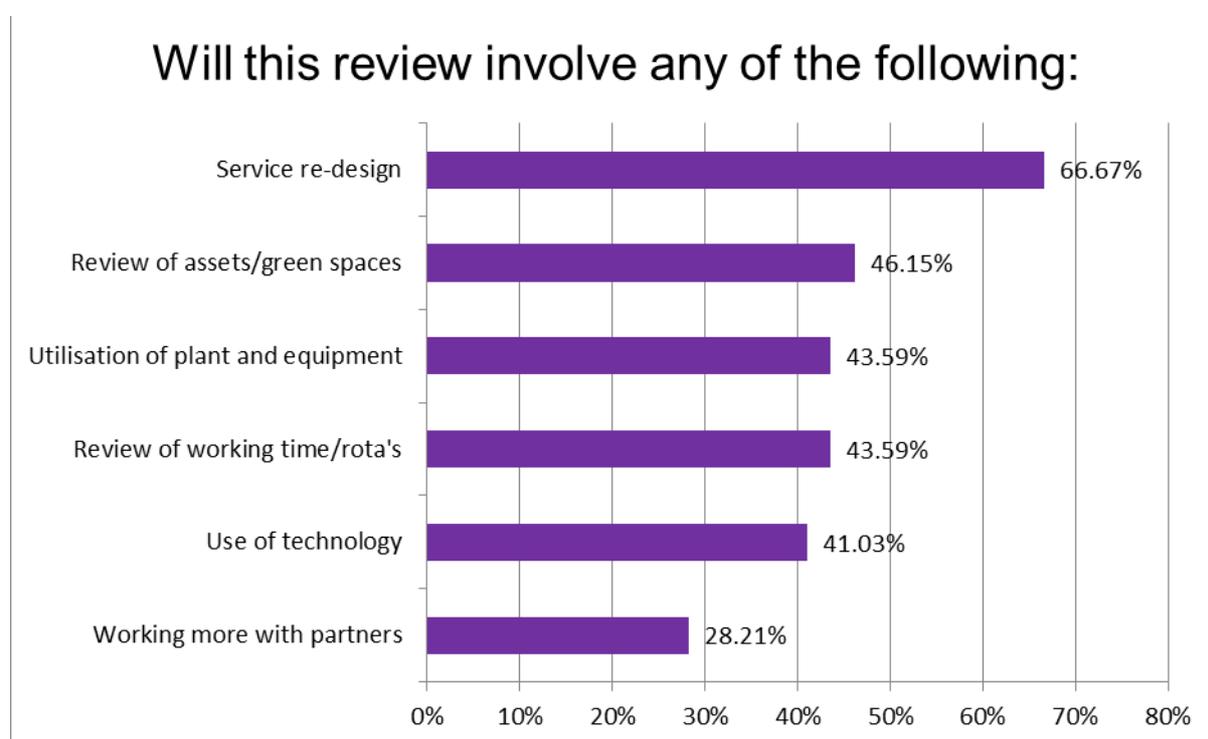
maintenance frequencies, housing grass cutting contracts and maintenance work for town/parish councils.

The number of respondents suggesting such areas will decrease compared to 2020 suggests that despite some signs of budget cuts being less severe, the lack of optimism that these areas of work will not be cut any further, is still a worry

### Service reviews

27% of respondents had recently completed a service review and 33% were currently underway. A further 23% plan to do so in the next 1-2 years. Surprisingly, 14% recorded they had not or did not intend to undertake a service review.

According to respondents, these service reviews will involve the following:



### APSE Comment

Undoubtedly 2020 has been massively affected by the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. Parks have been called upon to meet public health and wellbeing needs like never before, with 94% of survey respondents stating that they had experienced increases in visitor numbers. At the same time as these increased visits, many Parks staff have been redeployed to support key services such as waste collection and bereavement services.

Due to the need of social distancing many traditional parks events and visitor amenities have been closed resulting in significant reductions in income, income which many parks are dependent upon to meet service needs.

In addition, many of the volunteers and Friends Groups have had their activities dramatically curtailed, both operational and through the grants and additional income they can bring into the parks.

But from the responses received to this survey, it is quite clear that despite the impacts of the pandemic, ongoing service budget cuts, managers and front-line staff are continuing to provide quality parks and greenspaces.

However, there is a real belief amongst parks professionals that service quality may start to be seriously affected as a result of the ongoing pressures on budgets, changes to maintenance frequencies and a need for investment and now more worryingly, albeit potentially short-term, the additional cost imposed on councils by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Based on some of the results there does seem to be some hope that the scale of budget cuts are reducing and in some cases budgets are actually increasing, although they will need to be sustained if the losses experienced over the last few years are to be recovered. But we have seen in 2021 again there are some respondents looking at budget increases of between 5-10%

Local councils are working hard to meet these challenges through making efficiencies and looking for income generation opportunities to plug funding gaps. It is therefore welcome that within the survey examples of income generation and the acquisition of additional funding is growing, as local authority parks staff become more adept at generating additional income. However, it is noticeable in this year's results that there has been an increase in the degree of resistance to income generation from the public and some elected members, possibly as a result of the refuges parks and greenspaces provided for residents during the pandemic. Therefore, the message appears to be that the drive to generate income needs to be tempered with the ability to ensure there is still free public access to the UK's parks and greenspaces.

As recent changes to local government finances indicate, as councils will become increasingly reliant upon business rates retention and local housing taxation; then the value of a quality greenspace should not be underestimated in their ability to attract commercial investment and new housing developments. Therefore, if ongoing cuts to these services are allowed to happen then the impact could have much wider implications for local councils if this leads to areas having poor quality parks and greenspaces and consequently becoming unattractive to new businesses, as well as new potential residents.

The growing need to recognise the value of our parks and greenspaces both to public well-being and health and also to our local economies, has become abundantly clear over the past twelve months as whole communities have descended on parks and greenspaces as a place of solace. The Parks Inquiry reports now need to be placed more firmly on the Government's agenda through the work of 'The Parks Action Group' on which APSE represented its member local councils.

The announcements of sporadic pockets of funding will help some of those parks in need of renovation and is welcome, but it still falls well short of the hundreds of millions of pounds which has been lost from parks budgets over the past decade.

It is also apparent that using alternative methods to fund an maintain parks such as the increasing use of volunteers and trust models are still being mooted, however it has to be realised that these resources are often only available for localised projects and will not be enough to be a credible alternative to local authority historical experience and knowledge which has almost 200 years of history.

Therefore, the transferring of responsibility of our greenspaces needs to be considered carefully if free access is to be maintained. The Parks Inquiry report, although considering the need for mixed models in parks management, nevertheless still points towards ownership of parks being the role of local authorities, where the skills and resources still sit.

It is not surprising that reducing standards and reduced facilities are common themes in comments recorded in the survey. As a result of ongoing budget cuts and now the negative financial impacts of the pandemic, it will be critical that service resources are targeted more effectively in those areas where public use and greenspace maintenance need is at its highest. Therefore, there needs to be a greater appreciation by Government and senior local authority leaders and members of the increasing number of benefits parks and greenspace bring, many beyond health and wellbeing such as, climate change mitigation, flood alleviation, biodiversity opportunities contributors towards cleaner air etc. It should also be noted that many of these benefits sit within targets identified as corporate goals outlined in such as Climate Emergency and Local Plans. Indeed, both climate change and biodiversity issues have clearly come to the fore in this year's survey results, with councils striving to meet climate change targets and protect and enhance biodiversity.

It has never been clearer that there is a growing demand from the public for access to greenspaces as our roads become congested and financial constraints in the home mean people are more-needy of free access to pleasant and accessible greenspaces; the recent pandemic has made this demand even stronger.

Local authorities are successfully introducing new and innovative ways to sustainably manage parks whether this be through income generation, partnerships or alternative forms of funding. Local councils are also promoting the multiple benefits that greenspaces provide to other stakeholders and gaining funding from these sources in recognition of these benefits.

With all these considerations in mind, APSE feels there needs to be a balanced and proportionate response to the many concerns being raised about the future of the UK's public parks.

From the results in this survey, it is hoped that the positive and innovative work local authorities are continuing to deliver as part of their desire to maintain cleaner, greener and safer parks and green spaces, in spite of the impact of austerity, will come to fruition. It is hoped that Government and other stakeholders will, in recognition of this innovation and best practice, provide the necessary support for local authorities and their parks managers, in developing a sustainable future for the UK's parks and the multitude of benefits they bring.

## Get Involved

APSE member authorities have access to a range of [membership resources](#) to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with informal networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email [enquiries@apse.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@apse.org.uk)

Our national advisory groups include:-

- Building cleaning
- Catering
- Cemeteries and crematoria
- Environmental health and trading standards
- Housing, construction and building maintenance
- Local authorities, commercialisation, income and trading network
- Parks, horticultural and ground maintenance
- Renewables and climate change network
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Sports and leisure management
- Vehicle maintenance and transport
- Waste management, refuse collection and street cleansing

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