

## **EASTBOURNE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

# ELECTED MEMBER COMMUNITY STRATEGY VALIDATION EXERCISE 2003





www.eastbourne.gov.uk/esp

#### **FOREWORD**

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Further information about the Centre can be obtained from:

Sallie White, Research Administrator HSPRC University of Brighton Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9PH

Telephone: 01273 643480 Fax: 01273 643496

Email: s.s.white@brighton.ac.uk

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## Chapter 1

#### Introduction

The Eastbourne Strategic Partnership comprises a number of public, voluntary and private sector partners with the primary focus of working together to develop a community strategy in collaboration with local people. The aim of the strategy is to address 'the economic, social and environmental well-being and health inequalities of the Eastbourne community and that will contribute to the sustainable development of East Sussex and the South East region of the United Kingdom.' The Eastbourne Community Strategy Foundation Document was published on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003 and the summary leaflet distributed in July, 2003 to all households in the area via a local newspaper<sup>2</sup>.

This report presents the findings from the a community strategy first year validation exercise that is part of the ESP's ongoing commitment to develop and deliver a strategy fully engaged with the needs and concerns of the local community. This document will therefore inform the strategy review due to take place in July 2004.

<sup>1</sup> See http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/Community/ESP/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> ESP Minutes meeting 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2003 at http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/Community/ESP/meetings.asp

## Chapter 2

## Research methods

#### 2.1 Data collection

Information for the Foundation Community Strategy validation was collected through the use of a structured interview. The 19 interviewers were elected members from Eastbourne Borough Council who received training from University of Brighton staff prior to conducting the interviews. The interview followed the structure of a questionnaire which had been previously piloted by members of the public. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and an hour and were carried out at the interviewee's home at a time suitable to them. During the interview the respondent was also given a copy of the questionnaire to follow (but not for self-completion). The interviewer's and the interviewee's 3 copy of the questionnaire was were identical except for question 5 (as this was a memory test and therefore did not give respondents the names of ESP members). The bulk of the interviews took place between the 13th and 19th October as part of Local Democracy Week. Feedback was received from both elected members and interviewees who completed an evaluation form following the exercise<sup>4</sup>. Interviewees will also be sent feedback on the results of the research (a summary) and will be invited to the planned Community Strategy feedback and consultation event in 2004. They will also be sent an individual copy of the reviewed Community Strategy later in the year.

## 2.2 Sample selection

A stratified sample of 1504 was drawn from the electoral register to be representative of each ward in the town. These 1504 residents received a letter about the validation with a reply slip to return if willing to be interviewed. The 87 volunteers were then contacted by letter firstly to thank them for their offer of participation and secondly to inform them that they would shortly be contacted by telephone if selected for interview. 56 residents were then selected according to availability of interviewees and interviewers during Local Democracy week. Once interviews were agreed, respondents received a strategy document, summary and leaflet to read in preparation for the interview, together with a letter confirming both the name of the interviewer and the arranged time for interview. The breakdown of responses and interviews by ward is displayed in Table 2.1 below.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Appendix 1 contains the interviewee's copy of the questionnaire.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> At the time of writing the deadline for the feedback forms had not been reached. Results are to be produced in a separate document.

Table 2.1 Numbers of responses and interviews by ward

Ward	Responses	Interviews
Meads	18	11
St Anthony's	9	5
Langney	7	4
Devonshire	10	3
Upperton	4	3
Ratton	9	7
Old Town	20	15
Sovereign	6	6
Hampden Park	4	2
Total	87	56

#### 2.3 Sample characteristics

Although as shown above, the survey attempted to represent residents from all the wards in Eastbourne, due to the reliance upon self-selection and availability amongst the initial sample, it was not possible to ensure representativeness in any other respect. As the sample was also relatively small, (giving a confidence interval of 10.5) the findings should therefore be treated with some caution. In particular it should be noted that they may better reflect the views of older people who were more likely to respond and were thus over-represented. 39% were in fact over 65, which was greater than the overall proportion of over 65's (25%) living in the town. There was also a corresponding lack of younger residents in the sample with none aged 15 to17 and only one in the 18 to 24 age bracket. As 10.8% of the total population are aged 15 to 24<sup>5</sup>, this age group is therefore significantly under-represented.

The age weighting of the respondents also related to other personal information obtained through the interviews such as employment status, household type and long-term illness. For example, there was a large proportion of retired people in the sample (39%) and only 21% had children (under 18) living at home, whereas the largest group consisted of older adult couples without children who were mostly (96%) 45 and over. 64% of 'other' responses were in the 45-64 age bracket and several of these specified that they in fact lived in a household with their adult 'children'. Also there was a link between age and long-term limiting illnesses which were experienced by 19% of the sample aged 45 or over, 14% of those under 45, and 18% of the sample as a whole (15% of the population at large have a long-term limiting illness)<sup>5</sup>. The majority of respondents had also lived in Eastbourne for over 20 years (52%) which again is linked to an extent to age, in that those who were older were more likely to have lived in the area for a longer amount of time. This is demonstrated in Figure 2.3 which shows the increasing correlation between age and proportion of each age group having

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Census, 2001 Office for National Statistics

lived in the town for over 6 years. The other charts below give further information on the breakdown of these characteristics amongst the sample.

Figure 2.1 Age distribution of respondents

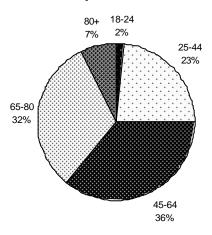


Figure 2.2 Age distribution of Eastbourne population (15+)

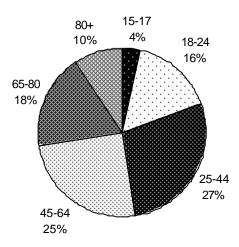


Figure 2.3 Length of time in Eastbourne

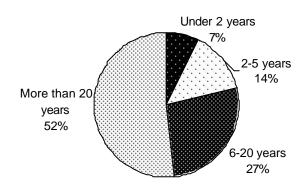


Figure 2.4 Correlation between age and length of residence in Eastbourne

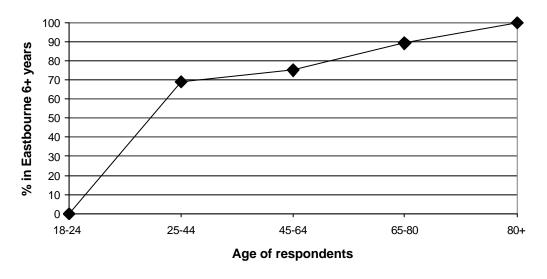


Figure 2.5 Household type

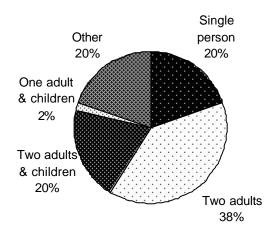
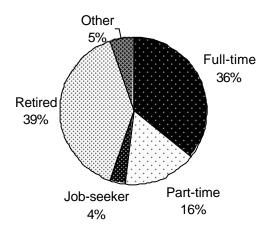


Figure 2.6 Employment status



Other personal information received related to the gender and race of interviewees. Male and female respondents were represented equally (50% male; 50% female), but there were no respondents from black and ethnic minorities (94.6% white British; 3.6% white other; 1.8% white Irish) which constitute around 3.4% of the Eastbourne population (ESP, 2003)<sup>5</sup>

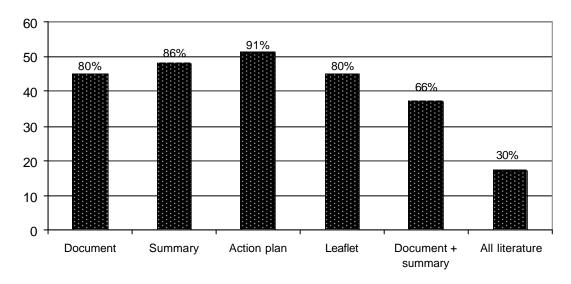
## **Chapter 3**

#### Results

#### 3.1 Introduction

The questionnaire contained questions about the various pieces of ESP literature that were distributed. This included the full ESP document (including the action plan), the summary and the leaflet. Where the respondents had not been able to read all the information on the strategy prior to interview, they were asked only about the documents they had read. Questions focused on both the format and style of the literature, preferred methods for distribution and views on and awareness of the strategy / ESP. Findings in each of these areas will therefore be presented in this chapter. For full details of the questions see Appendix 1.

Figure 3.1 Numbers of respondents who had read the various pieces of ESP literature



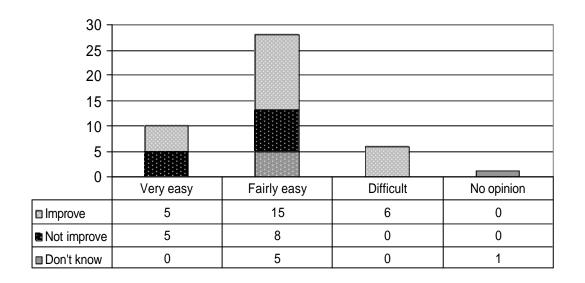
## 3.2 The style, format and printing

#### 3.2.1 The full document and action plan

A large majority of respondents (84%) who read the document considered it to be easy ('fairly easy' or 'very easy') to read. The most commonly selected reason for liking the document (82%) was the way in which it was 'clearly and methodically set out', whilst the least selected factor was 'the logos are good' (26%). Those who found the document difficult particularly agreed with the comment that 'It is too detailed' (71%). Although only a small number indicated that they found the

document difficult to read, most respondents considered there to be ways in which it could be improved (as shown in Figure 2.3). There were a wide variety of suggestions as to how this might be achieved, many of which were not available for selection on the given list. In fact half of the respondents answering this question (48%) gave 'other' reasons. The most commonly selected 'improvements' from the list of options were to 'make the language less complicated and remove the abbreviations' (37%) and to 'reduce the length' (37%). Several of the 'other' comments were also around the size of the document and the plea to make it less repetitive. However, the smallest proportion (22%) felt that this should be substantially reduced i.e. that the ESP should rather 'produce a medium size, less detailed document with pictures'.

Figure 3.2 Responses to questions 1a and 1d: Did you find the full document easy to read? / Do you think the document could be improved?



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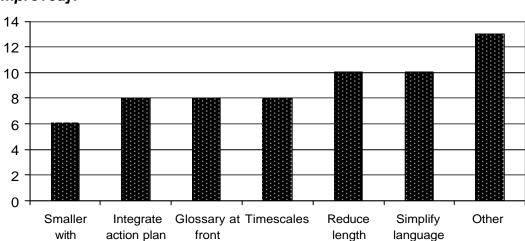


Figure 3.3 Responses to question 1e: How [could the full document be improved]?

Respondents were also specifically asked whether they had read the action plan that was contained within the document. A large majority had done so (91%) but 39% of these had only skimmed it. Although the majority found this easy to read (69%), a larger proportion had difficulties with this part (26%) than the document as a whole. The other respondents who read the action plan had no opinion about this.

pictures

A large majority (86%) of those who had read (or skimmed) the action plan identified at least one thing they liked about it. Most felt that 'the language used is understandable' (59%), that 'it is clearly and methodically set out' (57%) and that the 'targets were clearly set out' (55%). Most (84%) also found at least one aspect they disliked. However, fewer factors were on average selected as being disliked by each respondent. The most commonly selected dislike (45%) was 'column headings needed on each page'.

Figure 3.4 Responses to question 10b: What did you like about it (the action plan)?

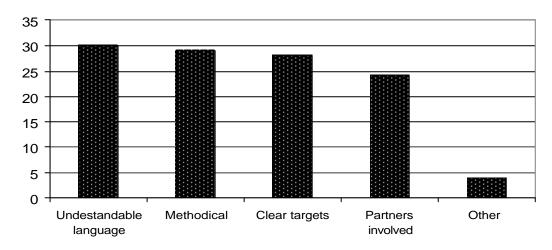
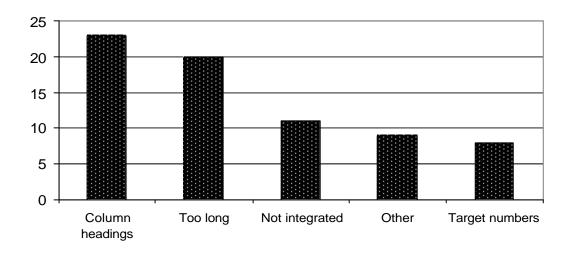


Figure 3.5 Responses to question 10c: What didn't you like about it [the action plan]?



#### 3.2.2 The summary

The majority of respondents who read the summary found it 'very easy' to read (61%) and a further 37%, 'fairly easy'. As with the document the most commonly liked feature (selected by 69%) was the way in which it was 'clearly and methodically set out'. Only one respondent had any difficulties with the summary, finding it 'too long with too much information'. Nevertheless, around a third (33%) felt there were ways in which it could be improved. The most common of these was to 'make the language less complicated and remove the abbreviations'. The other 'improvements' identified are displayed in Figure 3.7 below.

Figure 3.7 Responses to questions 2a and 2d: Did you find the summary easy to read? / Do you think the summary could be improved?

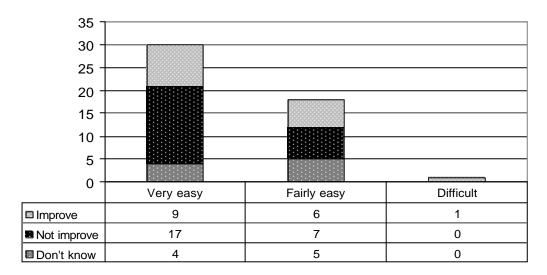
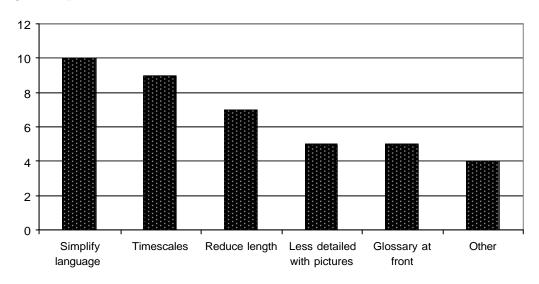


Figure 3.8 Responses to question 2e: How [could the summary be improved]?



#### 3.2.3 The leaflet

Most respondents (80%) either read (38) or skimmed (7) the leaflet and all found it easy to read with 37 (82%) of these identifying it to be 'very easy'. Most of those who had read (or skimmed) the leaflet agreed with all the positive statements about it, with the exception of 'It will attract people to want to know more', which was selected by less than half (47%). In particular, respondents considered it to be 'well designed' (82%), 'short and to the point' (76%) and 'a

good summary' (73%). However, although none stated they found the leaflet difficult, almost half of those who read or skimmed the leaflet (49%) felt there was at least one thing they disliked about it. The most commonly selected of these (by 16%) was the statement that 'You don't tell me how you are going to do things'.

Figure 3.9 Responses to question 11b: What did you like about it [the leaflet]?

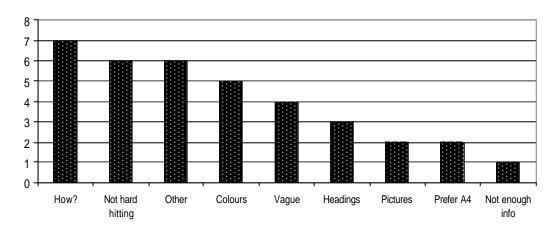
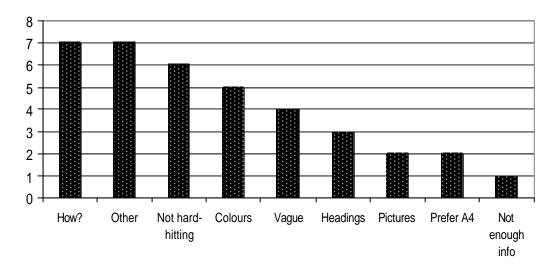


Figure 3.10 Responses to question 11c: What didn't you like about it [the leaflet]?



#### 3.3 Dissemination

The method chosen to disseminate the information about the ESP was predominantly the leaflet with the intention of making the full document and action plan available through the website and as a paper copy on request. Respondents were therefore asked whether they agreed with this decision. Five respondents felt that it would have been better to have produced the strategy in another way or to not have produced it at all. One felt that another method should have been used for those without access to the internet (e.g. a summary in a local newspaper) and two others suggested an alternative format to the leaflet (e.g. a magazine or newspaper format) as it was felt that 'people don't read leaflets'.

Respondents were also asked how they would like to be kept aware of future ESP developments. The most commonly selected methods for this communication were through an annual short brochure (77%) and a local newspaper (71%) whilst the least popular was through a town conference (16%).

50 45 40 35 30 25 20 15 10 5 Internet Radio Other Annual Newspaper Community brochure forums / conference

Figure 3.11 Responses to question 14: How would you like to hear about progress on the community strategy?

#### 3.4 Content

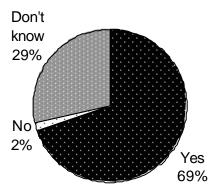
#### 3.4.1 The ESP and the strategy: attitudes and awareness

meetinas

Sections two and five of the questionnaire asked about the priorities and attitudes of the respondents and whether these were congruous with those expressed through ESP literature. Firstly interviewees were asked whether they agreed with the partnership vision of: 'a successful Eastbourne where people want to live, work and visit, with every resident enjoying a high quality of life and environment both now and in the future.' 95% stated they agreed with this vision, with the remaining three respondents stating they agreed with it 'to some extent'.

Secondly, respondents were asked whether they felt that in bringing together all the key agencies in the town, the ESP would make a difference to residents. The majority responded positively to this question (70%) with 16 out of the remaining 17 stating they were unsure.

Figure 3.12 Responses to question 12: Do you think the ESP will make a difference to the people of Eastbourne?



The descriptions set out in Question 3 which were regarding the message communicated by the strategy, were all selected by the majority to be appropriate. In particularly respondents indicated that they considered the strategy documents to communicate the message that 'there are plans for the future of Eastbourne' (82%), that 'organisations in the town are working together' (77%) and 'more involvement is needed from the people of Eastbourne' (77%). These are detailed in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1 Responses to question 3: Describe the message communicated by the strategy

	Yes		No	<b>)</b>
	No.	%	No.	%
There are plans for the future of Eastbourne	46	82	10	18
More involvement is needed from the people of	43	77	13	23
Eastbourne				
Organisations in the town are working together	43	77	13	23
Organisations working together with the community	39	70	17	30
The quality of life for everyone in Eastbourne will be	36	65	20	35
improved				
Organisations have shared priorities and objectives	30	54	36	46
Other	7	13	49	87

Respondents were also asked to state whether or not they agreed with a number of statements relating to the strategy. The level of agreement to each of these can be seen in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Responses to question 13: Which of these comments do you agree with?

	Yes		No	
People must recognise that improvement will be over a long period of time.	No. 47	% 84	No. 9	% 16
If you do what you say you will, there will be a change for the better.	46	82	10	18
It will all be down to finance.	39	70	17	30
The ESP will make organisations more open and accountable.	29	52	27	48

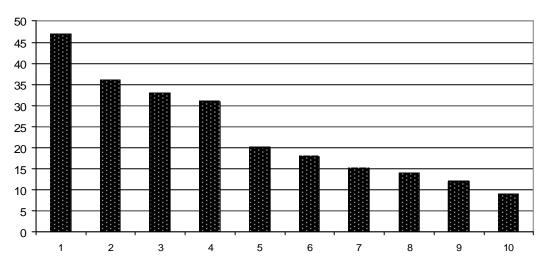
Section two also included questions about awareness of particular aspects of the community strategy. This was in regard to previous awareness of achievements in the key areas contained in the report, and of external funding Eastbourne has received for projects and development in the town. In both cases participants were mostly aware at least of some of the achievements (84%) / funding sources (61%).

Table 3.3 Responses to question 8 and 9 regarding awareness of achievements and external funding sources

	Yes		Some		No		
Awareness of achievements in Eastbourne	No. 16	% 29	No. 31	% 55	No. 9	% 16	
relating to various themes Awareness of external funding received in Eastbourne	15	27	19	34	22	39	

A memory test was also included in the questionnaire in order to give an indication of information retained about the ESP. Interviewees were asked to name as many of the member organisations as could be remembered. The organisations identified by the majority of interviewees were Eastbourne Borough Council (84%), Sussex Police (64%), East Sussex County Council (59%) and Eastbourne Downs Primary Care Trust (55%). Others which were less likely to be identified included partnerships involving mixed sector providers which were perhaps less well known. Most of the participants (54%) remembered under half of the members.





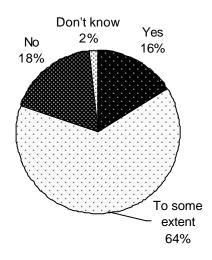
#### Key

- 1. Eastbourne Borough Council
- 2. Sussex Police
- 3. East Sussex County Council
- 4. Eastbourne Downs Primary Care Trust
- 5. Eastbourne Association of Voluntary Services
- 6. Eastbourne & District Chamber of Commerce Ltd
- 7. Eastbourne Housing Partnership
- 8. East Sussex Learning Partnership
- 9. Eastbourne Reborn
- 10. Eastbourne Environmental Partnership.

#### 3.4.2 Concerns

Respondents were also asked to identify their main concerns about the future development of Eastbourne. Answers were open-ended and included a number of very specific issues. In particular however, although only 16% felt their concerns were fully covered by the report, these mostly fell within the main themes included within it. In particular, although there was a degree of overlap between them, they related to the *environment*, *regeneration and economy*, and *crime and disorder*. These will therefore be discussed accordingly below.

Figure 3.14 Responses to question 7a: Does the community strategy address these concerns?



#### **Environment**

Most people raised concerns about the environment (62%). These were in relation to both the local urban and natural environment. Specific areas of concern were regarding:

- Amount of traffic / public transport system (especially buses).
- Roads and footpaths (cleanliness and maintenance).
- Threats to preservation of character of town / seafront.
- Waste and recycling (e.g. no plastic recycling available).
- Residential development (especially of green sites).
- Open spaces, downland, public parks and gardens.
- Reduction of floral displays.
- Lack of support for local farming.
- Threat of flooding.

Few respondents (15%) felt their concerns in these areas were being fully addressed by the strategy, although most (71%) felt they were being addressed to an extent and hoped to see the development and expansion of relevant initiatives.

#### Regeneration and economy

Another main concern, noted by 31 respondents (55%) was about the local economy and need for regeneration. Although, as with the other areas of concern there was some overlap in the comments, they mostly focused on the following four areas:

- Transport infrastructure (especially road, rail links and parking).
- Need for more and better employment opportunities (higher wages).
- Need to attract tourism / business.
- Declining town centre (i.e. empty / rundown shops).

As with concerns about the environment a large majority of respondents who raised these concerns (84%) did not feel they were fully covered by the strategy although most of these (68%) felt they were being addressed to an extent.

#### Crime and disorder

Concerns relating to crime and disorder / anti-social activity were highlighted by a significant proportion (37%) of the sample. However, this was mostly in relation to a general fear of crime or anxiety about the behaviour of unoccupied youth, rather than about any serious criminal activity in the town.

Only two respondents stated that these concerns were not addressed by the strategy and in both cases respondents felt a greater police presence / involvement to be required. 23% felt that their concerns were being fully addressed and 64% to 'some extent'. There was a correlation with age group in that older respondents were more likely to express a concern about crime and disorder.

## Chapter 4

## **Discussion**

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the key findings from the exercise are summarised. The discussion is divided into the three sections as outlined in the findings chapter. Firstly, therefore it focuses on feedback regarding the style, format and printing, secondly on the dissemination of the literature and thirdly on the content of the strategy.

#### 4.2 The style, format and printing

The majority of interviewees found the full document, action plan, summary and leaflet easy to read, clear and methodical. This was particularly true of the shorter pieces of information, especially the leaflet that was considered either 'fairly' or 'very' easy to read by all the respondents answering the question. Almost a quarter (22%) of those reading the full document however agreed with the statement that it should be reduced in length and the language made less complicated (without abbreviations), whilst a number of respondents made similar comments (e.g. about repetitiveness) in the 'other' box. 39% (of those who had read or skimmed the action plan) also felt it to be 'too long' and 45% thought it would be made clearer by placing column headings on each page. A number (21%) of those who had read the summary agreed with the statement that it would improve it to 'make the language less complicated and remove the abbreviations'. 76% of those who had read the leaflet however liked the way in which it was 'short and to the point' and 82% thought it 'well designed'. Therefore, there was an overall sense that residents valued the clear way in which the documents were on the whole set out and that they were keen to be able to quickly and easily access key pieces of information of interest to them rather than be immersed in detail.

#### 4.3 Dissemination

A large majority (91%) agreed with the decision to distribute information about the strategy predominantly through the leaflet, whilst making the full document available through the internet or as a paper copy on request. A few however felt that leaflets were not the best format to use, being easy to throw away and ignore. Respondents most preferred methods for future communication were through an annual brochure or a local newspaper. Whatever the format, it seems that above all, residents would prefer generally distributed information to communicate the key issues in a way that is clear and straight to the point.

#### 4.3 Content

The majority of respondents expressed a positive attitude towards the strategy / ESP with the majority stating they believed the partnership would make a difference to the people of Eastbourne (69%), that it would make organisations more open and accountable (52%) and that if implemented, the strategy would bring about a change for the better (84%). They also however, held a sense of realism in that most (84%) agreed that such improvements would only occur over a long period of time and that financial constraints would be the definitive factor (70%).

Information on the achievements communicated through the documents was new at least in part to most of the participants (84%) as was the information about external funding sources that had been exploited (61%). After reading the literature, four out of the ten ESP members were identified by most of the respondents (in the memory test) but the other organisations were not remembered by the majority. Again this perhaps reflects the lack of interest in and attention to detail given by readers.

The main themes of the strategy were shown to correspond with the concerns of the participants, particularly environment and regeneration and economy and crime and disorder (although the latter was particularly evident amongst the older members of the sample). However, although most felt the strategy addressed their specific concerns in these areas to an extent, few felt they were being given sufficient consideration. The area of concern which was particularly prominent and seen to require most input was the local transport system and infrastructure. This issue was particularly communicated in regard to an environmental perspective (i.e. a concern over the damaging effects of car use and the lack of adequate and affordable alternative forms of transport) and an economic one (i.e. the need for better road and rail links as an incentive to businesses and tourism). It is however an issue which is also of significant relevance to several of the other key themes and the impact of all priority actions should therefore be considered in relation to this. It should also be made a priority to seek further engagement with those sections of the population that were under-represented in the sample, as it may be the case that other concerns are more evident amongst these groups. In particular this applies to young (under 25's) and ethnic minority people. Plans are currently underway to carry out exercises which will address the lack of involvement from these groups.

## **Appendix 1**

The Questionnaire (see separate download)