

# COVID-19 Staff Survey

## Planning Services

### Summary of Responses

## Table of contents

Table of contents .....	1
1. Introduction .....	2
2. Response Rate.....	2
3. Are you happy working from home? .....	3
4. What do you feel has worked best for you working from home?.....	4
5. What has been more challenging for you working from home?.....	5
6. Have you been able to carry out all your duties from home?.....	6
7. Do you think your productivity has increased/reduced since being out of the office? .....	7
Volume of work?.....	7
Quality of work?.....	8
Performance against targets?.....	9
8. Have there been any specific advantages to you from working from home?.....	10
9. What do you miss about working in the office? .....	12
10. Do you have any contact with customers?.....	13
11. Have you been in regular contact with your team whilst you have been working from home? .....	15
12. Do you feel that you have been supported by your line manager whilst working from home?.....	16
13. Is there anything you feel you need to make your current home working arrangements better for either you and/or the Service? .....	17
14. Is there anything else you would like to tell us as part of this survey? .....	18
15. Broad conclusions .....	19
16. A copy of the Questionnaire sent to staff.....	19

## 1. Introduction

We are in an unusual time for our Service, having to respond to the challenges of COVID-19. However, like all good services that are customer focused, we need to understand the impact of our new ways of working on our service delivery and our staff.

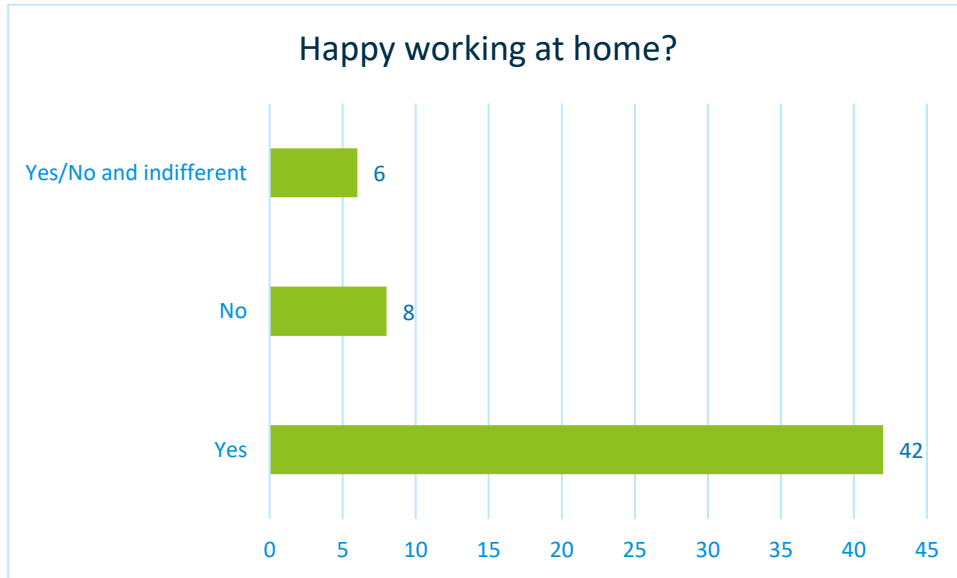
There is a large expectation on the Service to contribute to the economic recovery of the Borough post COVID-19. Responses given will enable us to shape the Service going forward.

## 2. Response Rate

We have a 100% response rate, and information and conclusions below have been collated from 60 individual staff responses.

**A summary of responses is detailed below**

### 3. Are you happy working from home?

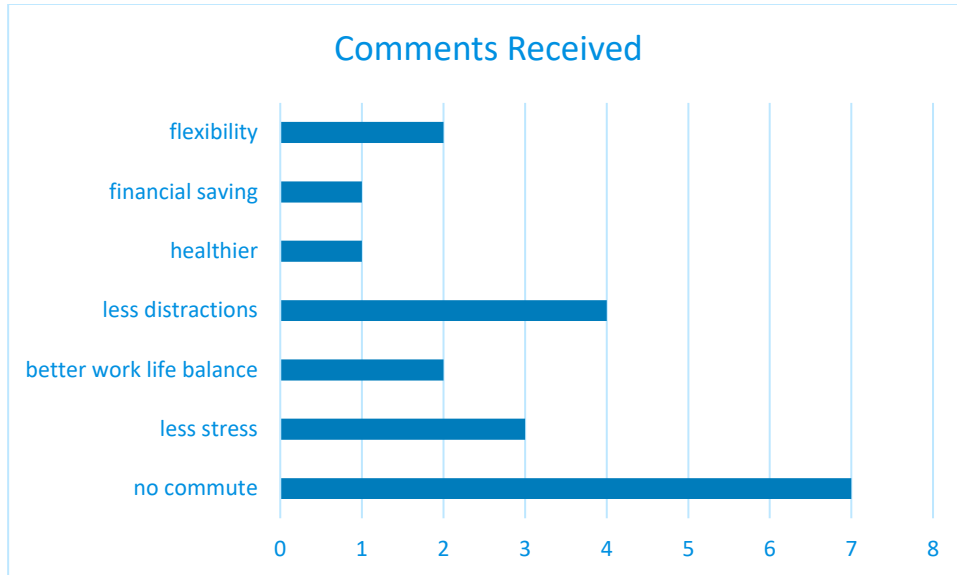


#### Conclusions drawn from comments made

- Officers happy work from home but the majority would prefer a more balanced approach involving working from home and spending time in the office
- Benefits from home working providing a better work life balance
- Having children at home whilst schools are closed presents challenges for some
- Feeling of isolation for some due to missing colleagues for social interaction, training and opinions on work issues.

See breakdown of issues given in responses to questions below

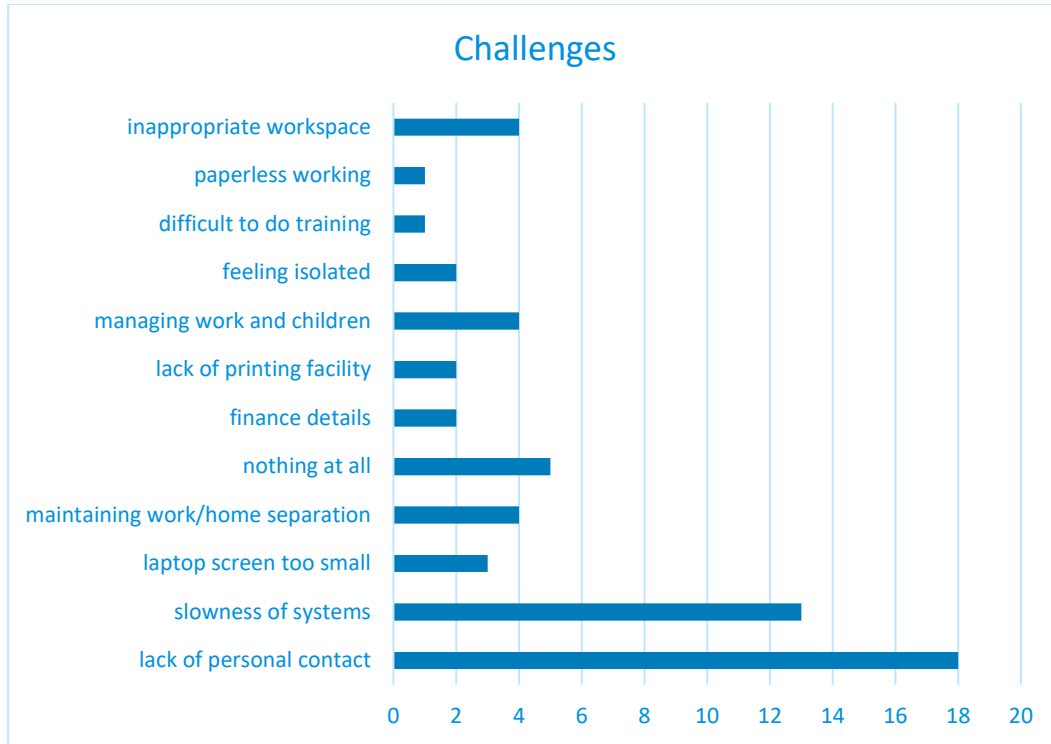
## 4. What do you feel has worked best for you working from home?



### Conclusions based on comments made

- Staff appreciate that they do not need to commute to the office, which saves them time and money
- Staff are generally able to operate as well at home as they would in the office
- Working from home provides flexibility around the hours they work
- Ability to use Teams for meetings rather than having to try to find a meeting room
- Concentration levels are higher as there are fewer interruptions
- Staff report that working from home provides opportunities to improve their general health.

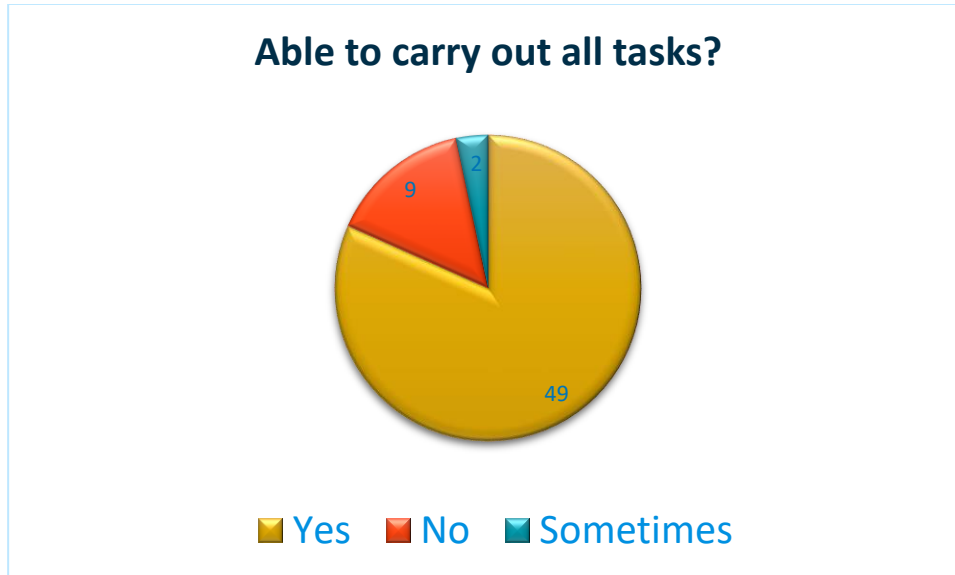
## 5. What has been more challenging for you working from home?



### Conclusions based on comments made

- The majority of staff cited network/internet connections fluctuating and Uniform database being very slow causing delays and frustration
- Some found working with children at home during school closure challenging
- Some staff felt isolated or lonely as they have little or no social interaction
- Some staff felt that they don't have appropriate workstations eg using dining room table and non-office chair which causes some discomfort
- Some staff felt it was difficult to network and or gain opinions from others in the Service and other departments, particularly those that they didn't have contact with before which wasn't always complimentary to their work
- Some staff found it to be a steep learning curve at start of lockdown with introduction of new systems eg BlueBeam, Teams and not having a paper copies of plans and documents
- Training has been difficult to provide
- Not having direct access to financial payment information has caused delays
- Some staff found that having no access to printers was restrictive.

## 6. Have you been able to carry out all your duties from home?



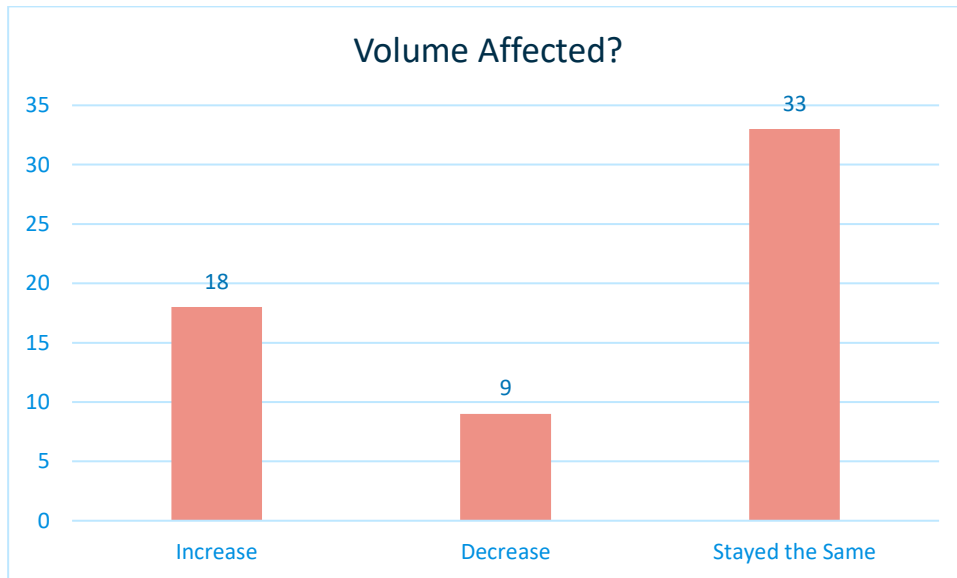
### Conclusions based on comments made

Most officers are able to carry out all or most of their tasks whilst working at home. Some issues have been identified:

- Access to printers sometimes needed
- Lack of availability of mobile phones (some phones redeployed to other teams for dealing with front line COVID-19 issues)
- Finance packages not available to receipt income or generate refunds from home thus requiring someone to be in the office
- Slowness and inability to access certain IT systems
- Planning site visits not able to be carried out which means making decisions without detailed knowledge
- Some historic records only available in the office (hard copy/microfiche)
- Site notices still need to be placed near development sites, requiring someone to print and collect from the office then distribute.

## 7. Do you think your productivity has increased/reduced since being out of the office?

Volume of work?

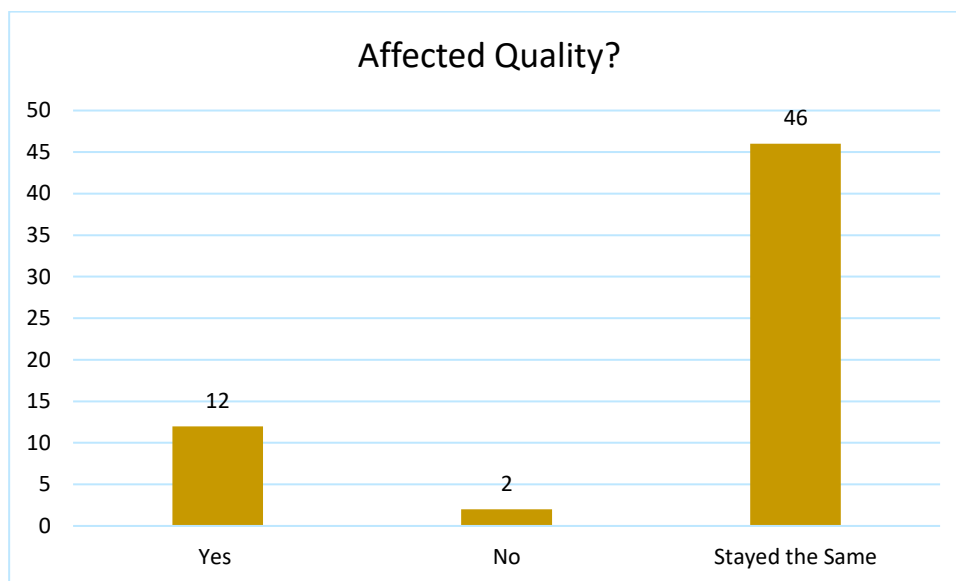


### Conclusions from comments made

- The majority of staff felt that the volume of work had stayed the same as it was when working in the office. (This is based on officer perception, but data gathered throughout the lockdown has shown slight reduction in some areas but increases in others.)
- Staff that thought there had been an increase in volume suggested that this was due to not being interrupted, less distractions and therefore being able focus to get through more work.
- Staff commenting that they perceived there to be a decrease in their output state they have been hampered by slowness of systems, child and parent caring responsibilities and waiting for replies to emails (rather than asking someone face to face).



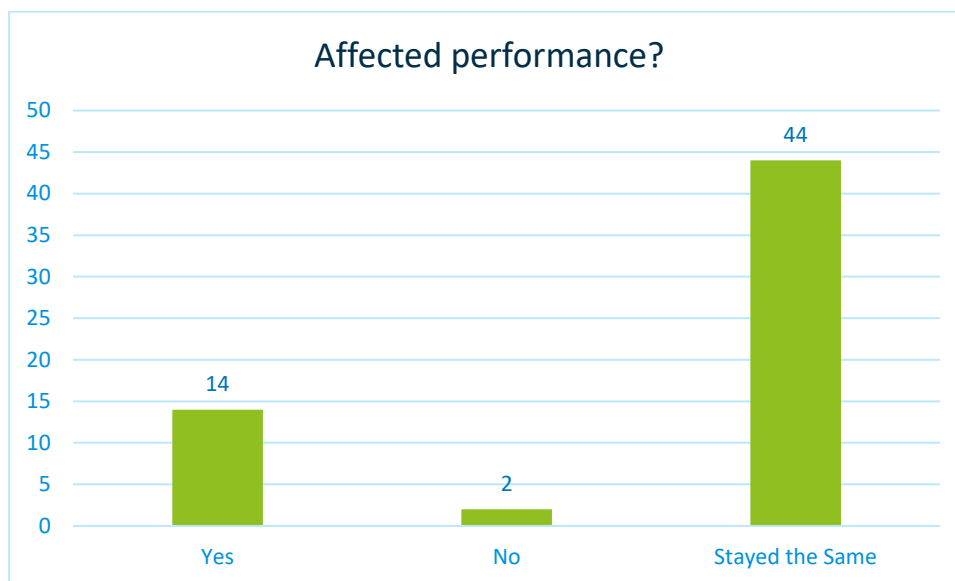
## Quality of work?



### Conclusions from comments made

- Most staff thought that the quality of their work had either increased or stayed the same.
- The reasons stated for the increase have been less interruptions and background noise allow them to focus on producing improved quality of work. This has included additional research and better policy interpretation.
- Those that thought the quality of their work has reduced thought that child care and slowness of systems had affected the quality of their output.

## Performance against targets?



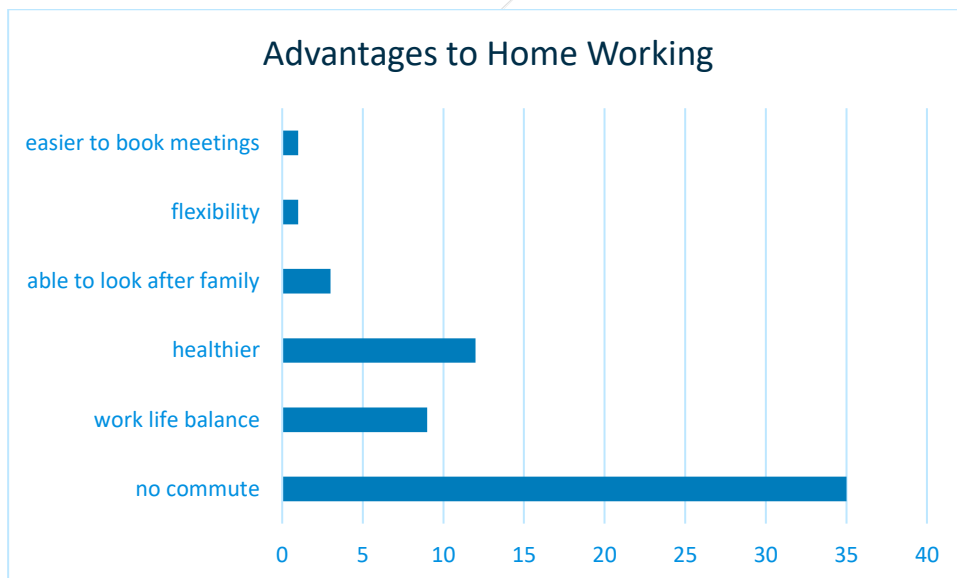
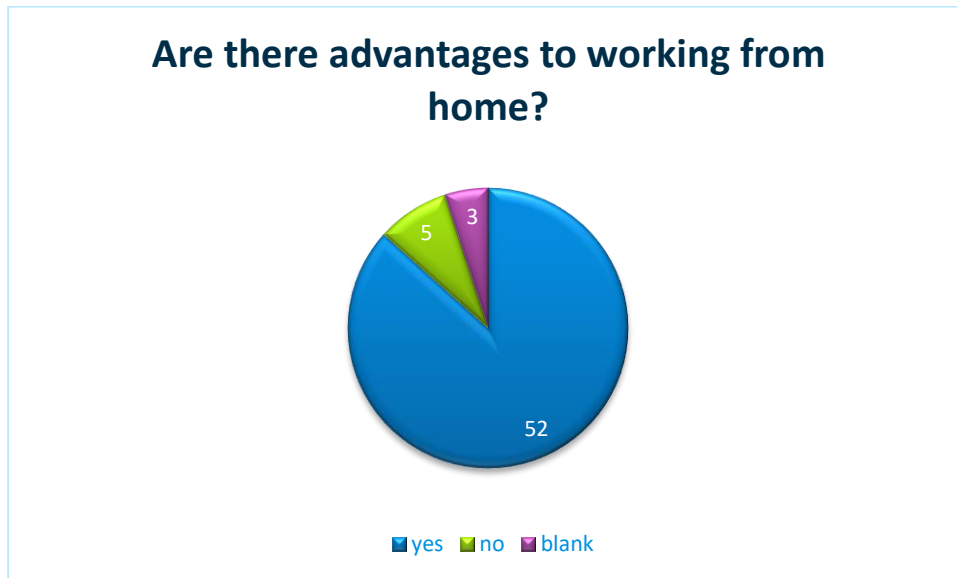
### Conclusions from comments made

- The majority of staff thought their performance had stayed the same – this was based on the balance of less distractions versus slower systems
- Those that felt their performance had decreased stated increased workload due to increased demand for services during COVID-19 additional tasks.
- Some staff felt that their performance had increased due to time saved not having to leave to catch public transport, being less distracted and nonattendance at physical meetings. Others said the flexibility to log in later to complete tasks was helpful.

### The above should be read in the context of what is set out below

- For the validation of planning applications, it can be shown that there was a 20% increase in performance against targets based on the same period last year. This however needs to be balanced against an approximate 20% reduction in the number of applications received, which means in real terms that performance has stayed the same
- For the determination of planning applications performance in 2020 remains at comparable levels for 2019. This is only due a reduction in the number of planning applications for a comparable period in 2020, which suggests that performance is dipping slightly.
- There has been an increase in performance in Building Regulation plan vetting by 8% when compared to comparable figures in 2019, although there has been a reduction in the number of applications due to restrictions imposed on construction sites.

## 8. Have there been any specific advantages to you from working from home?



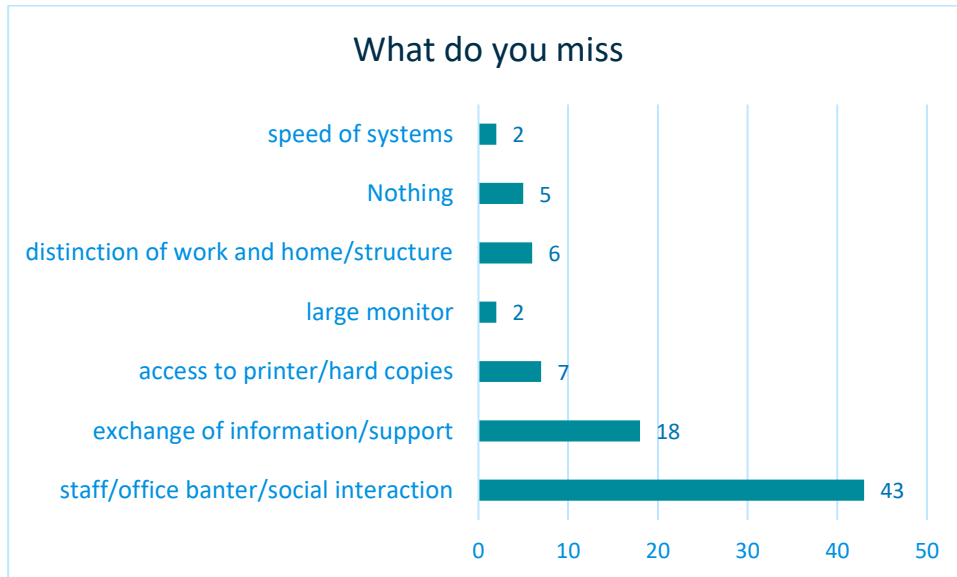
### Conclusions made on comments made

- Staff clearly felt that the main advantage of working at home was not having to commute. This gave staff more time, saved money and allowed them to start work earlier and helped to improve work life balance.
- It can be noted that some staff felt healthier during this period. This is reflected in the

significant reduction of sickness absence across the Service.



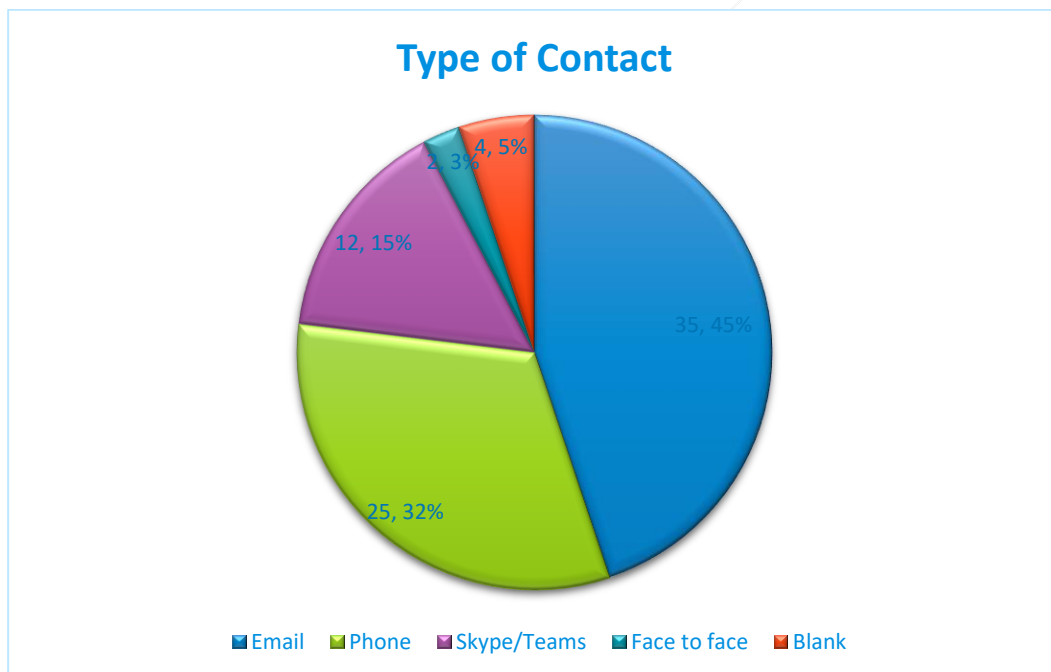
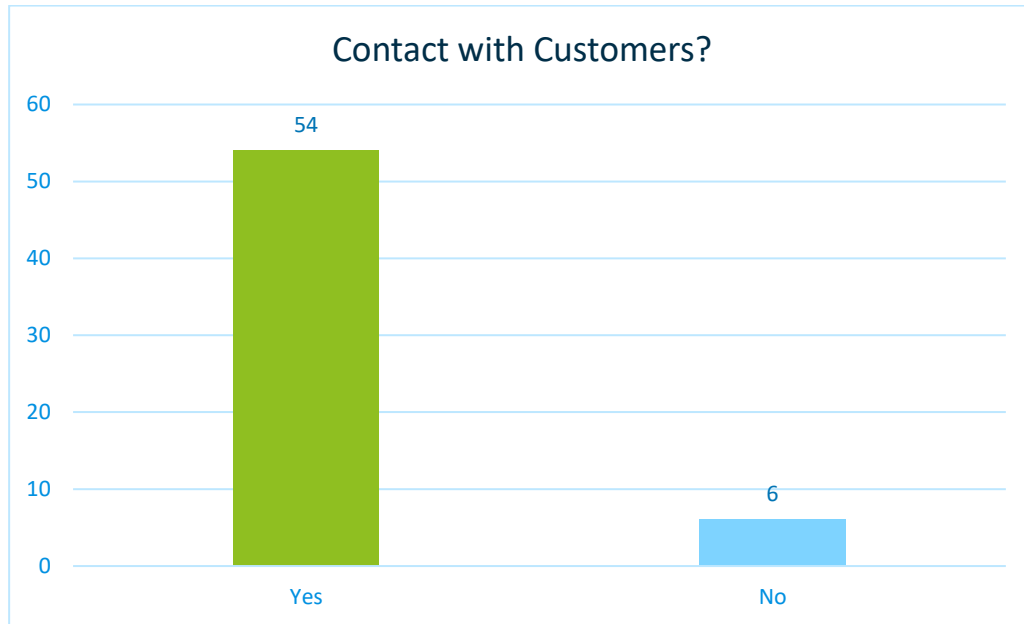
## 9. What do you miss about working in the office?



### Conclusions based on comments made

- The most common theme raised a lack of social interaction with other colleagues
- Some staff miss having access to hard copy documents and being able to print when needed, whilst others miss the speed of systems and ability to use a large monitor
- Others would like better segregation of work and home life
- Some staff felt that there was nothing or very little that they miss about working in the office

## 10. Do you have any contact with customers?



### Conclusions based on comments made

- The introduction of Teams has been appreciated as it enables everyone to get together without having to travel.
- Customers are positive about our ability to work remotely and still provide a great service
- Staff have made use of technology to communicate amongst themselves and customers eg WhatsApp groups, email, Teams, and texts – all have been very effective.



## 11. Have you been in regular contact with your team whilst you have been working from home?

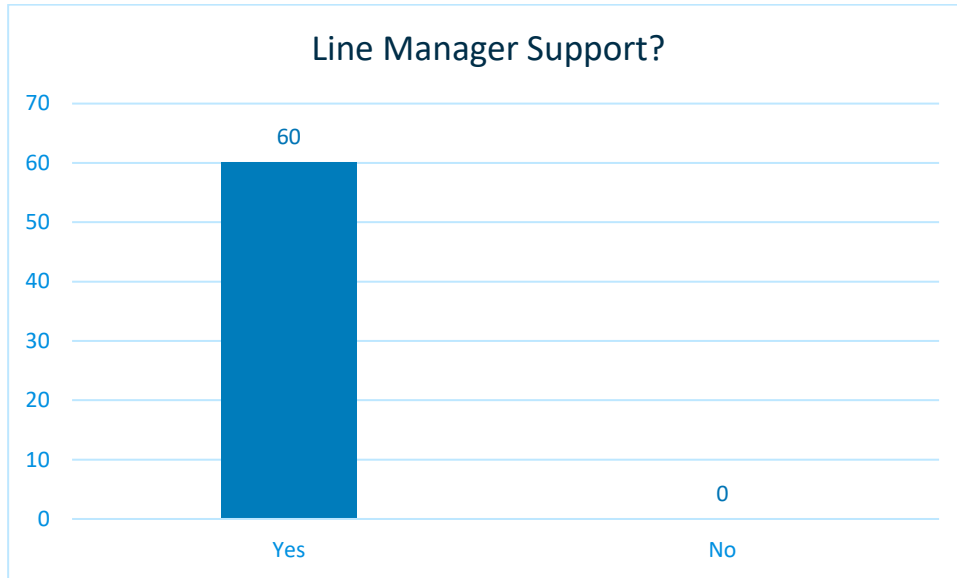


### Conclusions based on comments made

- All staff have kept in touch with their colleagues using Teams, WhatsApp, email etc. Most have found this to be a good support, improved morale and has given them the forum to share work updates, raise issues and to join together as a team.



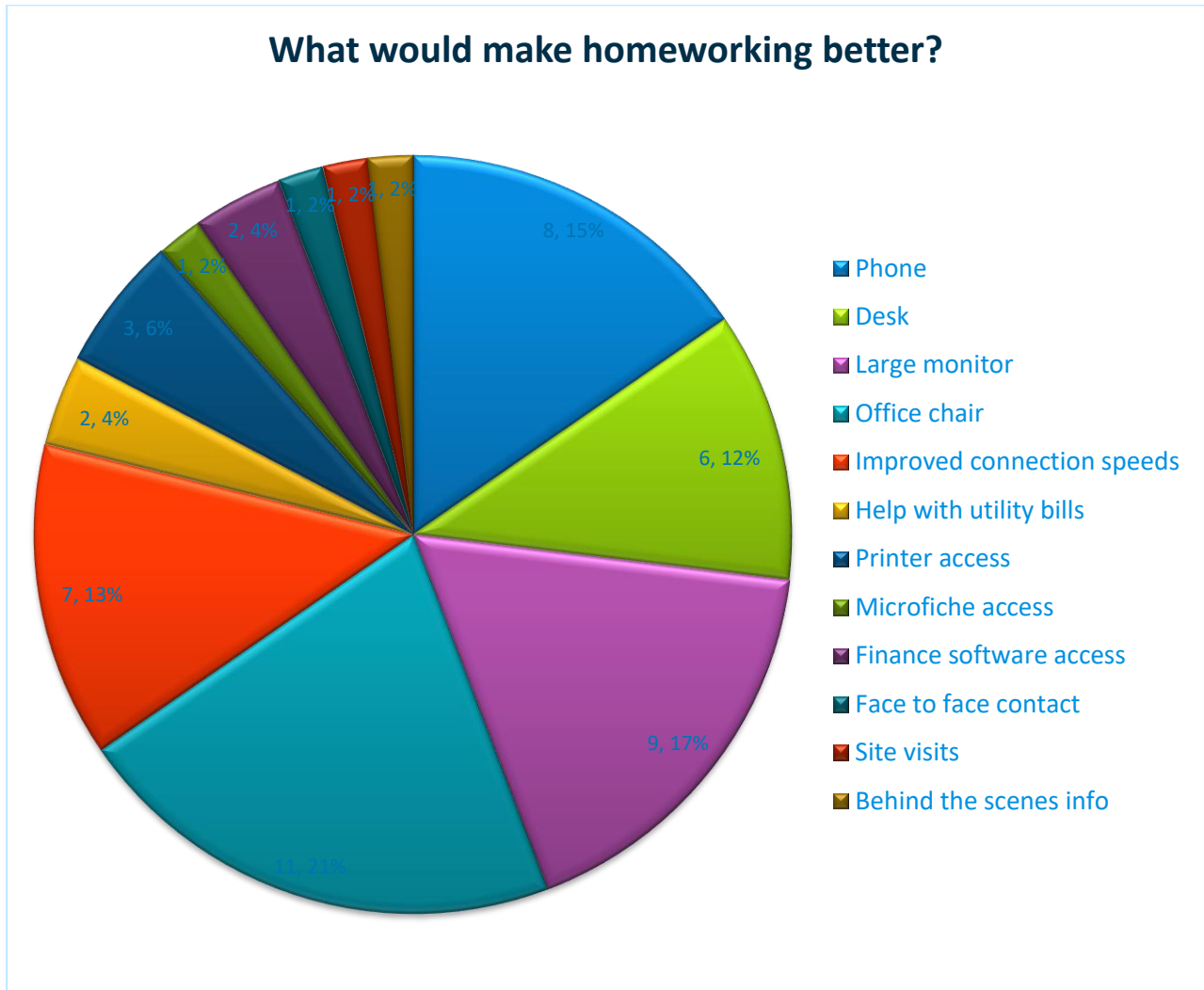
## 12. Do you feel that you have been supported by your line manager whilst working from home?



### Conclusions based on comments made

- All staff have reported great support and regular contact from their line managers

### 13. Is there anything you feel you need to make your current home working arrangements better for either you and/or the Service?

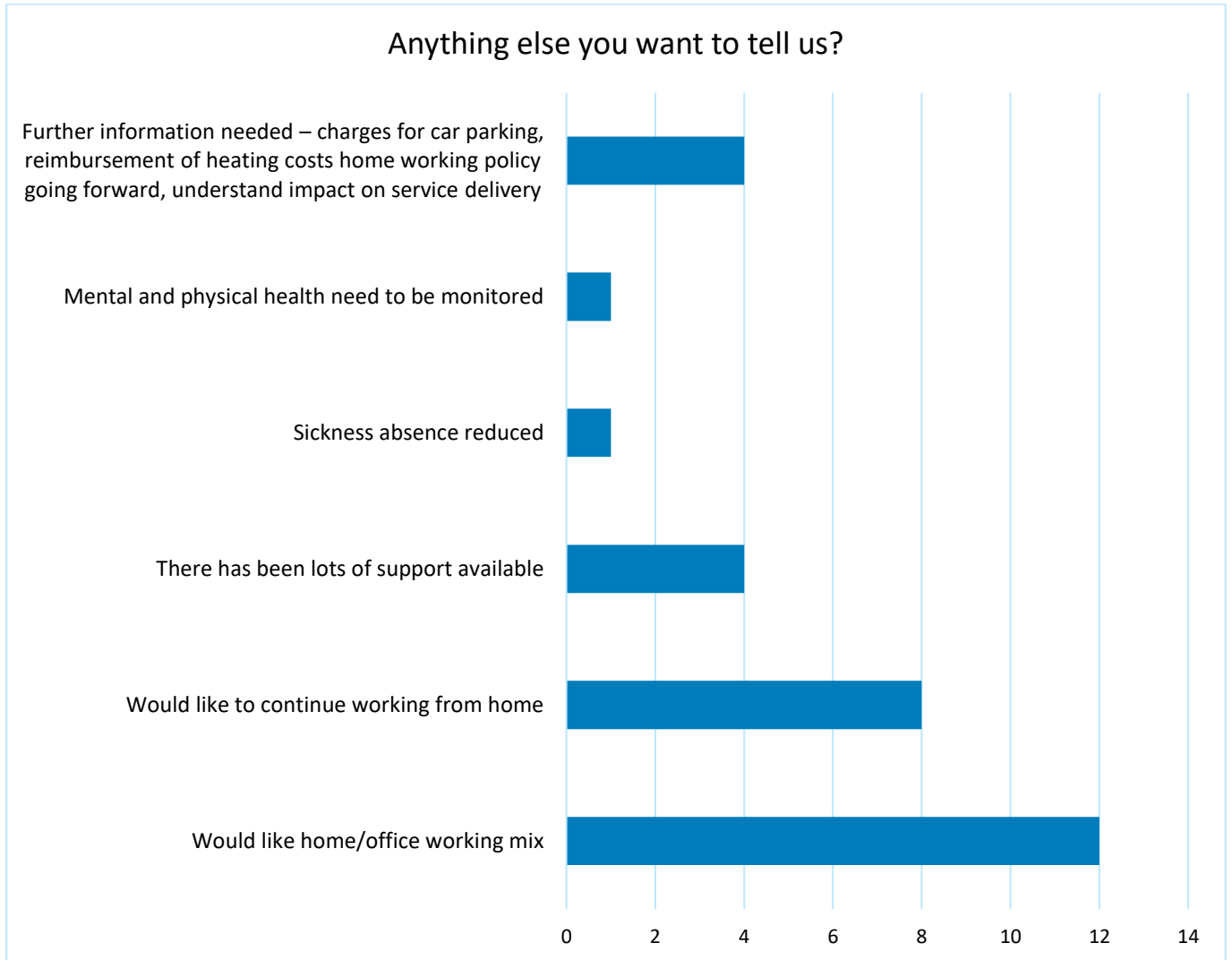


**Conclusions based on comments made**

- Most of the items listed relate to long term home working and creation of more permanent workstations
- Planning site visits will be able to be made when Government restrictions are removed
- Office phones have been restricted and will need to be rolled out to all officers if access to the office remains restricted for much longer

- Some information is still held in hard copy only and access to this will be limited to being within the office unless resources can be found to hold the information differently.

## 14. Is there anything else you would like to tell us as part of this survey?



## 15. Broad conclusions

- Staff generally happy working from home
- Work performance and productivity largely unaffected
- Some office functions are still required to support service delivery
- The need for teams to meet physically from time to time
- Staff feel supported
- Willingness to come back to the office on a shared work/home basis
- Technology generally acceptable but room for improvement particularly response times
- Working from home has provided better work life balance and financial savings
- Customers generally satisfied with standard of service provided
- Flexible working culture appears to be well embedded
- Longer term working from home will require proper risk assessment in terms of work stations
- Service therefore continuing to function effectively for the time being
- Implications of staff working from home post COVID-19 is unlikely to have any significant effects on the Service subject to the above general considerations.

## 16. A copy of the Questionnaire sent to staff

Is attached below

# COVID-19 Staff Survey – Planning Services

June 2020

We are in an unusual time for our Service, having to respond to the challenges of COVID-19. However like all good services that are customer focused, we need to understand the impact of our new ways of working on our service delivery, and also on you as a member of staff, helping us to deliver that service, particularly as there is a large expectation on us in contributing to the economic recovery of the Borough post COVID-19.

Please complete this form as comprehensively as possible so we can gain an insight into how things are going and to provide us with an opportunity to tailor our services going forward for the benefit of our customers, the Council and you as an employee.

Your name:

1 Are you happy working from home? Yes/No\*

If no, please tell us why:

2 What do you feel has worked best for you working from home?

3 What has been more challenging for you working from home?

4 Have you been able to carry out all your duties from home? Yes/No\*

If no, please say what you haven't be able to do and why.

5 Do you think your productivity has increased/reduced since being out of the office? Please answer with regard to :

- Volume of work? Yes\*/No/Stayed the same

if yes, please tell us why

- Quality of work? Yes\*/No/Stayed the same

if yes, please tell us why

- Performance against targets? Yes\*/No/Stayed the same

If yes, please tell us why

6 Have there been any specific advantages to you from working from home? Y/N

If yes, please tell us why

7 What do you miss about working in the office?

8 Do you have any contact with customers? Y/N

If yes, by what means do you contact them? Eg email, phone (we are aware that some staff have donated their phones to front line services), skype, on site

How effective are those means of communication and what feedback have you received?

9 Have you been in regular contact with your team whilst you have been working from home?  
Yes/No\*

If no, please tell us why not

If yes, have you found this helpful?

10 Do you feel that you have been supported by your line manager whilst working from home?  
Yes/No\*

If no, how could we improve this?

11 Is there anything you feel you need to make your current home working arrangements better for either you and/or the Service?

12 Is there anything else you would like to tell us as part of this survey?

Please email completed forms to Debbie Robinson