

**ASSOCIATION OF SCOTTISH COMMUNITY COUNCILS (ASCC)**  
**STAKEHOLDER SURVEY**  
**ANALYSIS DOCUMENT**

**Cover Note**

There are a number of caveats to consider when examining this report:

- Due to time restraints, the analysis has not completely addressed the question of who holds what views. In some cases, results from current ASCC members have been examined in comparison with overall respondents, but this is only in certain cases and has not been broadly achieved. The responses received cover the full spectrum of available options and it is difficult to identify a particular pattern to responses. This implies that it would be necessary to know the type of respondent (i.e. current ASCC members, members of the public etc) to fully understand what the results mean and this would need further analysis.
  
- The range of views shown could have been affected by the administration of the survey as it was necessary to use 'snowball' sampling i.e. where one respondent provides the contact for another. This means that it could have gone to anyone and that participants could have entered multiple responses. In a stakeholder survey there would, ideally, be a pre-identified list of respondents to whom the survey would have been administered. Preferably this would have been drawn up by the ASCC in conjunction with the Scottish Government (SG). This would have allowed identification of exactly who was included/excluded for the analysis, whilst keeping the anonymity for respondents during the writing up. It is recognised however that this is a survey being undertaken for Scottish Government purposes and it was felt that responses/views may be restricted if the ASCC drew up a pre-identified list of respondents. It is possible in this survey there may be a few respondents representing particular interests, which is why there is some considerable polarisation of opinions. This was unavoidable as the approach in this case was necessary, but it should be acknowledged and may explain the range of responses that have been achieved.

- The analysis has been done at a first reading. It has not checked for statistical significance of the data – i.e. whether responses are likely to have happened by chance. This would have improved the quality of the analysis and demonstrated the statistical reliability of the evidence.
- The survey questions were designed by the SG and, while the ASCC were aware they were happening and agreed to the content of this survey, we may not have captured specific areas in which work had been carried out in recent years. It could be that the ASCC may have focused on a particular area of their business which has not been adequately portrayed in the questions adopted. We have however given equal weight to each of the business objectives of the ASCC.

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**Executive Summary**

**Background**

The Association of Scottish Community Councils (ASCC) is the national representative body for Community Councils (CC). It was set up in 1993, enabling any established and formally recognised CC to join. Following a review of CCs in Scotland, undertaken in 2005, it was recommended that the Scottish Government review the role of the ASCC. This recommendation led to the Scottish Government undertaking the survey of the stakeholders of the ASCC.

**Aims**

The survey was designed to determine the following issues:

- Levels of and reasons for membership of the ASCC;
- Views on how the ASCC works with and involves its members and stakeholders; and
- Priorities for the future direction of the ASCC.

This report also considered the overall aims of the organisation and whether the ASCC were achieving these in their day to day practices. These aims were, to:

- Encourage and support all CCs throughout Scotland;
- Encourage and promote good practice;
- Establish a working relationship in order to liaise with appropriate public bodies, representative bodies, and industrial, commercial and voluntary organisations which have an impact on communities;
- Provide support for CCs by offering training and advice where appropriate;
- Encourage the growth and development of CCs and where they do not exist enlighten communities to the potential of establishing CCs;
- Encourage all actions which will enhance and protect the environment as well as promoting sustainable development of communities
- Be proactive in encouraging Scottish communities to take an active part in promoting the quality of life in their local areas.

The findings of this survey will also help to inform the Scottish Government's funding relationship with the ASCC.

### **Methodology and Response**

The survey was conducted in two parts; an electronic survey accessible online via [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/localgovernment/CommunityCouncils/ASCCStakeSurvey](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/localgovernment/CommunityCouncils/ASCCStakeSurvey) and also a paper version. The link for the online survey was sent by the Scottish Government to all 32 local authority Community Council Liaison Officers (CCLOs) who were asked to disseminate it to all CCs in their local authority area as well as interested stakeholders. They were also asked to send a paper copy to those CCs who did not have electronic access. A comprehensive list of around 430 stakeholders was also compiled by the policy team, based on information of potential interested parties provided by the ASCC. Again the survey was issued electronically where possible, but where no e-mail address was available a paper copy was provided. These stakeholders included local authority Political Leaders, Chief Executives and MSPs. Anonymity for all respondents was agreed in consultation with the ASCC with regard to writing up.

The survey was completed by a total of 334 respondents. These respondents were from a wide geographical spread of Scotland, with a significant proportion currently members of the ASCC. In addition, most members had been with the organisation for 5 years or more providing a number of years of experience of the ASCC on which to base their responses.

### **Findings**

Questions about the ASCC can be grouped around 5 main themes: communication, engagement, membership, meeting the day-to-day aims and objectives and whether respondents would be advocates of the ASCC. The main findings from the survey were as follows.

#### **Communication with the ASCC**

- Only 57.9% of the respondents had been in contact with the ASCC in the last 12 months. This was a low percentage given that 84.2% of all respondents were members of a CC.
- The majority of this contact (80.4%) came from mailing/newsletters. Interestingly, 43.1% of respondents were not aware that the ASCC had a website.

- Of those who had received communication, frequency tended to be every 2-6 months. When asked to give their opinion on the frequency, respondents reported that communication and contact was inadequate.
- In terms of quality of communication (i.e. letting people know what's going on and keeping them updated on relevant issues), respondents' views were mixed. Only 29% of all respondents agreed that the ASCC was good at letting them know what is going on, and 31% agreed that the ASCC provides accurate and reliable information.

### **Engagement**

- When asked to consider the ASCC's engagement with their stakeholders (i.e. seeking members' views; listening to them, understanding them and representing their interests), responses were generally more negative than positive.
- Respondents tended to be more negative in their assessment of the ASCC's ability to engage members' views. On understanding the needs of the CC, the majority of respondents felt they did not, with 37.5% returning a negative response as opposed to just 19.7% who were more positive
- Despite this general criticism on understanding and listening to their members, the ASCC did receive positive feedback. On their ability to represent the views of members fairly, 33.5% returned a positive response, contrasted with just 21.7% who were negative in their opinions.

### **Membership**

- Respondents were asked to consider whether they felt the current membership fee of £15 was good value. Analysis shows that respondents believed it was (33%) compared with 18.8% who responded negatively. However, 28.5% recorded a don't know response, and 19.1% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- When current members were asked to identify the single most important reason for joining the ASCC, insurance cover was considered the single most important reason (20.2%). Other popular choices included advice and support, 15.3%, and strength through collective action, 12.3%.
- Current ASCC members were also asked whether or not their councils would renew membership in the future. Despite often negative views on engagement and communication, the majority responded positively, with 34.2% answering 'definitely' as opposed to 0% for definitely not. This suggests that despite concerns, the majority of ASCC members are still interested in staying connected to the organisation.
- CCs that had previously left the ASCC were asked to provide a reason. Responses

varied with several commenting on the lack of benefits to joining such an organisation. Additionally respondents commented on the lack of correspondence and contact they had received when they were members.

- CCs that were not members of the ASCC were less inclined to consider joining the ASCC in the future.

### **Day to day role**

- On the 7 aims of the ASCC, a significant proportion of responses, at or above a quarter in each case, felt they were unable to assess the performance of the ASCC against these aims.
- Current members of the ASCC were consistent in their opinion that the ASCC's performance in achieving its aims is average.
- The two aims the ASCC performed best at were: encouraging and promoting good practice (52.5% felt they were achieving this aim to some degree) and also encouraging and supporting all CCs throughout Scotland (48% believed they were performing 'very well', 'well' or 'average' at this aim).
- Despite the overall consensus that the ASCC were 'average', a high proportion also felt the ASCC were performing poorly in achieving their aims. Over a third (31.8%) felt they were either poor or very poor at providing support for CCs by offering training and advice where appropriate. In addition, 12.1% believed they were 'very poor' at encouraging the growth and development of CCs and, where they do not exist, enlightening communities to the potential of establishing CCs, in comparison with just 4.6% who believed they did this 'very well'.

### **Advocacy**

- Opinions on whether respondents would be advocates of the ASCC were also mixed. When all respondents were asked to what extent they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the ASCC, the majority (34.1%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the organisation, whilst 17% responded with a don't know. The same proportion of respondents held positive and negative views (26.3%), but the strength of satisfaction is important to discern where depth of feeling lay. A total of 12.5% were very dissatisfied with the ASCC overall, compared with 3.9% who were very satisfied.
- This strength of opinion is best identified in the question about whether respondents would speak highly of the ASSC if questioned. Respondents were more inclined to disagree with the statement, with 31.5% providing a negative response when

compared with just 20.5% returning a positive opinion. Equally, 15.1% strongly disagreed as opposed to just 6.3% who strongly agreed.

- Going further than speaking highly of the ASCC, respondents were asked whether they would recommend the ASCC to others. Despite often being negative, the majority of current members would recommend the ASCC, by a significant percentage (40.2% would recommend membership compared to just 23.6% who would not). This may suggest that what the ASCC does well cannot be replaced by anybody else and, despite negative experiences, membership of the organisation is worthwhile.

### **Recommendations for Improvement**

- Respondents were asked to suggest up to three ways in which the ASCC could improve the way it works. Responses to the question were varied but several themes were apparent. Primarily, people believed that the ASCC needed to learn to communicate better with the various organisations with whom they interact. Responses also called for better engagement, i.e. listening to members and involving them and also suggestions that the organisation needs to promote itself and its services better, including improvement of its website.
- Other responses included the broadening of their reach and taking smaller locations into consideration.

### **Conclusions**

The survey demonstrates that, according to ASCC stakeholders, the organisation has some room for improvement. In particular, it fails to deliver on its main functions and members feel the ASCC needs to improve considerably in terms of its stakeholder engagement, listening to their needs and understanding them. While respondents felt the ASCC generally represents them well, it is clear that membership appears mainly to offer insurance protection. Other services that members feel they should be entitled to are not being delivered as stakeholders would like. Nonetheless, the £15 fee was considered good value for money, although this may reflect the service that members get rather than the potential service they should receive.

The ASCC has a number of areas for improvement, but communication with members and promotion of its full range of services are a key starting point.

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ANALYSIS DOCUMENT**

**1. Background**

1.1 The Association of Scottish Community Councils (ASCC) is the national representative body for Community Councils (CC). It was set up in 1993, enabling any established and formally recognised CC to join. As an organisation the ASCC aims to:

- Encourage and support all CCs throughout Scotland;
- Encourage and promote good practice;
- Establish a working relationship in order to liaise with appropriate public bodies, representative bodies, and industrial, commercial and voluntary organisations which have an impact on communities;
- Provide support for CCs by offering training and advice where appropriate;
- Encourage the growth and development of CCs and where they do not exist enlighten communities to the potential of establishing CCs;
- Encourage all actions which will enhance and protect the environment as well as promoting sustainable development of communities
- Be proactive in encouraging Scottish communities to take an active part in promoting the quality of life in their local areas.

1.2 Following a review of CCs in Scotland, undertaken in 2005, it was recommended that the Scottish Government review the role of the ASCC. This recommendation led to the Scottish Government undertaking the survey of the stakeholders of the ASCC to explore the following issues:

- Levels of and reasons for membership of the ASCC;
- Views on how the ASCC works with and involves its members and stakeholders; and
- Priorities for the future direction of the ASCC.

The findings of this survey will also help to inform the Scottish Government's funding relationship with the ASCC.

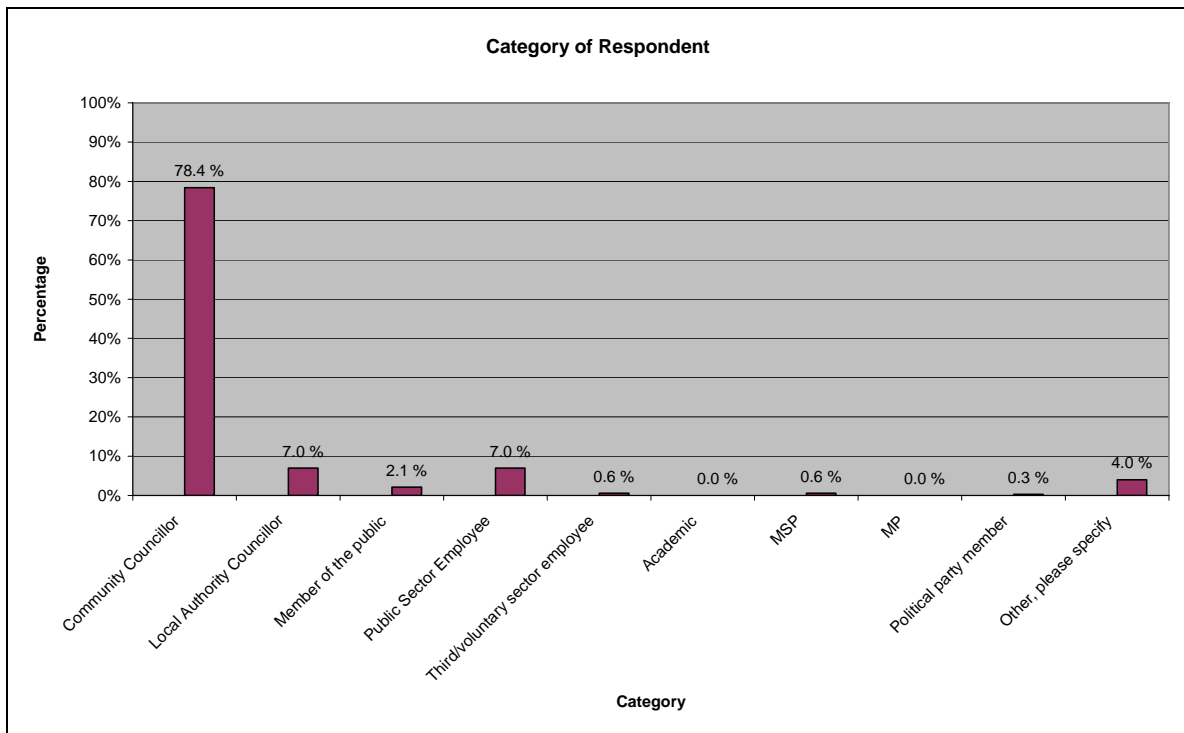
1.3 The survey was conducted in two parts; an electronic survey accessible online via [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/localgovernment/CommunityCouncils/ASCCStakeSurvey](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/localgovernment/CommunityCouncils/ASCCStakeSurvey) and also a paper version. The link for the online survey was sent by The Scottish Government to all 32 local authority Community Council Liaison Officers (CCLOs) who were asked to disseminate it to all CCs in their local authority area as well as interested stakeholders. They were also asked to send a paper copy to those CCs who did not have electronic access. A comprehensive list of around 430 stakeholders was also compiled by the policy team based on information of potential interested parties provided by the ASCC. Again the survey was issued electronically where possible, but where no e-mail address was available a paper copy was provided. These stakeholders included local authority Political Leaders, Chief Executives and MSPs. Anonymity for all respondents was agreed in consultation with the ASCC with regard to the writing of the report.

1.4 The survey was completed by a total of 334 respondents and the following report provides a brief analysis of the survey, highlighting key findings for consideration.

## **2. Respondents**

2.1 Section 1 of the survey asked respondents to clarify how they would categorise themselves.

Graph 1



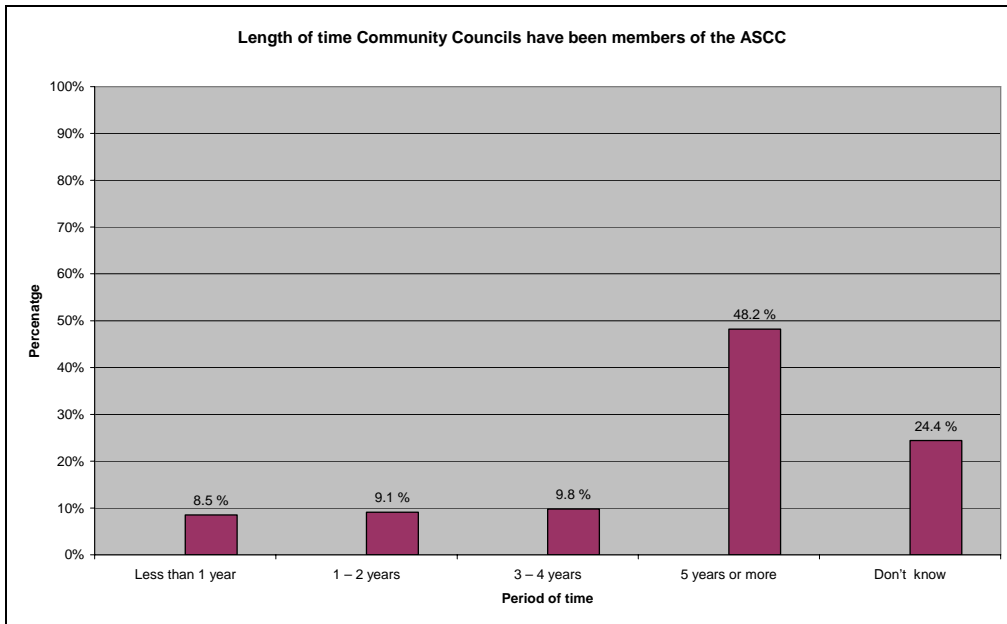
N = 329

Only 329 respondents completed this question, suggesting that 5 of the respondents felt unable to categorise themselves. Of those who did respond, over three quarters (78.4%) classified themselves as Community Councillors with the remaining respondents predominantly made up of Local Authority Councillors (7%), Public Sector employees (7%) and members of the public (2.1%). Just under half were completing the survey on behalf of their CCs, with the remainder responding either as an individual or on behalf of another organisation.

2.2 In terms of national coverage, the respondents came from across Scotland, except Dumfries and Galloway. Aberdeenshire had the largest number of respondents, followed by Glasgow City and the City of Edinburgh. A fairly large number were also from Fife, Moray and the Scottish Borders.

2.3 Of the respondents that were Community Councillors, 60% were current members of the ASCC. As graph 2 shows, 48.2% had been members of the ASCC for 5 years or more.

Graph 2



N = 164

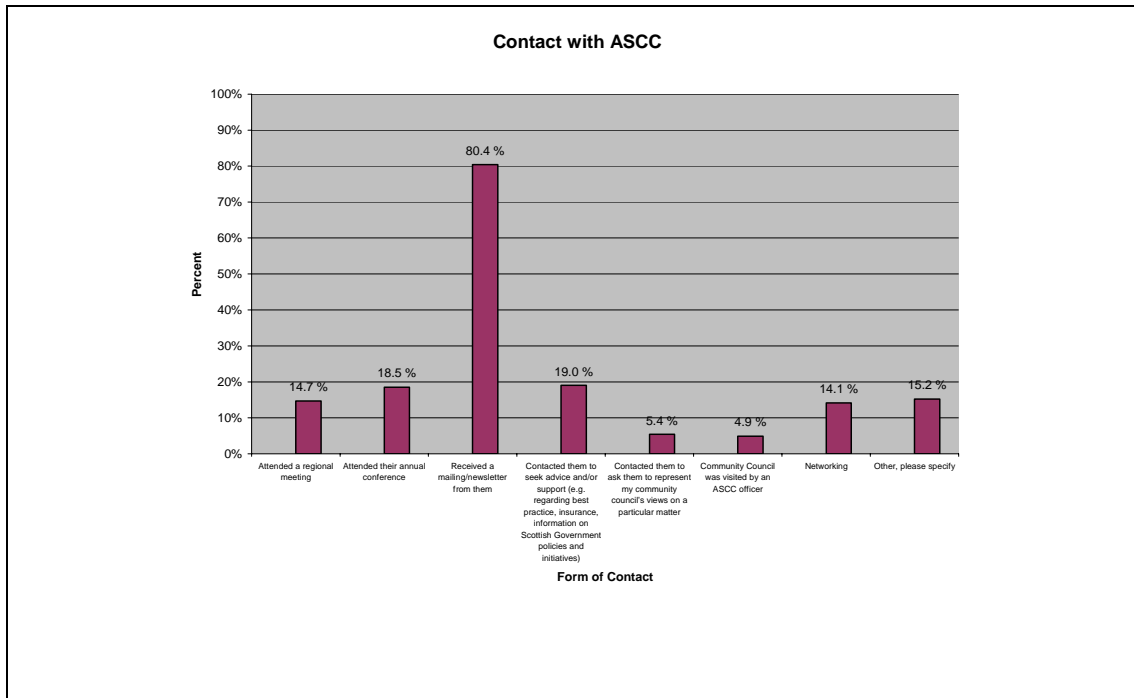
### **Summary**

2.4 The survey was completed by a total of 334 respondents. These respondents were from a wide geographical spread of Scotland, with a significant proportion currently members of the ASCC. In addition, most members had been with the organisation for 5 years or more providing a number of years of experience of the ASCC on which to base their responses.

### **3. Communication with the ASCC**

3.1 The respondents were asked whether they had any contact with the ASCC in the last 12 months; only 57.9% of the respondents confirmed they had been in contact with the organisation. This is a low percentage given that 84.2% of all respondents were members of a CC. Graph 3 shows that the majority of this contact was not face-to-face but rather through mailing or a newsletter.

**Graph 3**



N = 184

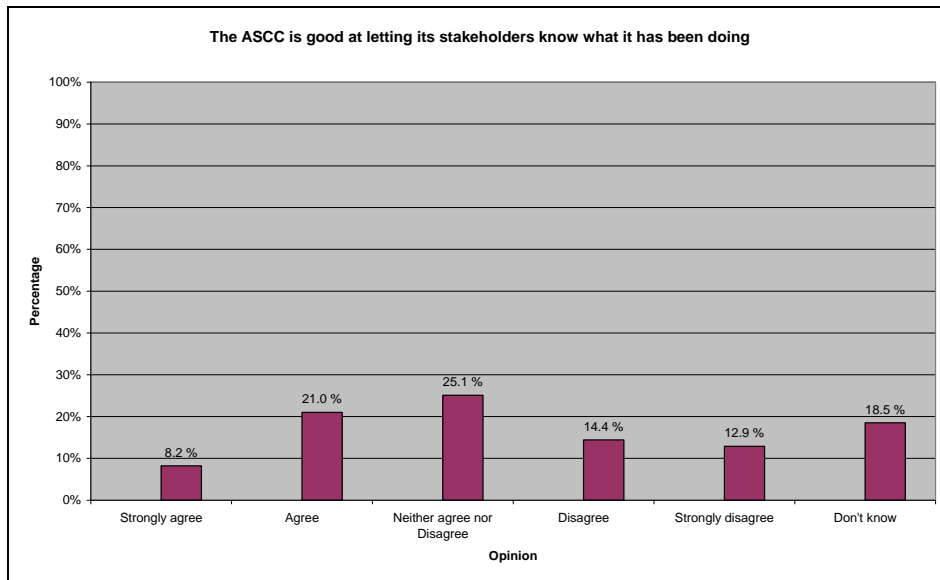
Where there had been more personal contact, it came through regional and annual meetings, networking and for advice or/and support, although the total combined equalled less than half the total for contact by mailing/newsletter. Other areas that were not included in the survey but respondents mentioned were email contact, CC seminars and Scottish Government Community Council Working Groups. Totals equal more than 100% in this question as respondents were able to tick multiple responses. In order to determine whether respondents had several different forms of contact with the ASCC, for example, receiving a newsletter and attending the annual conferences, further analysis would be required.

3.2 When considering how often respondents received communications from the organisation, the majority said between every 2-6 months (37.7%). The frequency was more likely to be longer. When asked to give their opinion on the frequency, the highest response came from those who believed that this was 'too little'. However, this was only marginally higher, 0.3%, than those who believed it was 'just the right amount'. Equally 24% responded with a don't know, suggesting that feeling towards the frequency of contact is mixed.

3.3 On questions about communication, graph 4 shows that views were also mixed in relation to the ASCC letting stakeholders know what they have been doing. A slightly larger proportion (29.2%) held positive views in comparison with the 27.3% that were negative.

However, whilst only 8.2% strongly agreed with this statement, a larger proportion (12.9%) were as strong in their negative convictions. Given that a quarter held a middle position, neither agreeing or disagreeing, and 18.5% don't know, it is clear that respondents hold very mixed views about the ASCC's role in letting stakeholders know what they are doing.

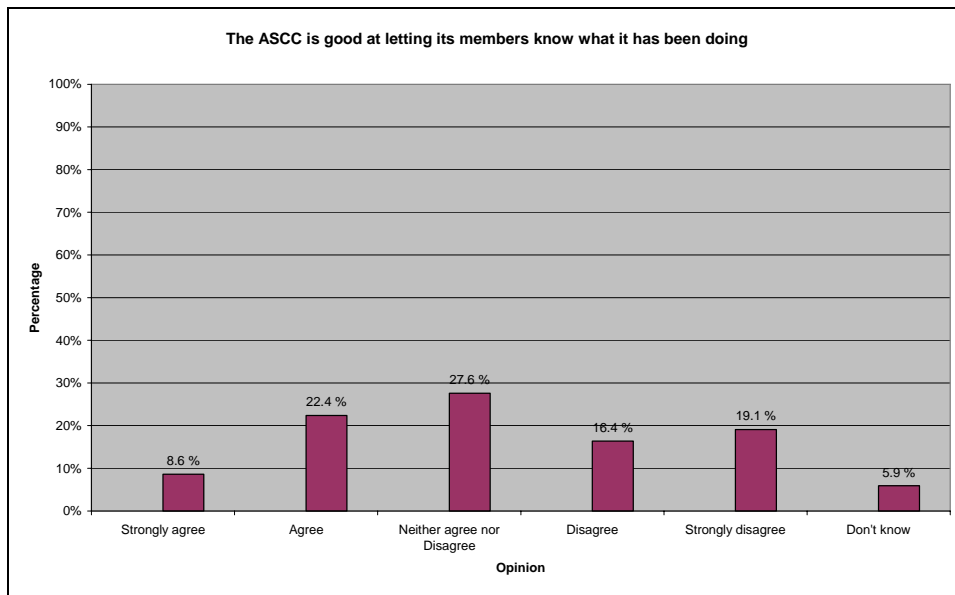
Graph 4



N = 319

3.4 These results are interesting when compared with a different question asked only of current ASCC members rather than all respondents. They were asked if they believed the organisation is good as letting them know what they have been doing (graph 5). Results show members are equally as mixed in their views, but hold stronger negative views than respondents as a whole. In this case, 35.5% were critical of the ASCC (compared with 27.3% of critics in graph 4). However, 31% felt the ASCC is good at letting them know what its doing (compared with 29% of all respondents). Views among members seem to be more polarised. This also comes out in the strongly agree/disagree categories. Among members, almost 1 in 5 strongly disagreed with the statement, while only 8.6% strongly agreed.

Graph 5

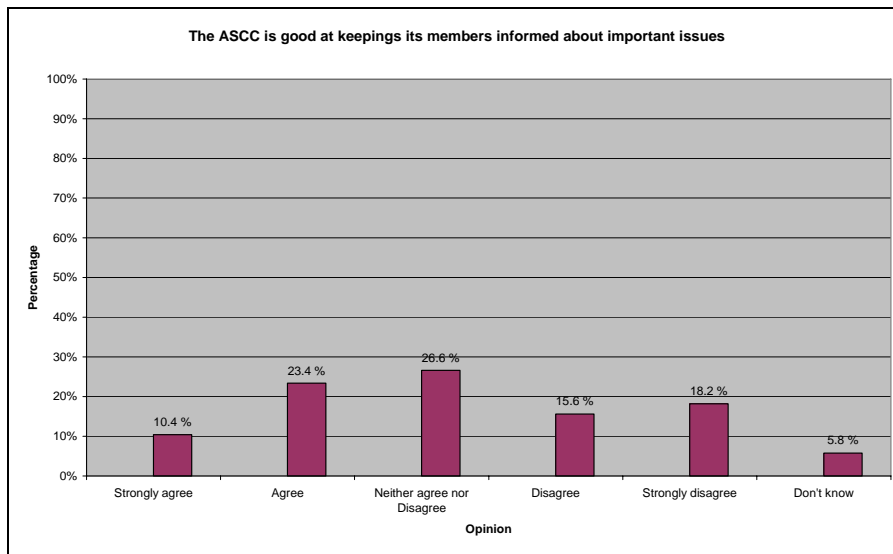


N = 152

If we consider responses by local authority areas, it is evident that different geographical locations have very different opinions on the ASCC's performance. For this analysis only areas with 10 or more respondents have been included. Of these respondents, in the City of Edinburgh, 58.3% believed the ASCC was not good at letting members know what they have been doing as compared to 36.4% for all local authority areas. Similarly in South Lanarkshire, 50% responded negatively and in Stirling this was 40%. However, in contrast, 58.3% of the respondents in Moray agreed or strongly agreed with the statement and in Renfrewshire this number was 50%. Please note the table for analysis by local authority breakdown is not shown and that this is the case throughout the report where analysis is broken down by local authority area.

3.5 Current ASCC members were also asked if they believed the ASCC was good at keeping its members informed on important issues. Again, the highest percentage belonged to the middling category of neither agree nor disagree. Whilst 23.4% were more inclined to agree than disagree, overall views on this issue were quite balanced: 33.8% were positive, compared with 33.8% negative. These results are shown in graph 6.

Graph 6

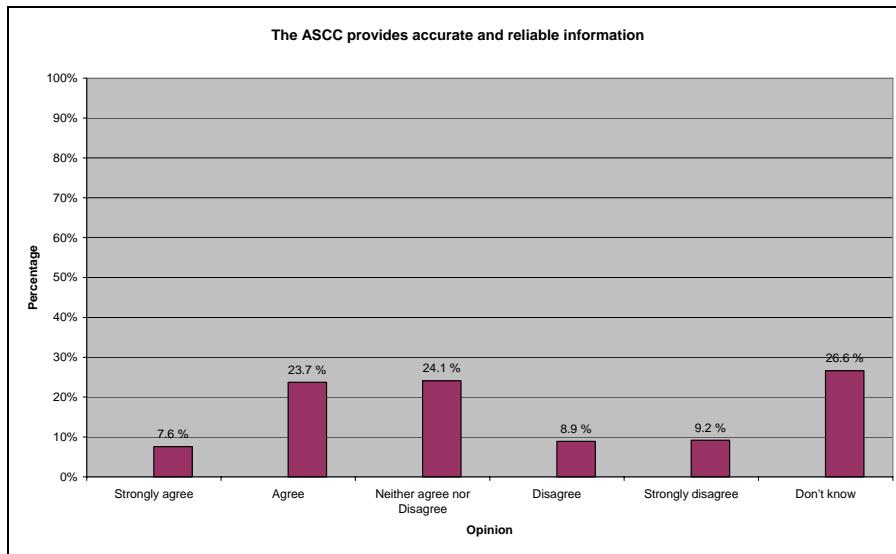


N = 154

Again, if we consider responses by local authority areas, it is clear that experiences and opinions vary from location to location. In the City of Edinburgh 53.9% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the ASCC was good at keeping its members informed on important issues as compared to 33.8% for all local authorities. Similarly, in South Lanarkshire, 50% responded negatively. The disagreement expressed on this point in Aberdeenshire (29.4%), however, was lower than when local authorities are considered as a whole. In contrast, 75% of respondents in Moray agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and in Renfrewshire this number was 50%.

3.6 When all respondents were asked to consider if they felt the ASCC provides accurate and reliable information a more positive opinion was apparent. Whilst over a quarter replied 'don't know' (26.6%), the remainder were more positive; 31.3% either agreed or strongly agreed in comparison to 18.1% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Again a significant proportion (24.1%) had mixed feelings and fell within the middle of the scale but, in general, opinions were more supportive of the ASCC on this issue as graph 7 shows.

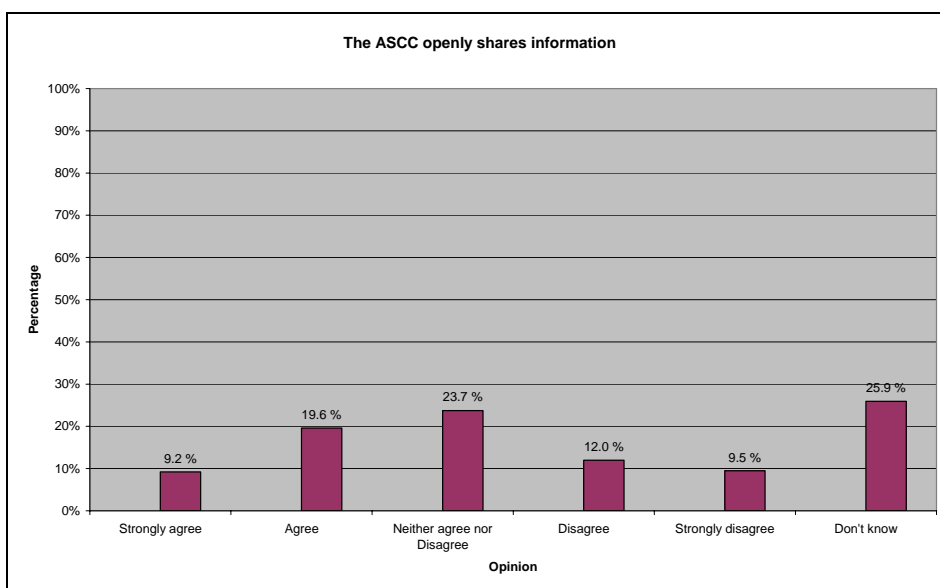
Graph 7



N = 316

3.7 This slightly more positive response is also true of the statement that the ASCC openly shares information. All respondents were asked this question and graph 8 shows that, again, over a quarter responded with don't know (25.9%), but of those that could answer 28.8% were positive and 21.5% negative. Whilst 23.7% could neither agree or disagree, 19.6% agreed as opposed to just 12% who disagreed.

Graph 8

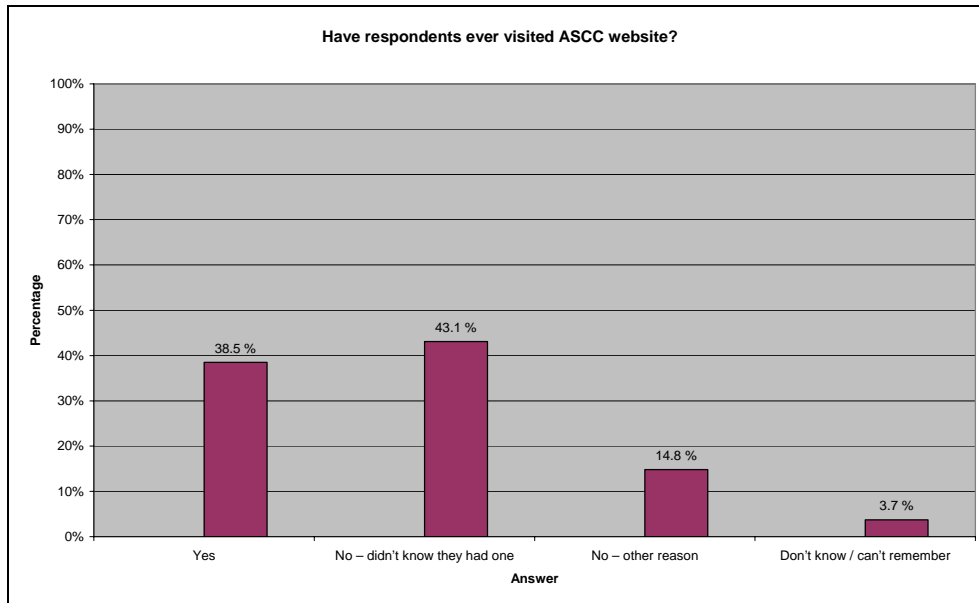


N = 316

A similar response was evident when we consider the opinions of current ASCC members only. Those of a positive opinion totalled 26.2%, in contrast to 22.7% who were negative. The largest percentage however, belonged to respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement (28.8%).

3.8 With regards to the ASCC's website, graph 9 shows that the majority were unaware the organisation had one.

Graph 9



N = 325

Of those that had visited the website, the largest response (39.3%) indicated that they had found it helpful.

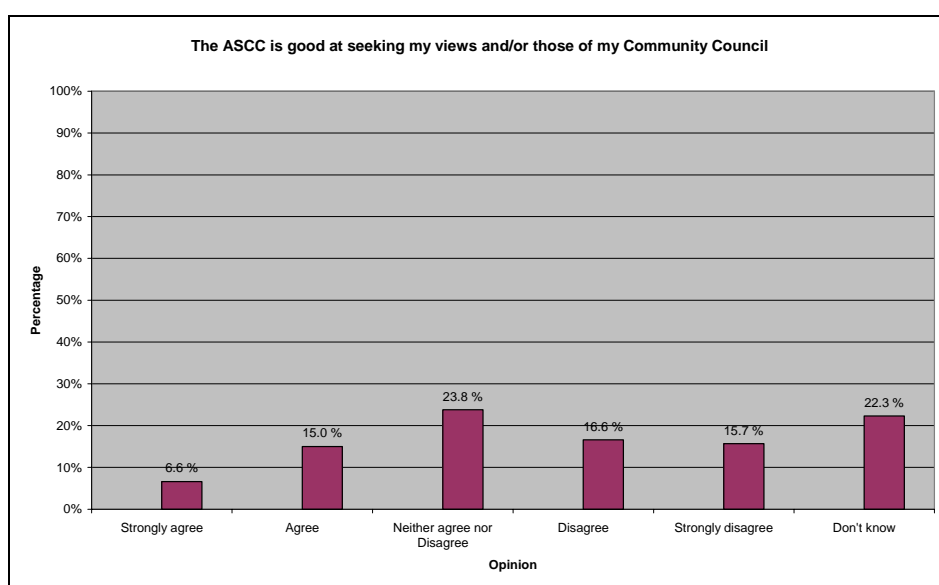
**Summary**

3.9 Overall, the numbers of those who actually had contact with the ASCC in the last 12 months were surprisingly low and current ASCC members clearly felt that the organisation was not good at keeping them updated on relevant issues or keeping them informed about what's going on. In terms of quality of information, however, the ASCC perform slightly better and stakeholders felt the group were generally good at providing reliable information and openly sharing this information, although again it must be emphasised that opinions were often very mixed.

## 4. Engagement

4.1 Respondents were asked to review specific statements associated with the ASCC's engagement, i.e. seeking members views, listening to them, understanding them and representing their views and interests, rating them on a scale of 1-5. When asked to consider whether the organisation was good at seeking views of the individual or of their CC, respondents generally neither agreed or disagreed with the statement (23.8 %) or did not know (22.3%), as graph 10 shows.

Graph 10



N = 319

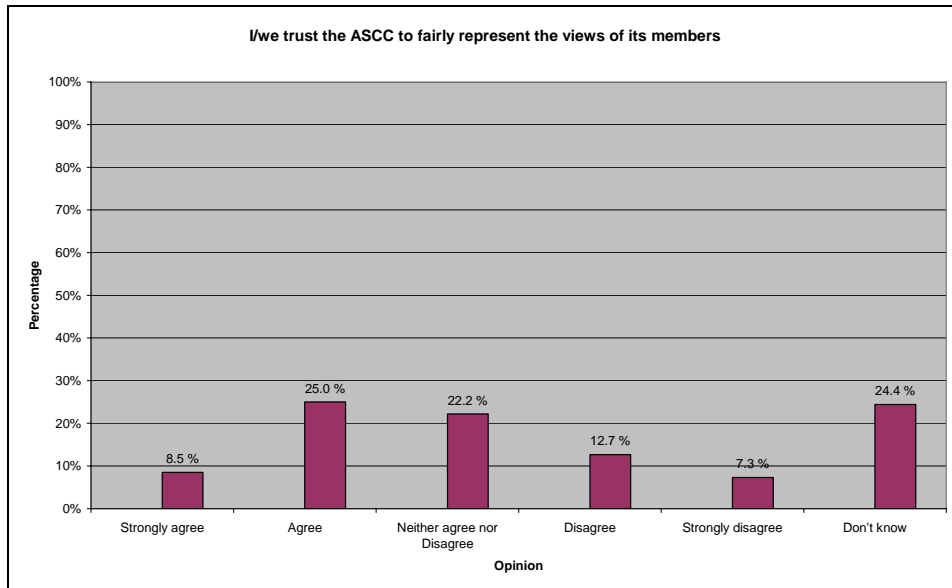
However, on closer inspection, more respondents felt they strongly disagreed or disagreed (a total of 32.3%) as opposed to strongly agreed or agreed (just 21.6%). This suggests a more negative view of the ASCC's ability to engage people.

When we consider responses by local authority areas, it is again apparent that opinions vary from one area to another. In particular, respondents from South Lanarkshire, South Ayrshire, the Orkney Islands and also Aberdeenshire predominantly disagreed or strongly disagreed that the ASCC were good at seeking people's views. By comparison, respondents in Moray, Perth and Kinross, and Renfrewshire held more positive opinions.

4.2 The ASCC received positive feedback on their ability to represent the views of members fairly. Although 22.2% had no clear opinion and 24.4% responded with don't know, a total of

33.5% had a positive view on their ability, contrasted with just 20% who were negative in their response, as the graph below shows.

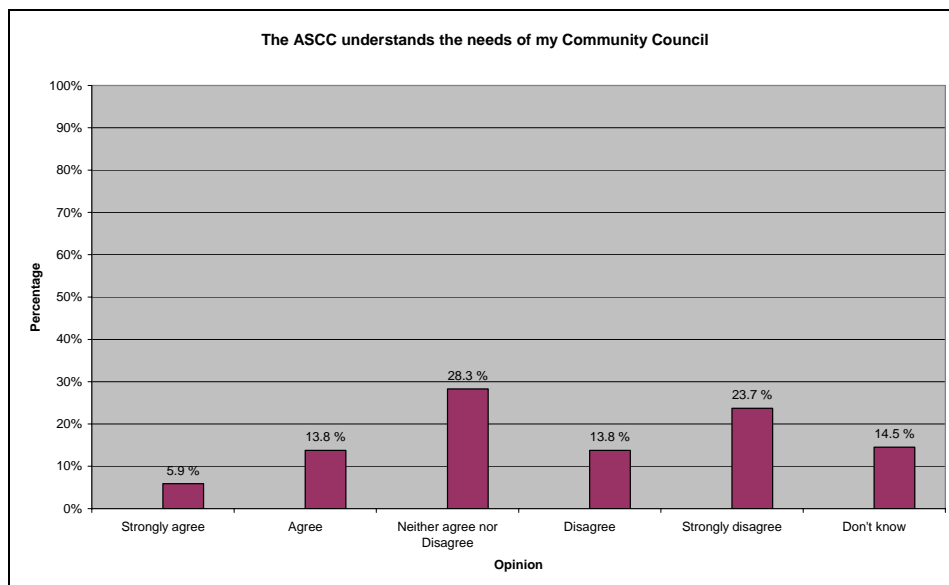
Graph 11



N = 316

4.3 This positivity however, is in contrast to the respondents who were current members of the ASCC. Asked whether they believed that the ASCC understands the needs of their CC, the majority felt they did not. Overall 37.5% did not agree with the statement as opposed to just 19.7% who agreed. In addition, 23.7% strongly disagreed with the statement in contrast to just 5.9% who strongly agreed, as graph 12 shows. This begs the question therefore, if the ASCC do not understand the needs of their CC, their ability to represent them in discussions with central government and other stakeholders would be thwarted, but why is this not revealed in this response? Analysis of graph 11 by members only would help to explain this more fully as the current picture is likely to be clouded by those who are not being represented by ASCC.

Graph 12



N = 152

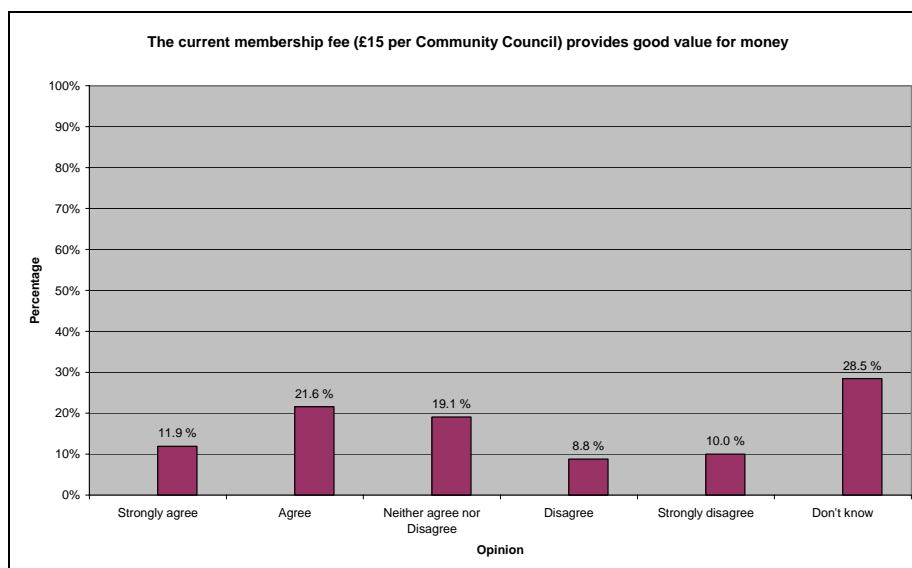
### **Summary**

4.4 On the issue of engagement, it is evident that current members of the ASCC in particular felt that the organisation was weak in its ability to engage sufficiently with CCs and stakeholders. This view was shared by all respondents in general, although they were less critical of the ASCC's ability to represent views fairly, which may be due to the question being asked of all respondents and not just members.

## **5. Membership**

5.1 This section (and the next) probe the question of membership more fully to identify which aspects of membership are more highly valued than others and where ASCC performs best in terms of its services to members. Firstly, membership fee was considered and all respondents were asked to consider the extent to which they felt the current membership fee of £15 was good value. Graph 13 shows that a small majority of respondents believed it was (33% compared with 18.8% who did not agree), although nearly half of respondents were either undecided (19.1%) or did not know (28.5%).

Graph 13

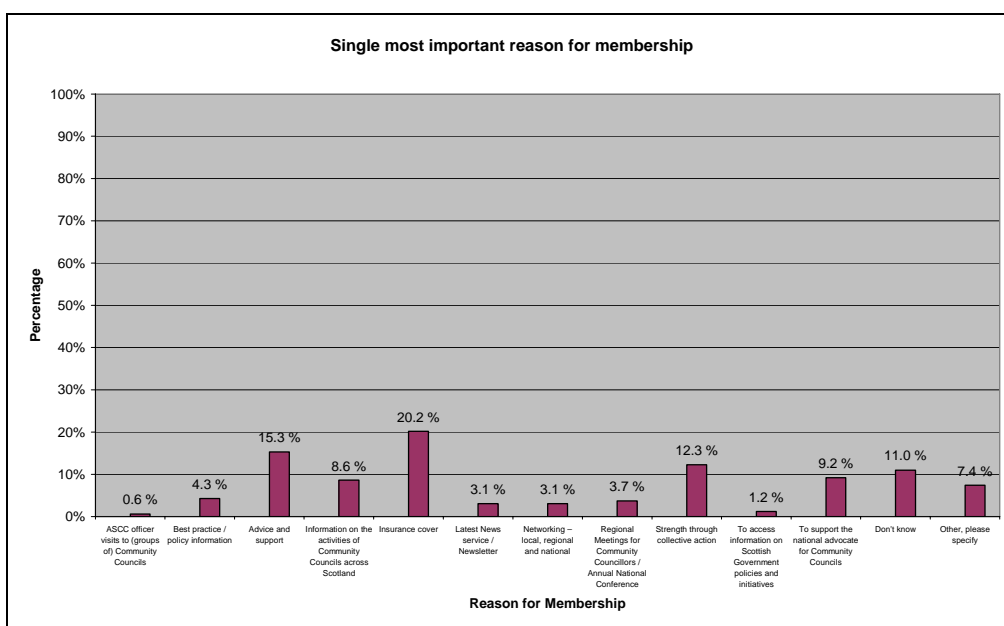


N = 319

A similar response, but by a larger percentage, is evident in the opinions of current ASCC members only. In total 47.6% believed the fee provided good value for money, compared with just 20.8% who had a negative view of the statement and 19.5% who neither agreed nor disagreed. Interestingly only 12.2% recorded a don't know response, significantly less than the 28.5% for all respondents. This suggests that current ASCC members were able to make a more realistic judgement as they had a clearer understanding of what is on offer for the membership fee.

5.2 Respondents were asked to consider the single most important reason for joining the ASCC. Only current members of the ASCC were asked this question and the highest response was for insurance cover, which received 20.2% of the responses. 'Advice and support' (15.3%) and 'strength through collective action' (12.3%) were also important to the largest percentages of respondents. The least important reason was for ASCC officer visit to groups of CCs with just 0.6% of the response (graph 14).

Graph 14

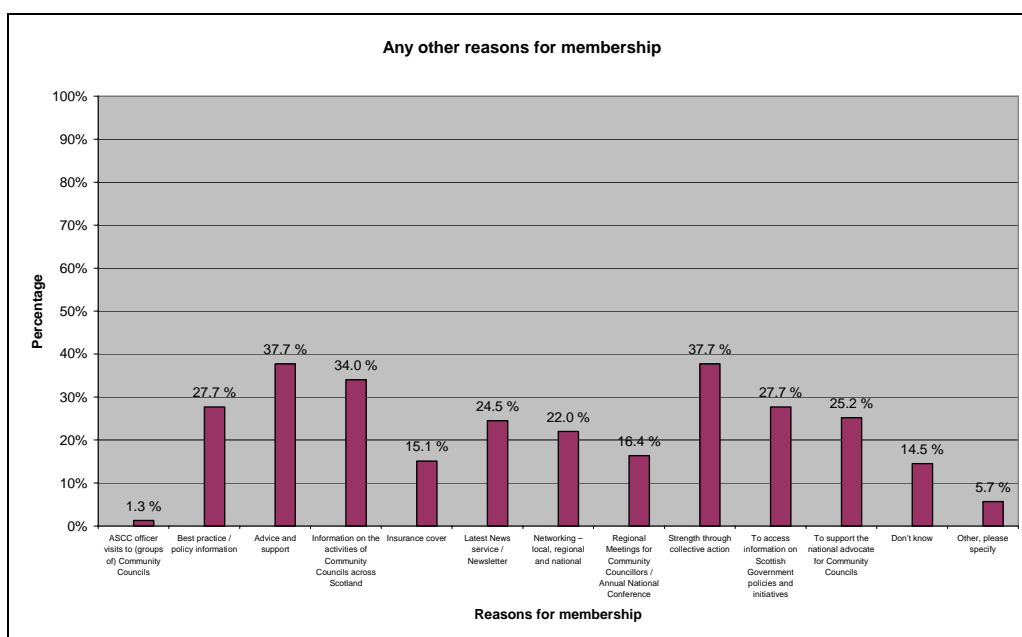


N = 163

‘Other’ reasons, as suggested by current ASCC members, included; organisation of membership by their Local Authority Council, their responsibility as founding members and also to raise the profile of CCs with central government.

5.3 Respondents were then asked to list any of the reasons they joined the ASCC, recording as many responses as they liked (graph 15). Popular reasons included offering advice and support, representation (i.e. strength through collective action), sharing best practice and, providing policy information and access to information on Scottish Government policy and initiatives. These responses help to identify the priorities for the ASCC according to its members. Insurance cover, advice and support, and providing a collective voice for its members are key priorities for members and areas which ASCC should focus in terms of serving its membership.

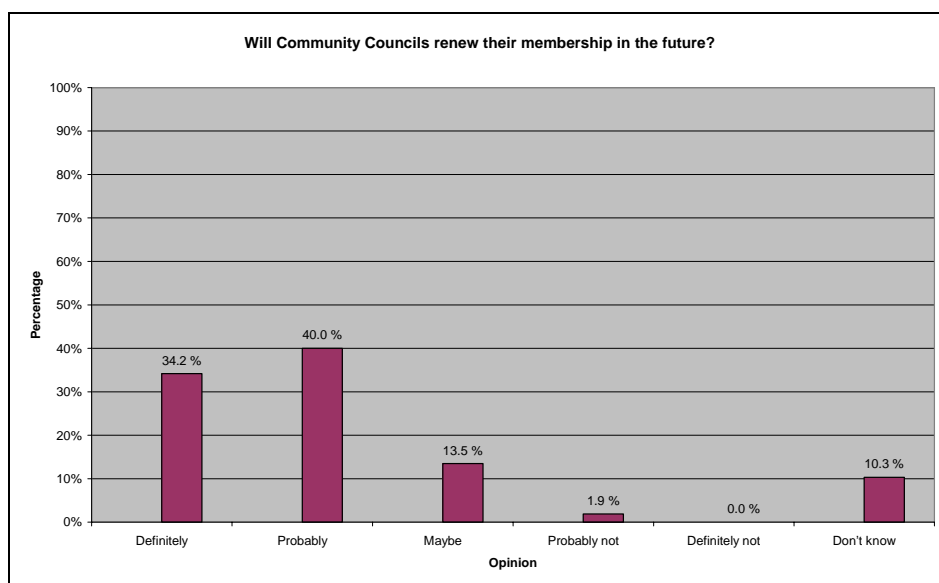
Graph 15



N = 159

5.4 Following on from this, current ASCC members were asked whether or not their CCs would renew membership in the future. Despite often negative views on engagement and communication, as exemplified previously within this report, the majority responded positively (34.2%), and 13.5% said 'maybe'. A significant minority (10.3%) said don't know, but nobody said definitely not. This suggests that, despite concerns ASCC members may have, they are still interested in staying connected to the organisation (graph 16).

Graph 16



N = 155

5.5 Among respondents, 29.3% had previously been a member but had since left the ASCC. These respondents were asked to provide a reason(s) for why they left. Responses varied with several commenting on the lack of benefits to joining such an organisation:

*“We left in 2002 as the CC at the time could see no benefit from membership or ways in which to participate. Its members could not afford the time or cost in attending meetings and there was a perception that our subscription was just funding a bureaucracy.”*

*“We did not see any benefit of having a membership with the ASCC. We received more benefits of being involved with the Federation of Community Councils. One of our committee members currently also sits on the Federation committee.”*

*“Felt no local benefit - possibly due to lack of info of ASCC activities.”*

Others also commented on the lack of correspondence and contact they had received:

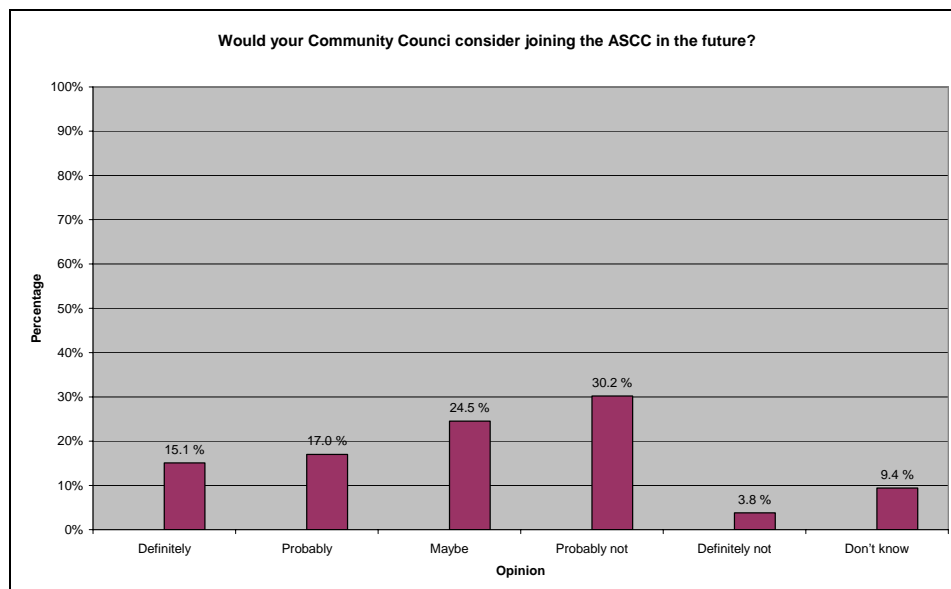
*“Quality of correspondence with ASCC was considered defamatory and no worthwhile feedback was ever received on what they were doing.”*

*“Tried to contact them, left messages constantly, no reply. Checked out their website after being told about it and the info on it was contrary to our local authority scheme.”*

This qualitative data supports earlier findings that the organisation does not engage sufficiently and does not communicate well with its members.

5.6 CCs that were not members of the ASCC also appeared less inclined to consider joining the ASCC in the future (graph 17). When asked whether they would consider joining the ASCC in the future, most respondents recorded a negative view, 34%, in contrast to 32.1% who said they definitely or probably would consider joining.

Graph 17



N = 53

5.7 Respondents were also asked to make any final comments. Responses often highlighted the mixed opinions that have been evident throughout the survey. Some were particularly positive whilst others very negative. Constructive criticism provides a useful insight into the organisation’s potential. One respondent, for example, suggested that the ASCC might consider widening its membership to take smaller locations into consideration:

*“We are a small community with a small community council, currently 5 members. I suspect that ASCC tends to concentrate its activities on the larger communities with larger more active councils”.*

In support of previous quantitative findings, some have suggested that the council must communicate and promote itself better if they are to achieve their objectives:

*“Don’t know if they have ever done anything to support or collaborate with our community council...did not know they existed.”*

*“I have been a community councillor for 8 years and in all that time recall reading 2 assoc. communications. It was not until reading this survey that I realised all that assoc. could have potentially done. I have never seen a representative here ... or been invited to see one [elsewhere]. I think it could be an excellent community asset if it were to do what it is set out as doing.”*

*“Let all community councils know that you exist, with info on what and who you are.”*

There is variation in the comments, with some highly dismissive of the organisation:

*“Very, very poor. Too right wing, filled with pompous self important fools.”*

Whilst others had more positive feedback:

*“Recently the ASCC has been increasing its activities which is evident in the appointment of a local area representative and the increase in mailings that I am receiving as secretary. More useful information is also being passed. More needs to be done to understand the issues for member Community Councils.”*

Some highlight factors in the ASCC’s poor leadership in the past which has limited its potential but, are hopeful for the future:

*“I think past performance of office bearers has been less than what it should have been and caused somewhat negative view amongst CCs however current office bearers and executive members seem to be more proactive and in tune with what needs to be done and are setting about to achieve it.”*

*“We understand that the organisation is in transition and needs to greatly improve on past performance.”*

## **Summary**

5.8 Members felt that the organisation was value for money, with the most important reason

for subscription being insurance cover. In addition support and advice, alongside strength through collective action, were considered important reasons. Despite being critical of the organisation, members were overwhelmingly likely to renew their membership. In contrast, those who were not members were not likely to join in the future.

## **6. Day to day role**

6.1 The survey also asked respondents to consider the extent to which the ASCC was meeting its overall aims, providing an assessment of the day to day role of the organisation. The table below provides the results from the survey.

**Table 1**

<b><u>Aims</u></b>	<b><u>Scale</u></b>					
	<b>Very well</b>	<b>Well</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very Poor</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
Encourage and support all CCS	5.8 %	19.5%	22.7%	19.5%	7.8%	24.7%
To encourage and promote best practice.	6.2%	20.2%	26.4%	14.7%	6.5%	26.1%
To establish a working relationship in order to liaise with appropriate public bodies representative bodies, and industrial and commercial and voluntary organisations which have an impact on communities.	5.2%	19.8%	19.2%	14.9%	9.4%	31.5%
To provide support for CCs by offering training and advice where appropriate.	4.6%	15.1%	21%	17.4%	14.4%	27.5%
To encourage the growth and development of CCs, and where they do not exist, enlightening communities to the potential of establishing CCs.	4.6%	11.7%	20.5%	15%	12.1%	36.2%
To encourages all actions which will enhance and protect the environment as well as promoting sustainable development of communities	4.6%	10.8%	21.2%	14.7%	9.5%	39.2%
To be proactive in encouraging Scottish Communities to take an active part in promoting the quality of life in their local areas.	6.9%	13.2%	21.1%	16.8%	12.2%	29.9%

6.2 It is worth noting that a significant proportion, at or above a quarter in each case, felt they were unable to assess the aims of the ASSC. This is especially the case in aims, 3, 5 and 6. It is not clear why they were unable to make the assessment: have they not seen the organisation working on these aims? Have they not had sufficient experience with the organisation to know whether they are delivering in these areas? This would need further investigation.

6.3 Current members of the ASSC were consistent in their opinion that the ASSC are average in achieving their aims. Table 1 shows that for all aims apart from aim 3, a verdict of average was either the highest percentage of all or the second highest percentage behind don't know.

6.4 The two aims the ASSC performed best at were: encouraging and promoting good practice (52.5% felt they were achieving this aim to some degree) and also encouraging and supporting all CCs throughout Scotland (48% believed they were performing 'very well', 'well' or 'average' at this aim).

6.5 Despite the overall consensus that the ASSC were 'average', a high proportion still felt the ASSC were performing poorly in achieving their aims. These negative views can be seen for aims 4 and 5 in particular. Over a third (31.8%) felt they were either 'poor' or 'very poor' at providing support for CCs by offering training and advice where appropriate. In addition, 12.1% believed they were 'very poor' at encouraging the growth and development of CCs and, where they do not exist, enlightening communities to the potential of establishing CCs, in comparison with just 4.6% who believed they did this 'very well'.

### **Summary**

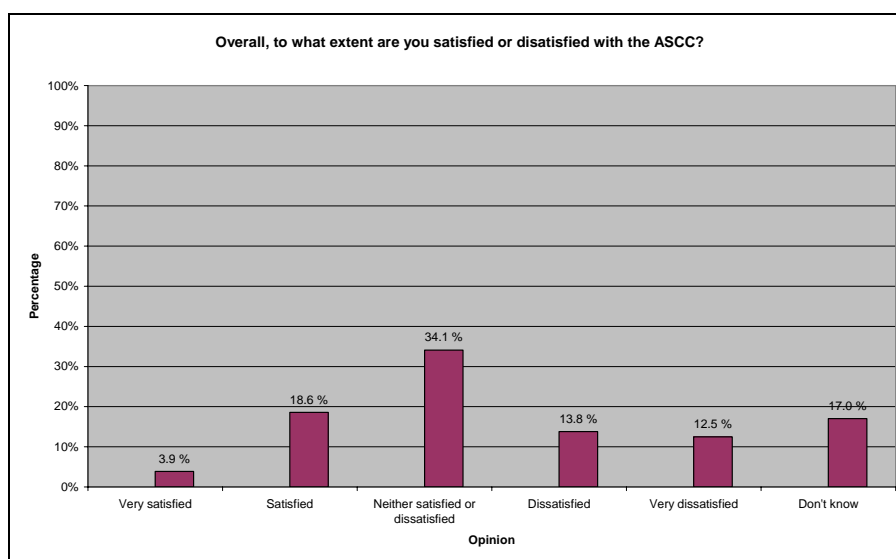
6.6 Therefore, whilst a considerable proportion of the respondents recorded don't know responses, at most, 26% felt they were doing well or very well at achieving their aims (aim 2: encouraging and promoting best practice). Consistently respondents felt the ASSC were average at achieving their aims, with a high proportion recording that the ASSC's performance was poor. Responses to this question are based on perceptions and experiences with the organisation and provide subjective measures on performance only. It could be that ASSC needs to work on changing perceptions of its achievements (i.e. through communicating its successes more vocally) as much as addressing meeting its aims.

## 7. Advocacy

7.1 In understanding stakeholders views of an organisation, it is important to question the extent to which respondents would advocate an organisation. Respondents were asked three key questions with regards to the advocacy of the group: overall level of satisfaction with the ASCC; whether they would speak highly of the ASCC; and whether they would recommend the organisation to others.

7.2 A mixed opinion is evident when respondents were asked to what extent they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the ASCC. The majority (34.1%) were neither satisfied or dissatisfied with the organisation, whilst 17% responded with a don't know. A slightly larger proportion (26.3%) were more negative than positive (22.5%), with 12.5% very dissatisfied and only 3.9% very satisfied (graph 18).

Graph 18



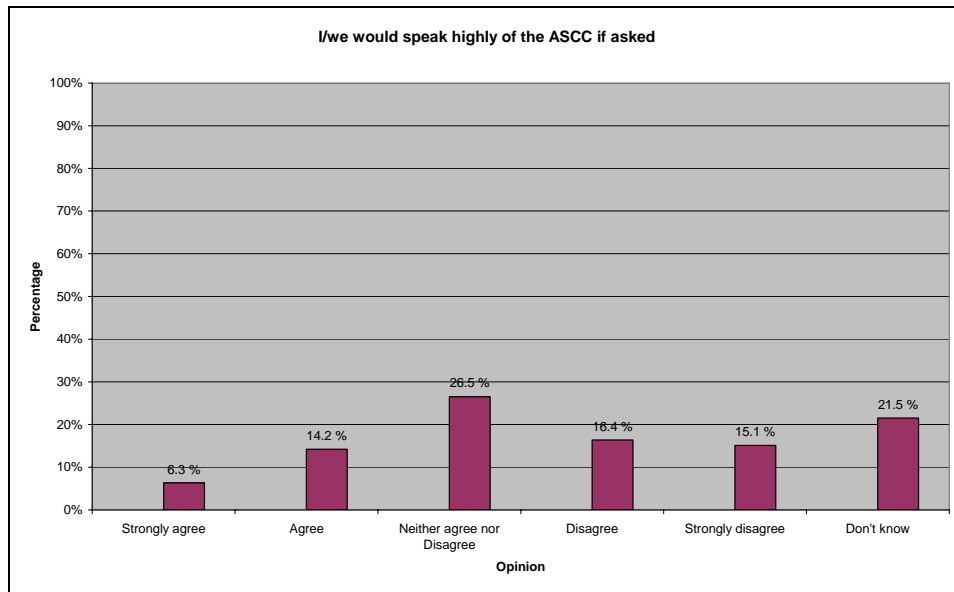
N = 311

A similar response is evident in the opinions of current ASCC members only. The majority (35.3%) were neither satisfied or dissatisfied, whilst 31.4% held a positive opinion in contrast to the 27% who held negative opinions.

7.3 All respondents were asked if they would speak highly of the ASCC if questioned. Over a quarter of the responses (26.5%) fell within the middle of the scale, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. In addition 21.5% responded with a don't know, suggesting

mixed feelings. However, of those that had an opinion, a more negative view is evident (graph 19).

Graph 19

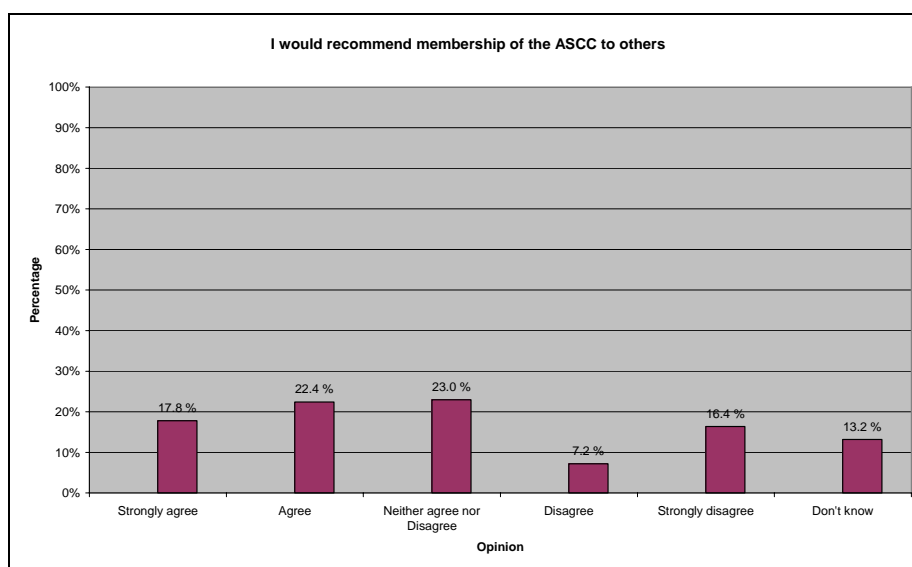


N = 317

Respondents were more inclined to disagree with the statement with 31.5% providing a negative response when compared to just 20.5% returning a positive opinion. Equally, 15.1% strongly disagreed as opposed to just 6.3% who strongly agreed.

7.4 However, a more positive response can be noted when only current ASCC members were asked if they would recommend the organisation to others. In contrast to the overall respondents' negative attitudes towards advocacy, the majority of current ASCC members would recommend the ASCC, by a significant percentage (40.2% were positive in their views on recommendation as opposed to just 23.6% who were negative).

Graph 20



N = 152

### **Summary**

7.7 Overall, when we consider advocacy for the organisation, opinion was generally mixed. Unlike previous sections, current members of the ASCC were more likely to be positive toward the group and advocated the recommendation of the organisation, however, this is despite mixed views with regards to general satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the ASCC. This suggests membership is valued but improvements in the work of the ASCC are needed.

## **8. Priorities for the future direction of the ASCC**

8.1 The survey has already highlighted a number of key areas for focusing the future direction of the ASCC, but respondents were asked specifically to suggest up to three ways in which the ASCC could improve the way it works. Responses to the question were varied but several themes were apparent. The weight of responses were predominantly that the ASCC should learn to communicate better with the various different organisations they interact with.

*“Improve direct communication with Community Councils which are members”*

8.2 A second area for improvement included better engagement, with additional comments that this engagement should not only be for the ASSC and CCs, but also the ASCC and local government.

*“Encourage wider engagement within communities and promote social inclusion.”*

*“Engage at the local level “*

*“Better communication with local authority councillors explaining what the ASCC are doing.”*

8.3 Responses also suggested that the ASCC needed to promote itself better, perhaps focusing on the improvement of its website. This also supports the quantitative findings that 43.1% didn't even know the ASCC had a website.

*“Advertise website”*

*“Better website supplier”*

8.4 It is interesting however, that some respondents suggested that despite poor leadership in the past there have been positive changes in recent months, and they are hopeful for the future.

## **9. Conclusions**

### **9.1 Levels and reasons for membership**

- The ASCC is not always providing the services members had hoped for upon joining. This however, does not appear to deter members, with the majority prepared to remain connected to the organisation.
- The single most important reason members joined the ASCC was for insurance cover. Other popular reasons included advice and support and, strength through collective action. The least important reason was for ASCC officer visit to groups of CCs. However, when the report analysed the aims of the ASCC and also the frequency of contact between members, it was evident that members felt they were not receiving adequate advice and support, and their was not enough collective

activity.

- This point is supported by the evidence provided by those CCs that had previously left the ASCC. Common themes included lack of benefits to joining the ASCC and also lack of correspondence and contact. These answers, when contrasted to the popular reasons for membership, support the findings that the organisation is not consistently providing the services members signed up for.
- Respondent's believed that the current membership fee of £15 was good value.

## 9.2 **Views on how the ASCC works and involves members and stakeholders**

- Many feel communication and contact with the ASCC is inadequate.
- Generally members of the ASCC were more critical than the average respondent on the ASCC's communication. They felt the organisation was not good at keeping them informed about important issues. Nonetheless, respondents were much more positive in their view that the organisation was good at providing accurate and reliable information, and sharing this information.
- Upon consideration of engagement, respondents felt the ASCC were not good at seeking views of the individual or of their CC. Members of the ASCC were again more critical and did not feel that the ASCC understood the needs of their councils. Respondents however, did feel that the ASCC represented the views of members fairly.
- The assessment of the day to day roles of the ASCC showed that respondents consistently felt the performance of the ASCC was average. Members were positive in their appraisal of the ASCC's ability to encourage and promote good practice. However, more negative views were evident in their performance to provide support for CCs by offering training and advice where appropriate and to encourage the growth and development of CCs, and, where they do not exist, enlighten communities to the potential of establishing CCs.
- When we consider advocacy of the group, opinions were very mixed when asked if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the ASCC. These results suggest that views on the organisation are often very diverse. When asked if they would speak highly of the ASSC if asked, views were more negative. However, those who were more directly involved with the ASCC would recommend them to others, by a significant percentage.

9.3 The survey demonstrates that, according to ASCC stakeholders, the organisation has some room for improvement. In particular, it fails to deliver fully on its main functions and

members feel the ASCC needs to improve considerably in terms of its stakeholder engagement, listening to their needs and understanding them. While respondents felt the ASCC generally represents them well, it is clear that membership appears to mainly offer members insurance protection and other services that membership entitles them are not delivering as stakeholders would like. Nonetheless, the £15 fee was considered good value for money, but it is fair to say this appears to reflect the service that members get rather than the potential service they should receive. The ASCC has a number of areas for improvement, but communication with members and promotion of its full range of services are a key starting point.