

# Engaging Communities

**Ben Page**

**Chairman**

**Ipsos MORI Social Research  
Institute**

**[ben.page@ipsos-mori.com](mailto:ben.page@ipsos-mori.com)**



# Where are we now?

- **A decade of reform to boost involvement and accountability**
- **Surveys, user engagement, juries, workshops, consultation strategies, local area forums, ward sub-committees etc**
- **Mayors and Cabinets to let us know who is really in charge**
- **Voting in NDC elections**
- **Partnerships**
- **And now elected hospital Boards, elected or local community police boards, library boards etc ....**
- **Public angrier than before?**

# A tale of improvement?

**Q** *How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your local council runs things?*



**People don't feel listened  
to**

# Most People feel they are not listened to

■ But may still be difficult to get them to take part in a particular exercise – or take part in existing structures

■ Five challenges

## 1.Relevance

*Is the Council doing a good job in implementing its Agenda 21 obligations?*

2.Credibility/efficacy problem - what's in it for me?  
What will actually change?

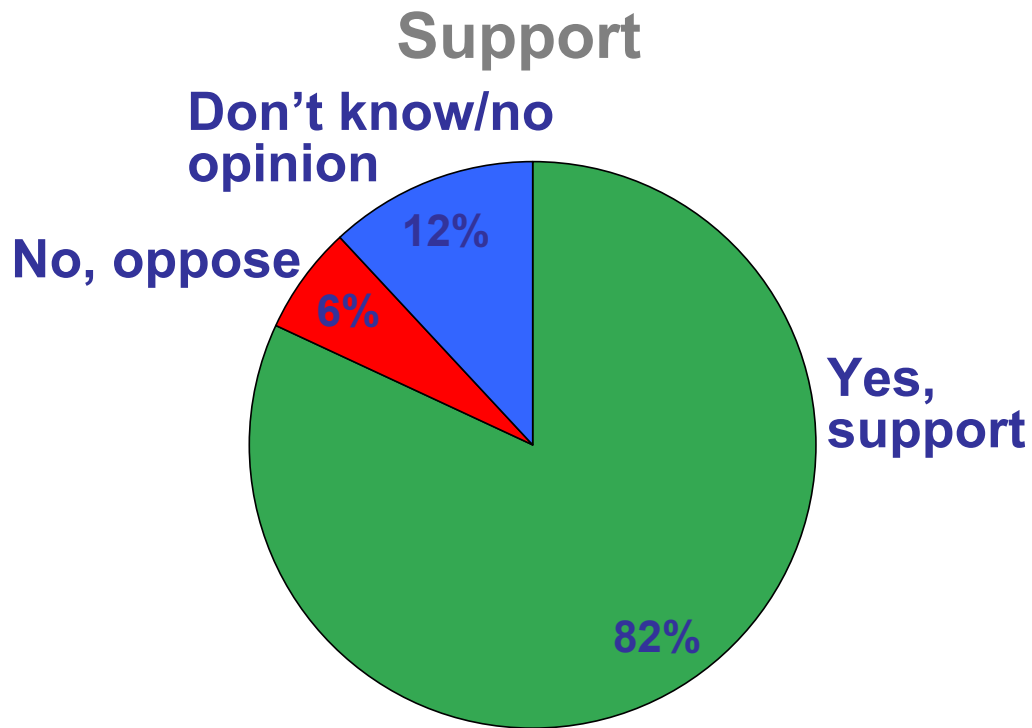
3.Resources

4.Political and managerial commitment

5.Scale – most good examples are only working with a very small proportion of people

# Most people favour local area forums of one kind or another

**Q** *In principle, would you support or oppose extending Community Partnerships to other parts of the Borough?*



Base: All residents (1,021)

# But many fewer SAY they personally want to get involved

**Q** *In principle, would you support or oppose extending Community Partnerships to other parts of the Borough?*

**Q** *And would you personally be interested in getting involved?*

## Support

## Involvement

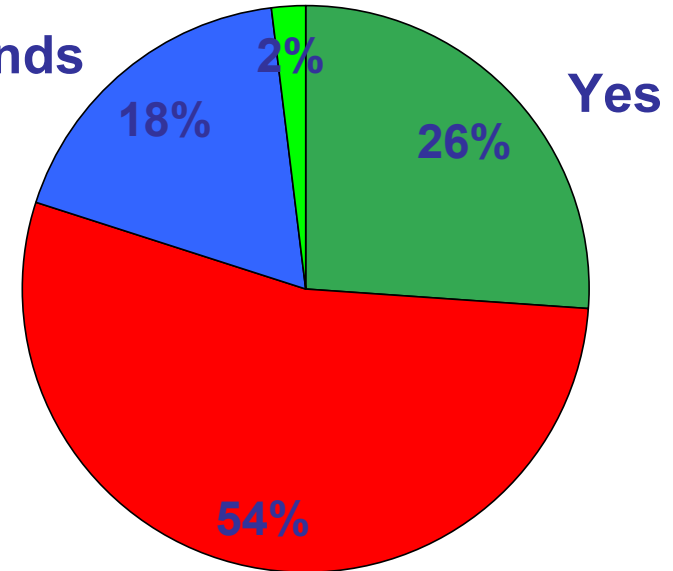
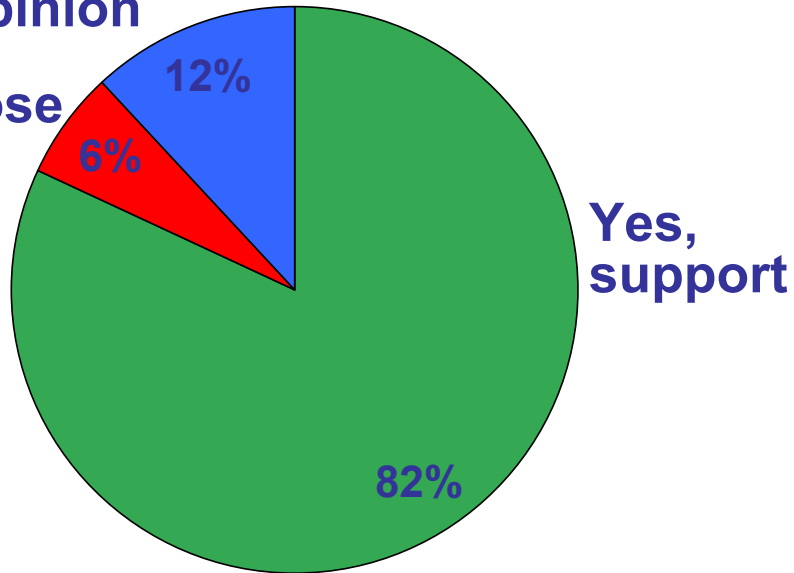
Don't know/no opinion

Don't know

No, oppose

Depends

Yes



Base: All residents (1,021)

**No**  
Base: All respondents who support the idea (835)

# And in practice only a tiny proportion ever do...

**Q** *In principle, would you support or oppose extending Community Partnerships to other parts of the Borough?*

**Q** *And would you personally be interested in getting involved?*

## Support

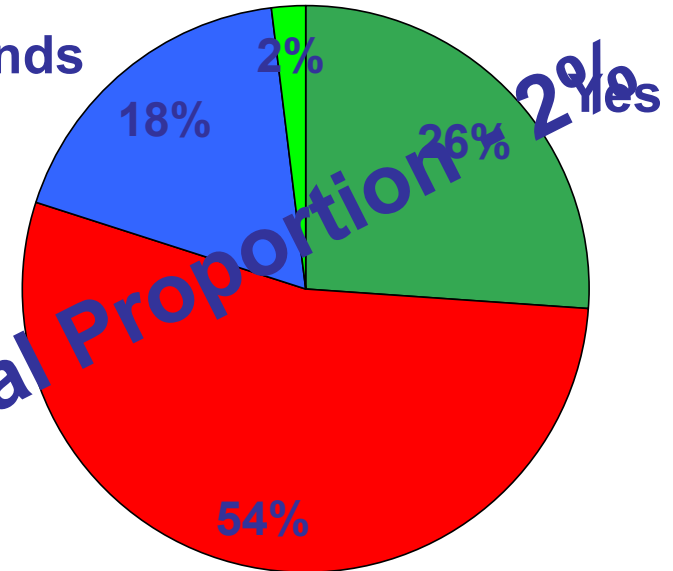
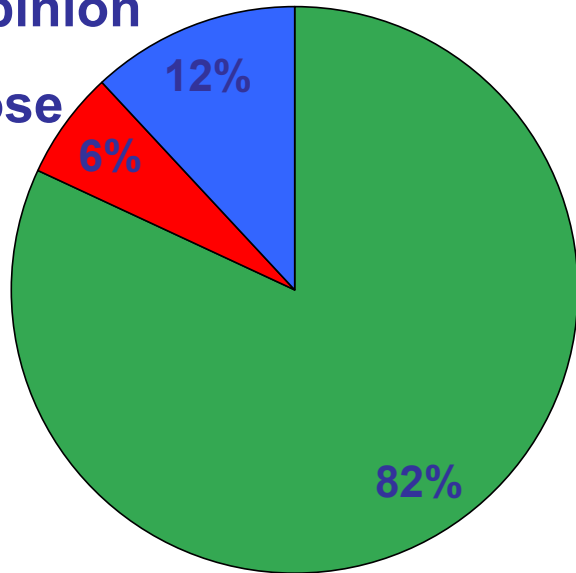
## Involvement

Don't know/no opinion

Don't know

No, oppose

Depends

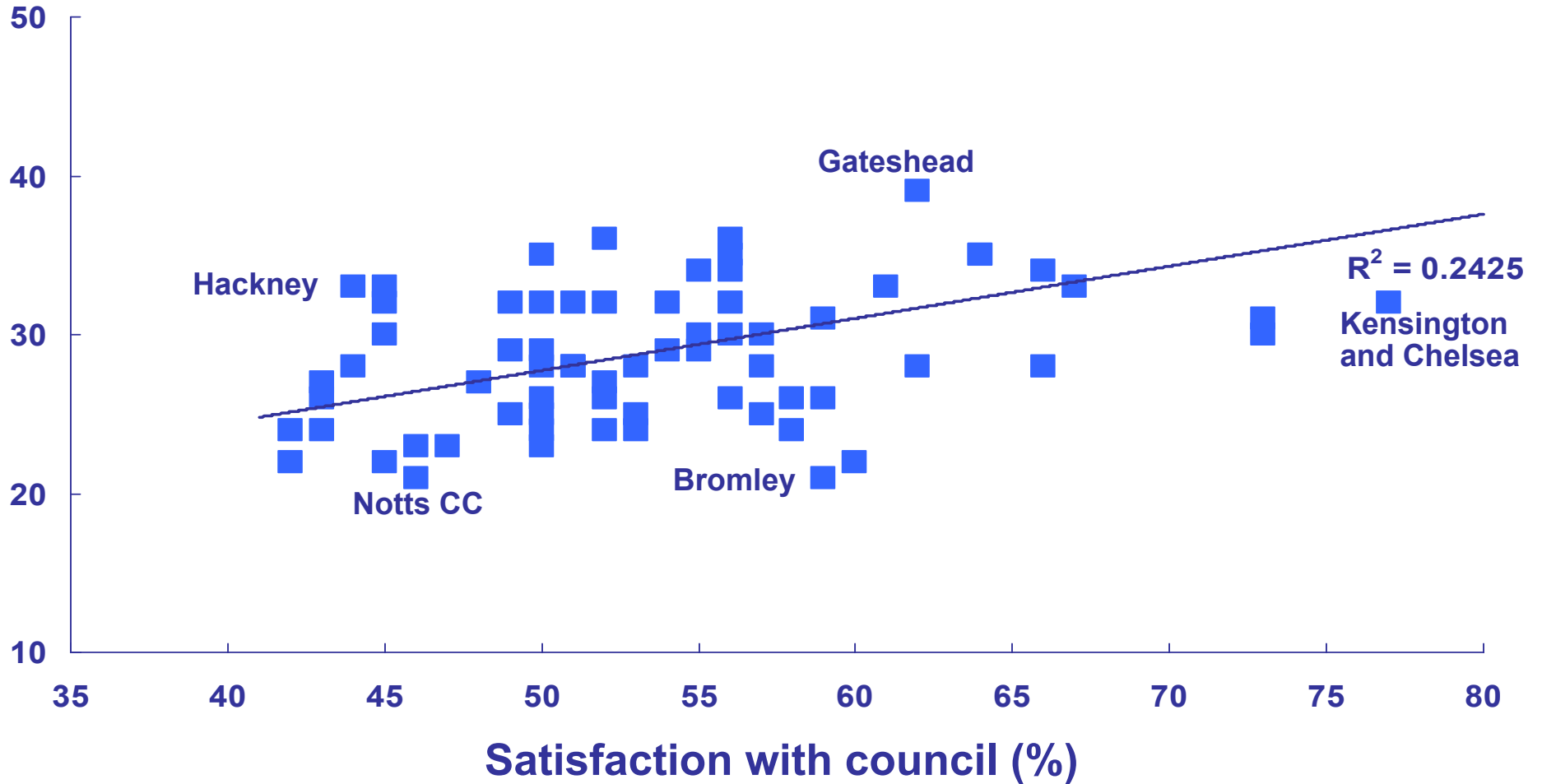


Base: All residents (1,021)

Base: All respondents who support the idea (835)

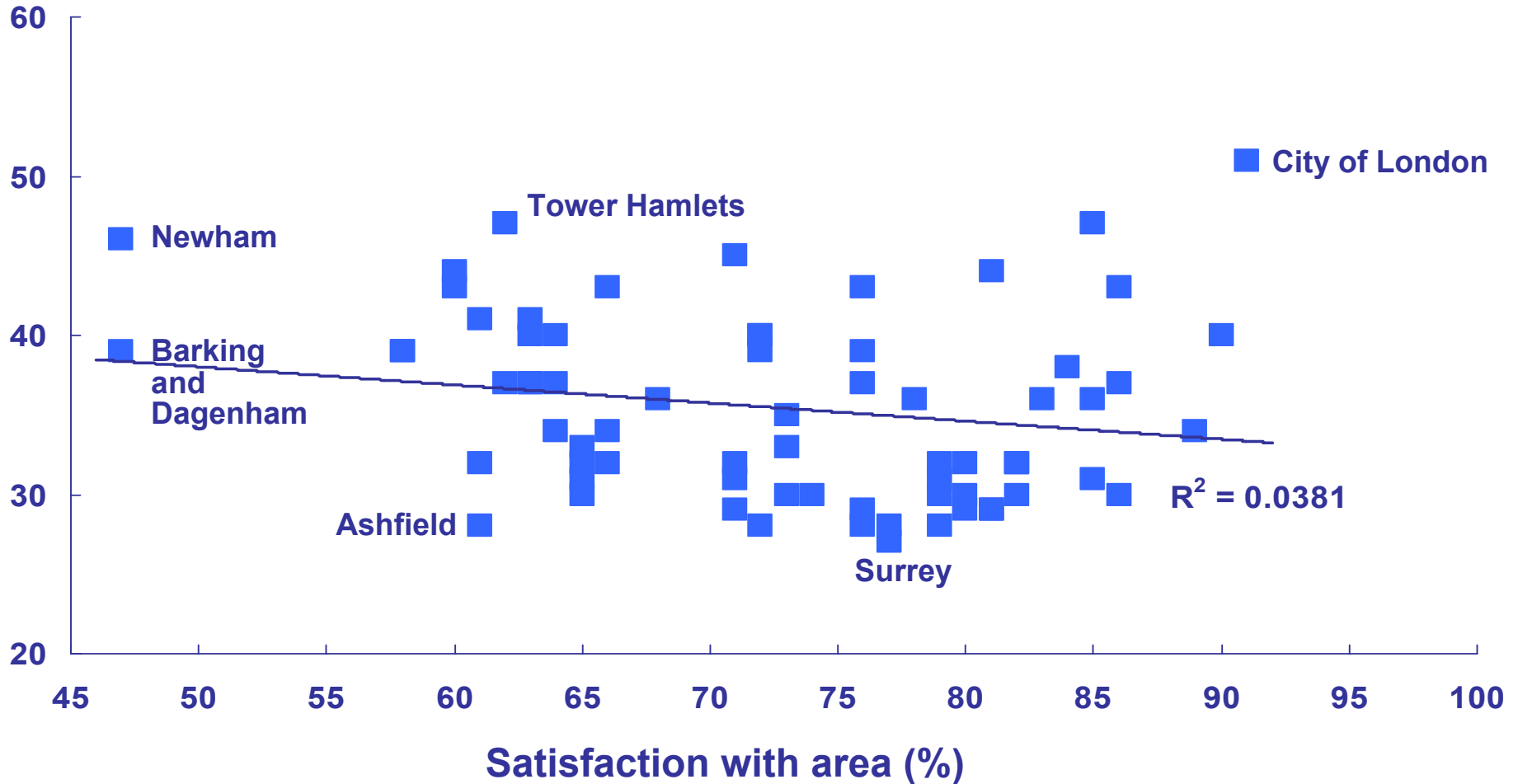
# Opportunities for participation do seem to matter

## Satisfied with opportunities for participation (%)



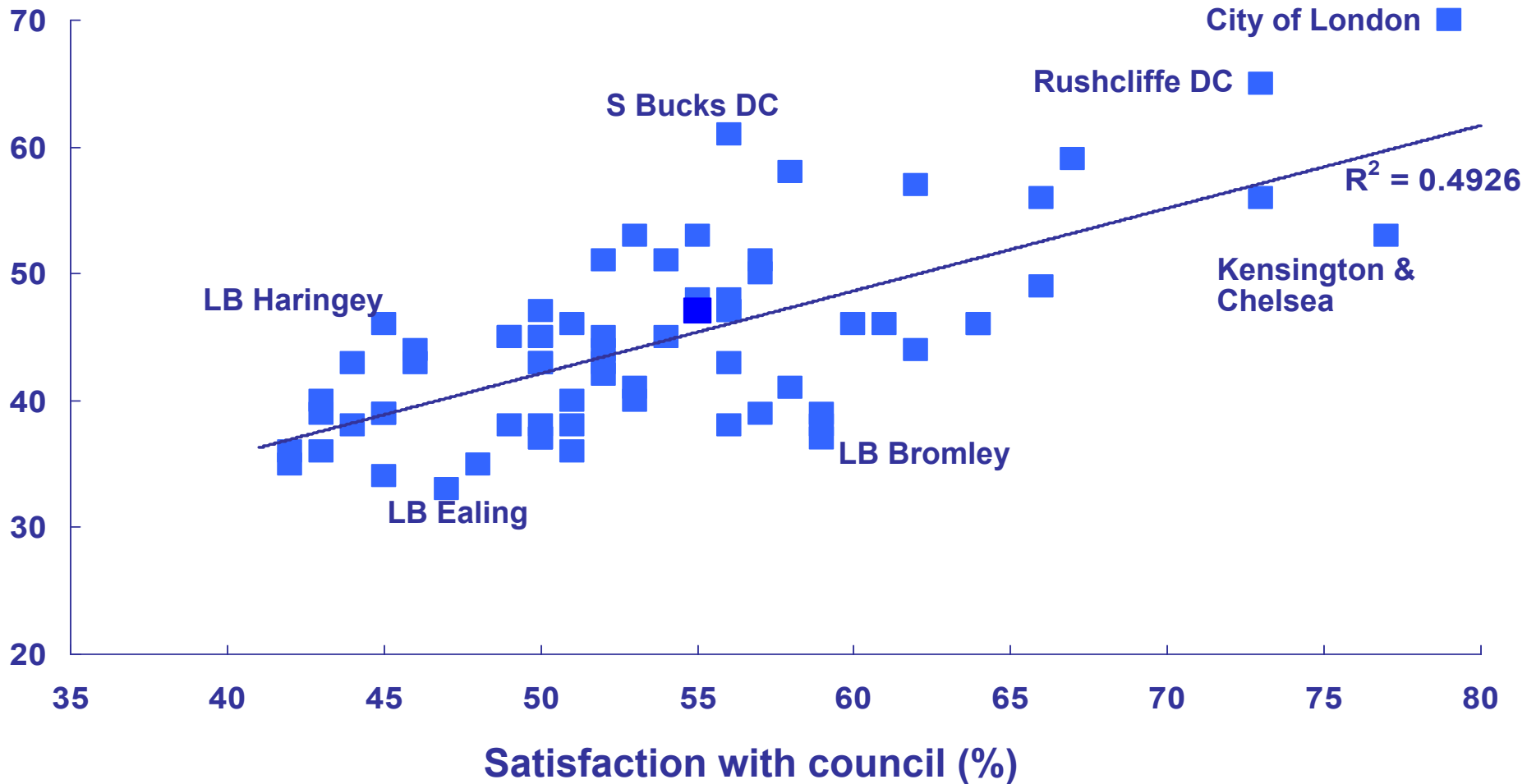
# But...Influence vs satisfaction with area!

Feelings of influence (%)



# The impact of communications is still strongest....

Feel informed by Council about services and benefits it provides (%)





**we asked...**

**you said...**  
"keep South Tyneside clean and tidy"

**we did...**

- collect 99% of bins on time
- remove fly tipping and abandoned cars by the next working day

 South Tyneside Council

We'd love to hear from you, why not give us a call on **0191 424 7337** or visit : [www.southtyneside.info](http://www.southtyneside.info)

**But does depend on the  
issue**

**And need to be prepared  
to be brave! Reactions to  
our recent deliberative  
event at Downing Street**

*Little more than a public relations stunt... That he should choose to round off his time in office with some silly PR exercise provides a neat summation of Blairism*  
Daily Telegraph, 4 March

*The country is awash in forums, like yesterday's at Downing Street. They reflect new Labour's Leninist aversion to intermediate democratic bodies and its love of empty consultative gestures.*

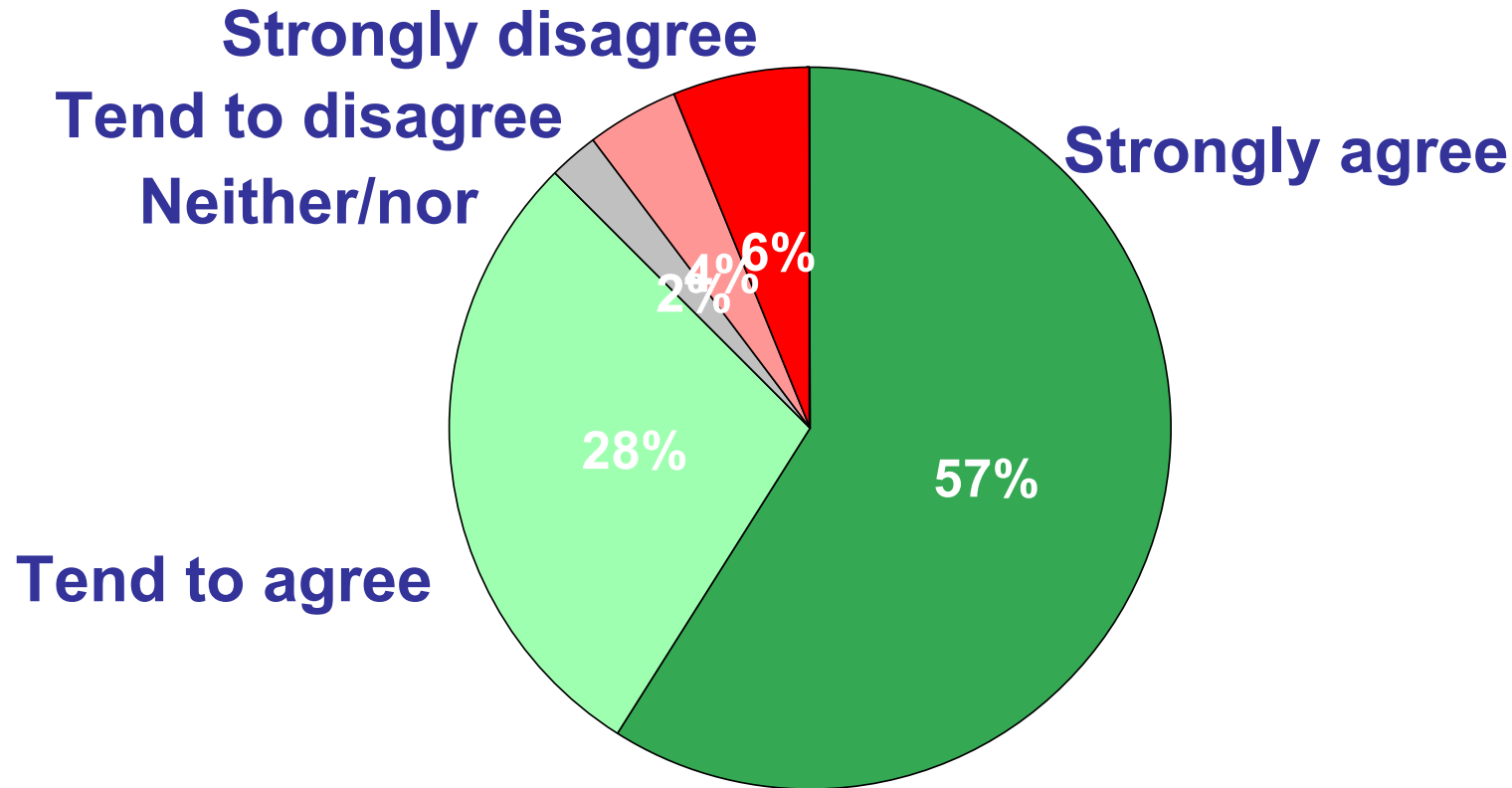
Sunday Times, Simon Jenkins

*"It's changed my opinion phenomenally, in terms of the complexity of the analysis that needs to go on, and how difficult it is ultimately to make decisions on a blanket level that clearly will only suit a certain number of people."*

Participant interviewed by BBC, 3 March

# Overall participants are positive – if those in authority listen and act.....

*The Government should conduct these type of exercises on a more regular basis – as long as they listen and take account of our views*

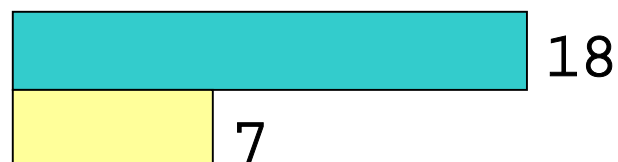


# Why you might welcome more participatory budgeting!

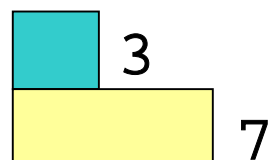
**Q Which of the following do you most agree with?**

■ Start of session    ■ End of session

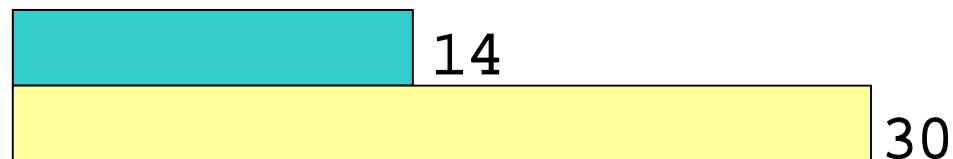
The Council Tax level is too high for the services the Council provides



The Council Tax level is too low for the services the Council provides



The Council Tax level is about right for the services the Council provides



Don't know



# Key Points

# Conclusions

- **“Engagement” is here to stay**
- **Signs that can help achieve positive outcomes and has significant positive side-effects – but issue of scale**
- **Don’t set up to fail – recognise range of methods/levels of involvement needed**
  - **Need to communicate better, more than consult better**
- **Need fitness for purpose – and clarity about methods**
- **Avoid consumer politics – ultimately need to give more responsibility back to people**

**Thank you**

**ben.page@mori.com**

**020 7347 3000**

