

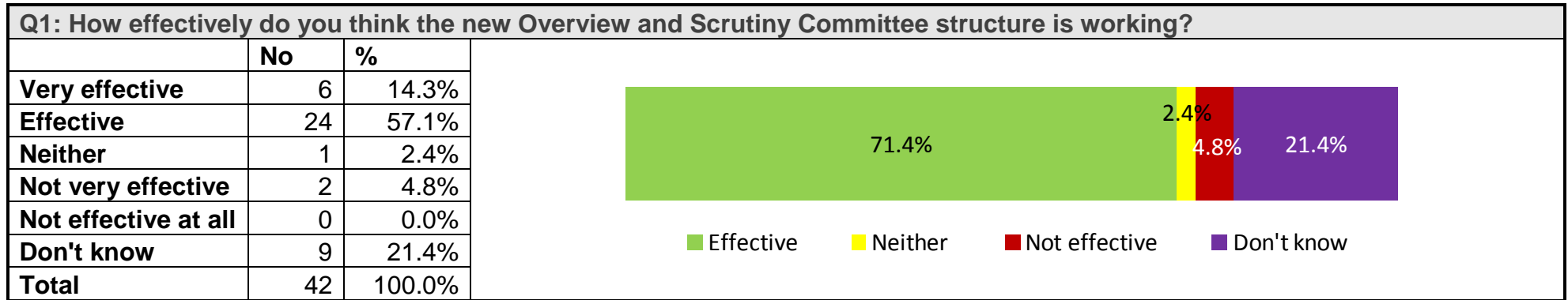
Scrutiny Survey Report 2014

Format **Web – a link to the survey was emailed to members and officers**

Date range: **28th April 2014 to 16th May 2014**

Total responses: **44 (web)**

1. How effectively do you think the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure is working?



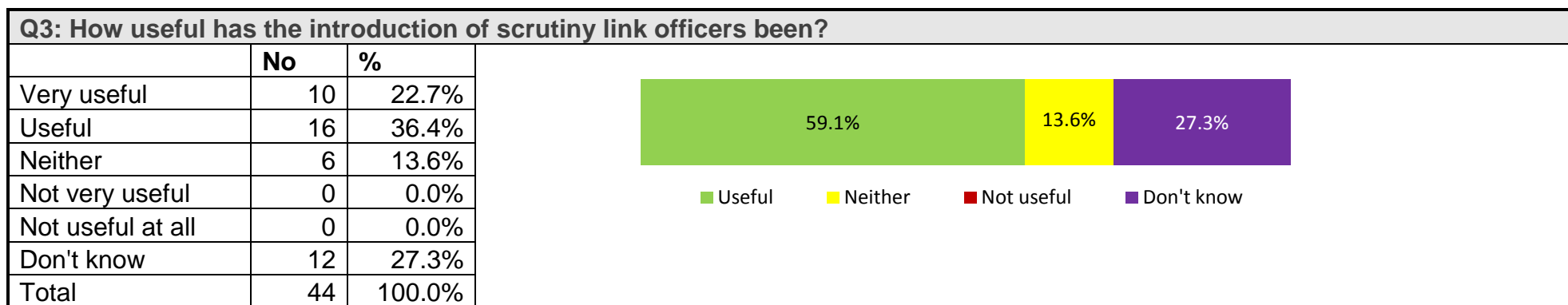
2. How could we improve the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Structure further?

- The very close relationship between Executive and Scrutiny undermines the scrutiny process. Some members of scrutiny do not say anything in the presence of members of the executive. They don't even ask questions and yet they are expected to take part in scrutiny.
- Tell people about it and what you do
- This comment is not really about the structure as such but I feel it would improve the whole scrutiny experience. By encouraging all members to take a more positive and pro-active role in the scrutiny process. There are still complaints now and again that back bench members aren't informed about things etc - if they became more involved with scrutiny they would not only be informed but also be able to have some input into policies, strategies and courses of action before the final decision is made.
- Whilst there will always be fresh items of business, e.g. dealing with call-in requests, I still feel the Committee is trying to do too much; and, at times, diverts its attention away from its agreed work programme on to single issue items of business. Just as the Council has

narrowed its priorities to better align with the financial and officer resources available, the Committee might wish to consider doing likewise.

- Better communication
- Can think of no improvements at the moment but, as always, we will seek to improve.
- Support for admin needs to be firmed up especially as there have been changes in Democratic Services. Also more Councillors need to be involved in the Groups. I think that a cabinet member not attached to the issue under Scrutiny could take part as we have Asst Execs as well as excess so reducing available pool.
- Not sure I have enough knowledge to say how to improve it.
- Understand what the role is and what decisions are made by the committee
- Many staff are not aware of the important role that Scrutiny undertake and have little contact with members of the Committee.

3. How useful has the introduction of scrutiny link officers been?

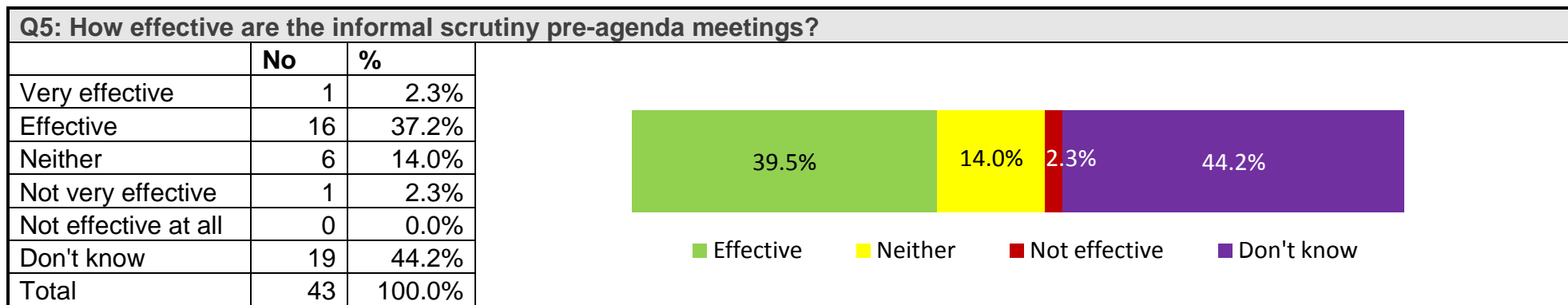


4. How could the scrutiny link officer role be improved?

- More involvement at team meetings etc
- Tell people what you do
- Seems to be little enthusiasm from some of the officers but this is improving meeting by meeting. Meetings are now to be held less often so may improve the quality of the ones we do hold.
- I haven't encountered the function so difficult to make suggestions.
- Who are the scrutiny link officers?

- If i am very honest I probably don't pay enough attention to scrutiny , having a number of other interests to juggle (chair of planning committee ,ward member -where my two colleagues are currently indisposed on medical grounds (so I am doing all the casework),Member of County council for another area ,vice chair of Audit at the county and member of the fire authority .Unless scrutiny directly impacts on these areas if i am honest I cant see me taking an active role in the near future.

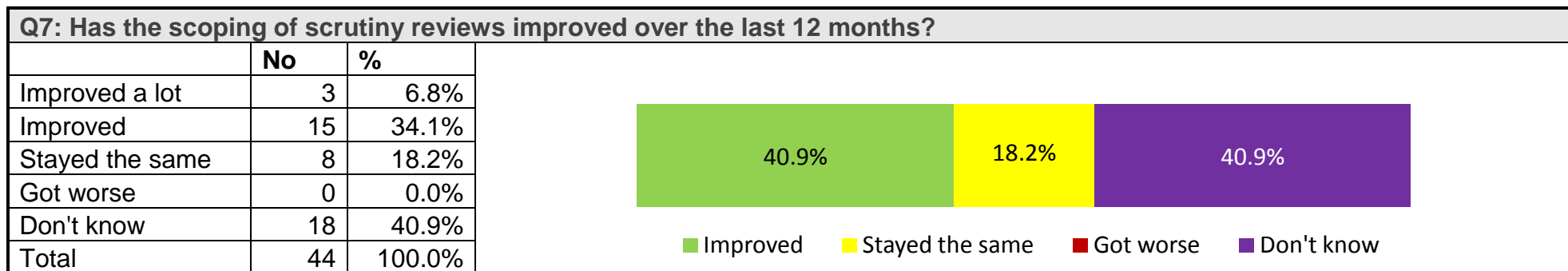
5. How effective are the informal scrutiny pre-agenda meetings?



6. How could we improve pre-agenda meetings?

- Without detracting from the informality sometimes they could do with a bit more focus.
- This is a difficult one. Feel that pre agenda meetings are a great idea, but I am never sure when they take place. Perhaps if the meetings better flagged up it would be useful.
- I haven't attended one personally but I believe they are effective at least from what officers have said. Scrutiny members and those attending to address the committee all appear to be more at ease and working from the same hymn sheet!
- Not attended any meetings, so difficult to comment. But, I understand that they're effective.
- Could be better used / attended by officers / members bringing reports forward. Perhaps better promotion would help.
- Not always necessary to have one, but we have had very good meetings when they have taken place. Up to date information not always available as early as needed, but this is because officers want scrutiny to have the most relevant data at the meeting.
- I'm not aware of the scrutiny process, so unsure of the benefits of the pre agenda meetings
- not involved
- Effective but time consuming

7. Has the scoping of scrutiny reviews improved over the last 12 months?



8. What could we do to improve the scoping of scrutiny review further?

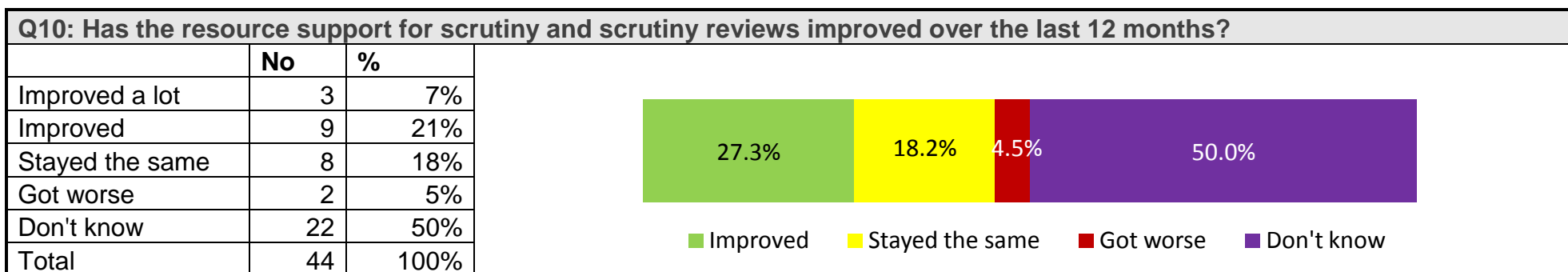
- Panel chairs do not always have the skills to undertake the scoping and yet there are no resources they can draw on. This is a deterrent for people who want to volunteer to chair panels.
- I think this activity has improved. But, I would encourage the Committee to draw more on the officer resources of the Council to help scope future reviews. There are occasions where a particular path has been followed, which could have been closed down earlier if advice from officers had been sought.
- Consult relevant service head / manager and relevant portfolio holder for comment.
- The tools we use for the report are a bit difficult to get ones head round especially if one has used other project planning and reporting tools
- I don't have access to the reviews

9. What else could we do to improve the operation and outcomes of scrutiny reviews?

- Publish reviews
- Encourage proper discussions rather than party political charade. I think some members of scrutiny do not seem to know the difference between scrutiny and political jousting. Each member of scrutiny should be afforded even when you don't agree with their view. Having two chairs is not at all effective as their different styles of chairing increase inconsistencies. I have every respect for one even when I disagree but have no consideration to the other who seems to think all members of scrutiny from other parties are enemies just because they don't tow the line.
- I think care needs to be taken in capturing contributions and ensuring they are timely in terms of policy development.

- I believe a number of scrutiny members find scrutiny confusing, I think some 'inset' sessions would help to remove some of confusion in our attempts to scrutinise council policy.
- Involve relevant (cabinet) members and officers from the beginning and also keep them informed etc. Of the 2 scrutiny reviews I can think of that had some involvement with my portfolio, the first I wasn't even aware of until being asked to attend scrutiny committee where it was getting a final reading, the 2nd I knew little about even when I attended one of the review meetings!
- We need to make the right appointments to the new roles that have been created within Democratic services to help support the scrutiny review panels with their research, report writing etc.
- More pre planning with key Officers involved in the review
- Consult relevant manager / portfolio holder on final draft scrutiny project report so comments can be considered by the Project Group before they finalise the report. Ensure there is a written report back from Cabinet with a decision on scrutiny recommendations so it is clear when recommendations have been approved or refused and the impact of scrutiny can be clearly measured.
- I am not aware of what goes on in scrutiny as I am not on the committee and never have been
- Better sharing of findings
- Ensure they are carried out to the agreed date where possible and also ensure the scoping is agreed before ANY action is taken
- I think it needs a bit more time for us to see the groups work under the new scheme as it is early days yet. I think Officers still need to understand the new way of working as some still appear to think we are being critical after the event
- tell me where the information is stored so I can read it and keep up to date - provide me with a simple process flow outlining the scrutiny process - make information available on the intranet
- Secretarial assistance

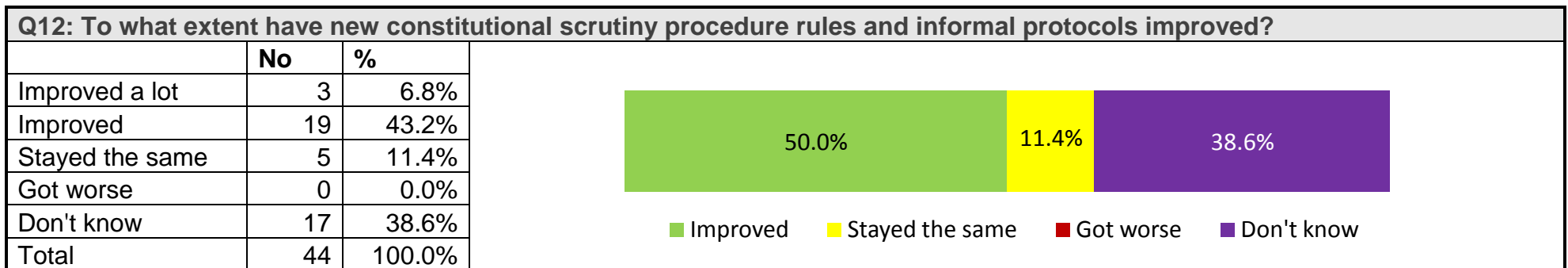
10. Has the resource support for scrutiny and scrutiny reviews improved over the last 12 months?



11. How could we improve the resourcing for scrutiny and scrutiny reviews?

- If anything it has decreased at a time when scrutiny is taking on more and more work. The resources identified in the review that lead to the new structure have not materialised. Panels have no resources to support them and it seems that the scrutiny officer feels her support is to the forum chairs.
- As above again
- Still no admin support.
- See previous answer ...
- Ensure Scrutiny Project Group Leads complete and submit the relevant Resource Request Form to the Policy and Scrutiny Officer / Scrutiny Chair
- What are the current arrangements for scrutiny support

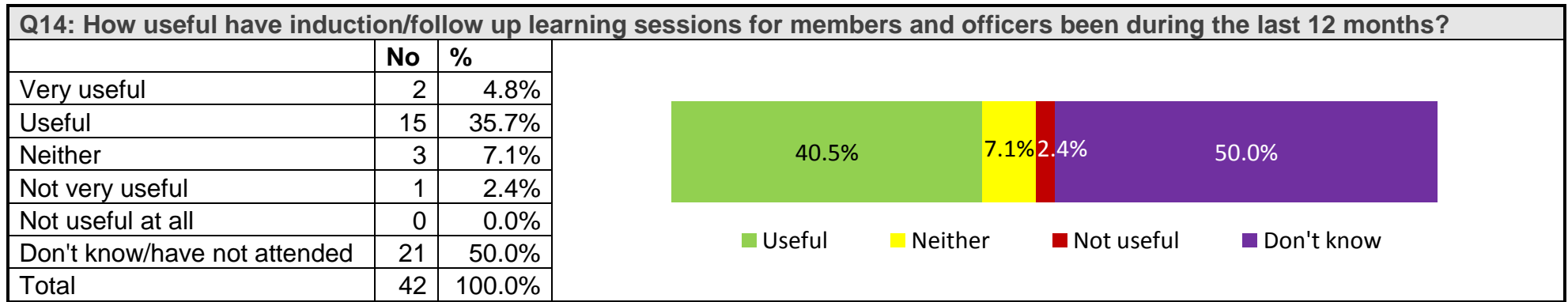
12. To what extent have new constitutional scrutiny procedure rules and informal protocols improved?



13. How could we improve the procedures and protocols further?

- It has been useful to have the communications but as i haven't been through the process for a while its hard to say how to improve.
- Scrutiny seems to have upped its profile and was impressed by the public consultation at assemblies

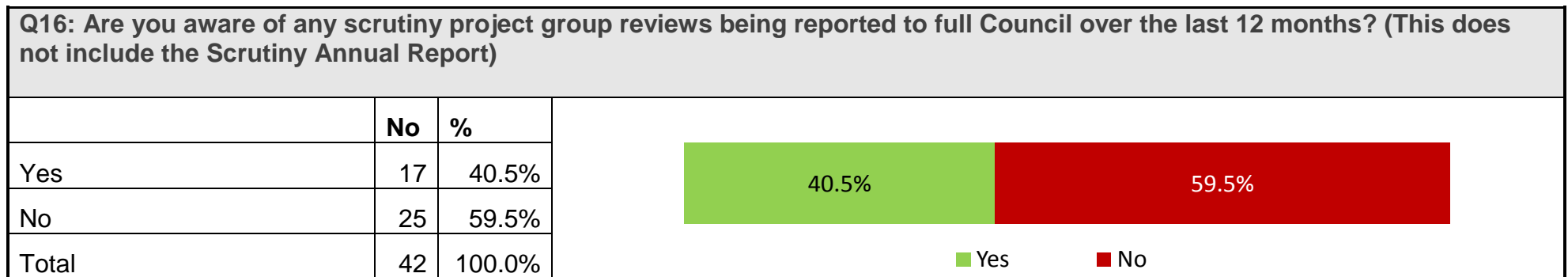
14. How useful have induction/follow up learning sessions for members and officers been during the last 12 months?



15. How could we improve the procedures and protocols further?

- More inset required
- The members who attend seem happy, but not very well attended. It has been suggested that we have them later, but this would mean a special meeting held separately from the forum. This may not be popular either.

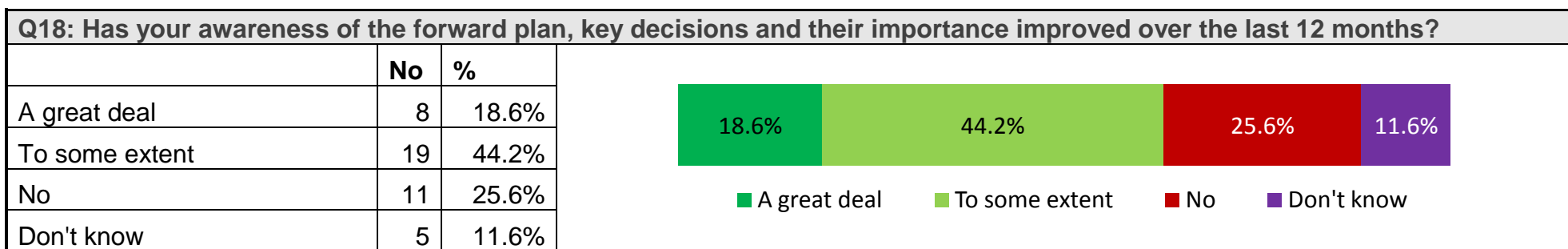
16. Are you aware of any scrutiny project group reviews being reported to full Council over the last 12 months? (This does not include the Scrutiny Annual Report)



17. What scrutiny project group reviews do you think should have been reported to full council during the last 12 months?

- New proposed leisure centre at Queen's Park
- All scrutiny project reviews report to Cabinet and the minutes of all Cabinet meetings are considered by full Council. Therefore full Council is aware of all scrutiny project reviews that have reported to Cabinet
- I could be wrong but I think all the scrutiny reviews were reported to cabinet. Perhaps it would be a good idea to report all scrutiny reviews to full council first, if the recommendations are something that cabinet has to make the decision about full council can always refer it to cabinet. By reporting to council first, all members will hear the details etc & would get an opportunity to ask questions - whether to the scrutiny lead or a cabinet member, perhaps both - & discuss etc
- The outcomes of a number of reviews have been reported at Cabinet, on the basis that this is the appropriate decision-making body pertaining to the subject matter(s) under review. I can't think of any reviews that should have been reported to full Council during the past 12 months.
- New QPSC

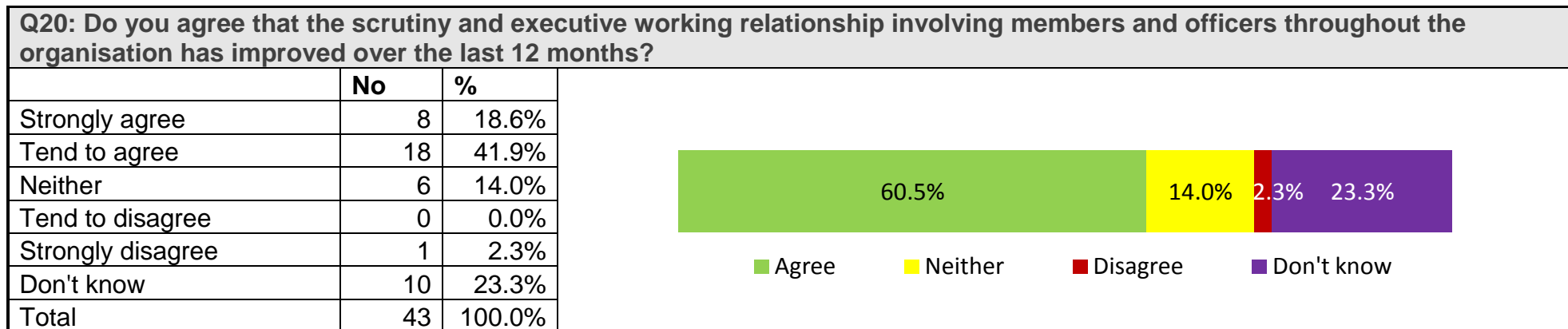
18. Has your awareness of the forward plan, key decisions and their importance improved over the last 12 months?



19. How could we further raise the profile of the forward plan and its importance?

- I have always used forward plan effectively in the last 5 years.
- By encouraging members, particularly, members of Scrutiny Committees to read it. Maybe whenever the forward plan is updated all Members could automatically be sent an e mail that includes a link to the updated forward plan.
- As I'm working with the Forward Plan every week, I'm very much aware of it. It might be worth publishing through social media (Facebook, Twitter) advance notice of up and coming key decisions.
- Given my position I was fully aware of them before An article in Borough Bulletin, info on intranet
- Ensure each entry in the Forward Plan clearly outlines what the matter is about.
- Discussion at assemblies - I attend 3 of the 4.

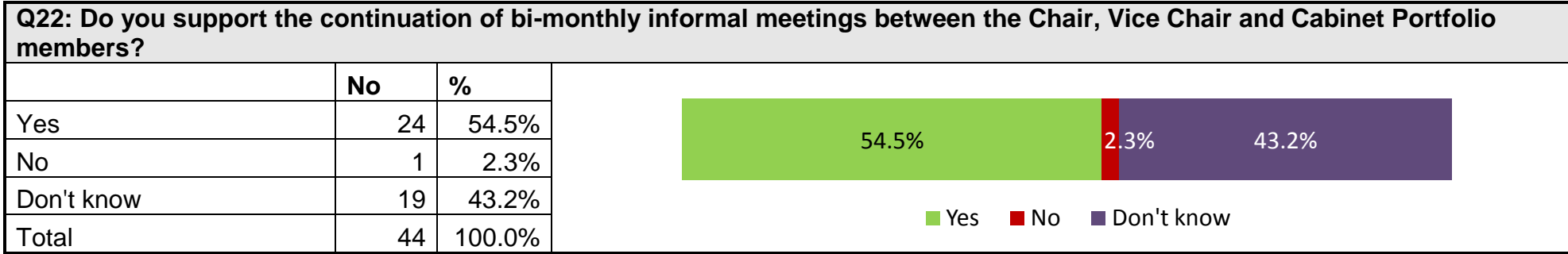
20. Do you agree that the scrutiny and executive working relationship involving members and officers throughout the organisation has improved over the last 12 months?



21. Please give reasons for your answer:

- Closer relationship leading to worse outcomes in my opinion.
- As a member of cabinet I have benefitted from invites to and information from scrutiny.
- The periodic informal discussions between the Scrutiny Chairs and Executive Members have started and seem to be working satisfactorily. In addition, Executive Members are now attending brief sessions with Scrutiny Members before the start of Scrutiny Forum meetings to update them on progress with Great Place Great Service.
- I am a Cabinet member rather than a scrutiny member - from my perspective (as a former scrutiny member & now a cabinet member) the scrutiny / executive relationship is improving constantly. 3 years ago I don't think there was a relationship between the two - it was frustrating as a scrutiny member to be presented with a document, make valid comments & suggestions that meant nothing as the document had already been signed off - scrutiny had no input! As far as I can I always ask for things to go to scrutiny before sign off. Scrutiny members may have a different view to this!
- I can't really talk from personal experience, as I've only been on a couple of occasions. But, I sense from talking to Executive members and officer colleagues that relationships are much improved.
- The Link Officers meeting has been instrumental in this
- Much more pro-active working and informal communication taking place between officers and members around scrutiny and scrutiny work.
- Higher profile

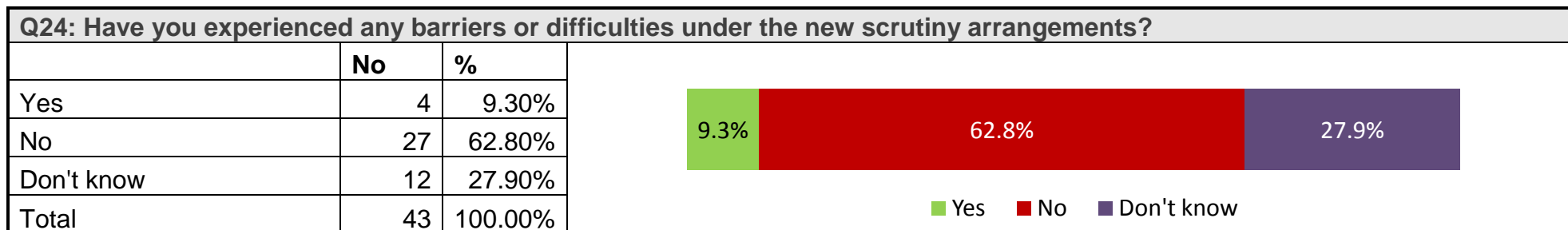
22. Do you support the continuation of bi-monthly informal meetings between the Chair, Vice Chair and Cabinet Portfolio members?



23. Please give reasons for your answer:

- Did not know that happened
- We live in challenging times where difficult decisions have to be made. Scrutiny becomes very important in these circumstances.
- How else can the Chair and Vice Chair be kept informed about current developments and what will be coming up over the horizon in relation to the portfolio holder's portfolio. Nothing beats regular face to face discussions.
- Not aware of such meetings
- I haven't been to one as yet, I haven't felt the need to. However, if there was something I wanted to discuss with the scrutiny chairs I would contact them anyway. In addition, I do try to ensure all new projects etc in my portfolio are taken to scrutiny in one form or another - for example, the relevant officer may just have an informal meeting with the chairs, who can then decide whether a committee should get involved etc.
- Ensure joined up thinking between Scrutiny chairs and Exec members
- Provides opportunity for informal conversations about scrutiny outside of the public arena.
- Too often once a month should be sufficient
- What are the benefits of these meetings?
- Scrutiny should be careful about seeking to collude with Lead Members. This is hierarchical and not democratic.

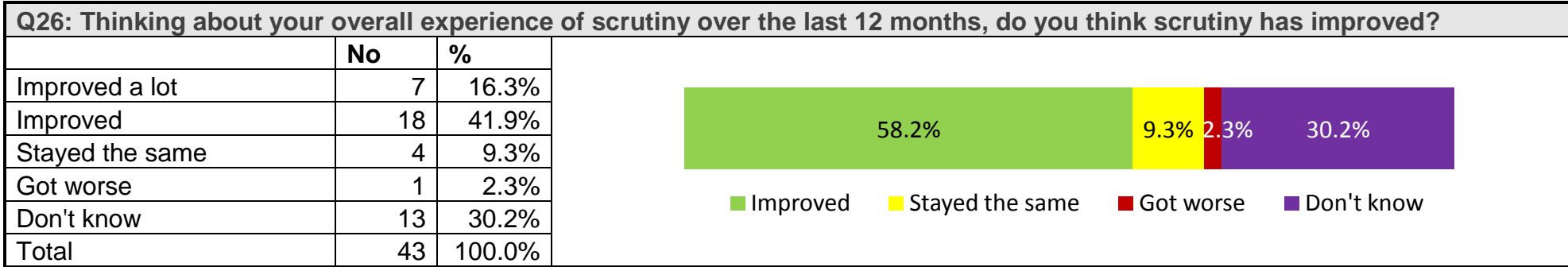
24. Have you experienced any barriers or difficulties under the new scrutiny arrangements?



25. If yes, what are the barriers and how could we reduce them?

- There is a lot of antagonism towards members of the main opposition and this has 2 effects: - their views are quickly disregarded if they are not shouted down - some opposition members no longer contribute as they see the process as a waste of time.
- Sometimes lack of notice. Once a lack of invite to a relevant scrutiny meeting.
- I believe that Scrutiny needs to become more flexible in terms of arranging dates, times and venues for both committee meetings and informal meetings with Executive Members, to make more use of the telephone for ascertaining availabilities and to make more use of the Microsoft Calendar system for issuing invitations to meetings.
- The issue of cutting across other formal processes such as planning

26. Thinking about your overall experience of scrutiny over the last 12 months, do you think scrutiny has improved?



27. Are you a:

