

Strata Service Solutions Ltd.

Councillor IT Requirements – Survey Results

V1.0

Date Issued: 8th June 2021



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Date of Approval	

Document Control

Title	Councillor IT Survey Results
Originator / Author	Laurence Whitlock
Reviewer	John Street / Henry Gordon-Lennox
Business Area	Strata Service Solutions Ltd.

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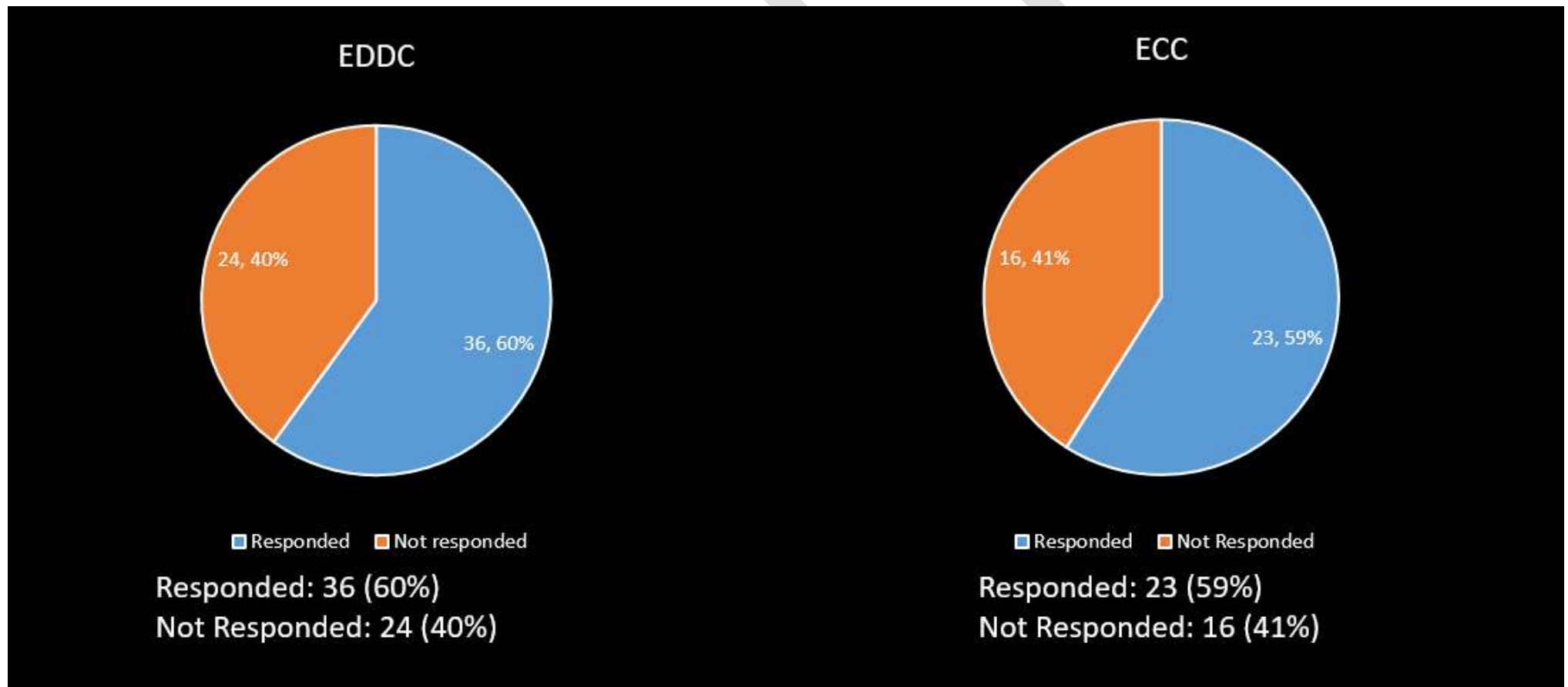
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Background & Purpose

During late March and early April 2021, Strata and the Democratic Services Teams from EDDC and ECC undertook a survey of Councillors in relation to the current and future IT requirements. The outcomes of the survey will act to inform and guide a potential redesign of the IT solution that it delivered to Councillors to enable them to perform their important role in supporting the citizens of Devon.

This report works to present the findings of the survey and to enable a discussion to be entered into between Strata, the authorities and representative Councillors.

It was hoped that 60% of Councillors would complete the survey and it is very pleasing to report that the 60% completion level was achieved.

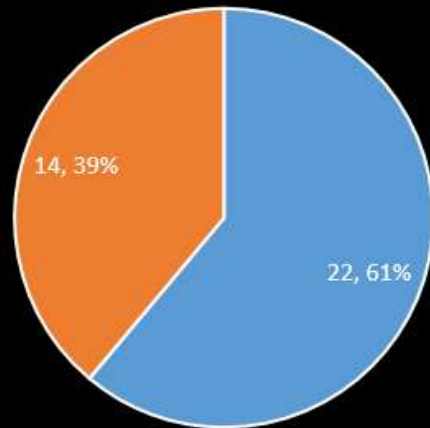


Surveys Results

Question: Is the current device provided for you by the authority suitable for your Councillor needs?

Is the current device provided for you by the authority suitable for your Councillor needs?

EDDC

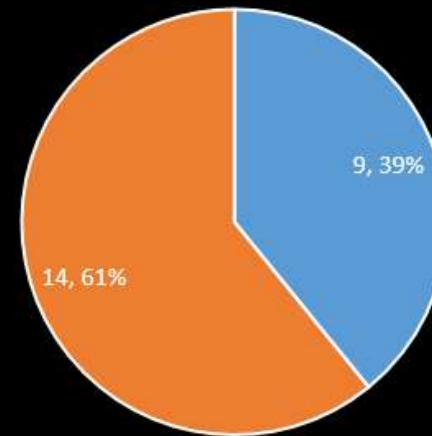


■ Yes ■ No

Yes: 22 (61%)

No: 14 (39%)

ECC



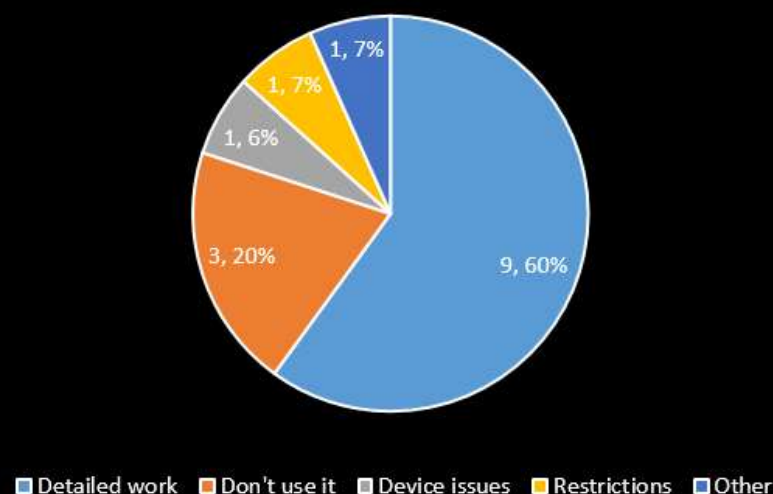
■ Yes ■ No

Yes: 9 (39%)

No: 14 (61%)

Is the current device provided for you by the authority suitable for your Councillor needs?

EDDC



Detailed Work: 9 (60%)

Don't use it: 2 (20%)

Device Issues: 1 (6%)

Restrictions: 1 (7%)

Other: 1 (7%)

"Too difficult to use filing facility. Too many Strata restrictions on machine"

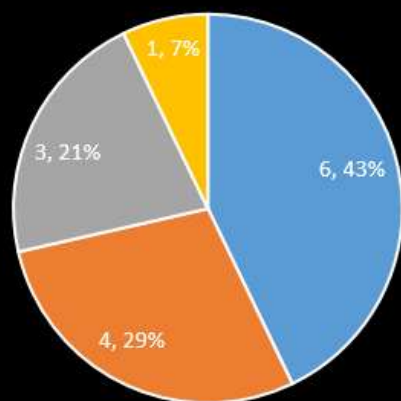
"very difficult to use for constructing short papers or other MSWord typed messages, and very difficult to read when looking at spreadsheets"

"Outlook software is very cut down version with limited functionality...consequence is that productivity is severely handicapped...cut and paste facility in Outlook. Apple keyboard is less comprehensive....elementary file handling...do not allow easy screen extensions"

"I would much rather have a decent laptop that has Microsoft Word, PowerPoint etc. The iPad has limited use"

Is the current device provided for you by the authority suitable for your Councillor needs?

ECC



■ Age of device ■ Detailed work ■ Virtual Meetings ■ Device usability

Age of device: 6 (43%)

Detailed work: 4 (29%)

Virtual Meetings: 3 (21%)

Device usability: 1 (7%)

"Neither of my devices do Zoom or Teams"

"The iPad is old and tired and can't access all apps, tends to be slow and difficult to work with"

"The iPad is great by limited. It provides a functional tool for email, reading documents and managing my diary but not for more detailed work – longer email responses, saving and storing documents and as a screen for virtual meetings"

"Most if not all of my Council related work is stored on Word & Excel. Neither of these platforms are available on my iPad"

"The iPad is end of life. They must be due a refresh!"

More comments on the authority iPad

“The fact that I cannot save documents such as forms on the iPad and then complete them and email them. I find that I either have to use the laptop or visit the civic centre in order to complete such tasks”

“Neither Word or Excel available on iPad. No Copy and Paste facility. No facility to link ipad to printer. No access to Teams. iPad doesn’t have access to Google to ‘look up’ things “

“the iPad email interface is awful and lacks the useful features that O365 offers. It limits the ability to find alternative tools better for the job....eg, Google Sheets are accessible but not editable on this device”

“cannot attach files from phone to any emails. Have to use external email to email myself and then forward on”

“No Microsoft Word for printing letters, which is still often the only way to deal with constituents. The Content function is clunky and slow. The iPad doesn’t have Teams and also is unable to open the Electoral Register so has significant limitations. Wireless keyboards were not provided”

Strata Comment:

From East Devon we can see that over half appear satisfied with their device, and under half within Exeter. These figures are not entirely unexpected.

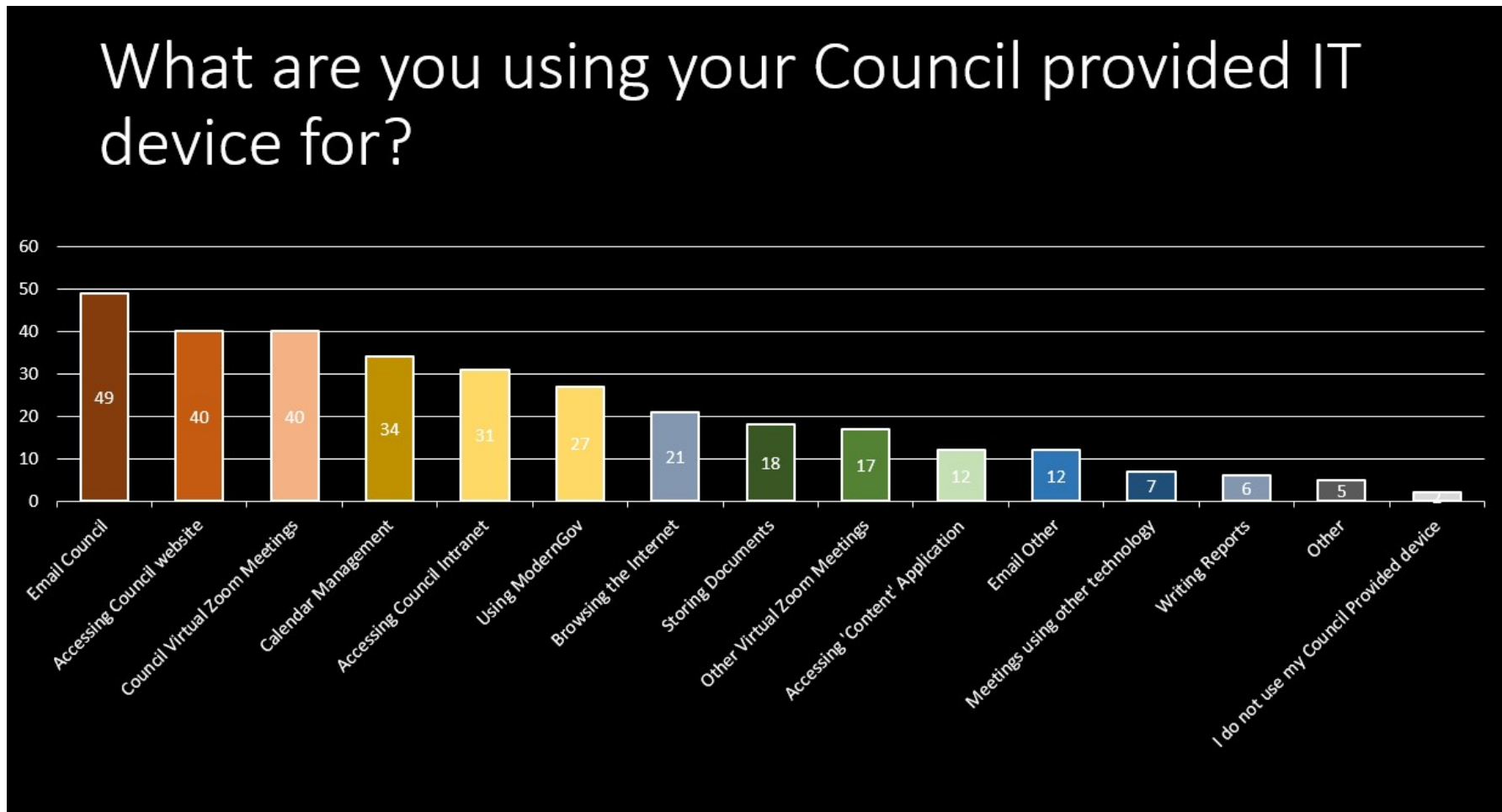
Many of comments from Exeter are quite clearly around the age of the device. This is not surprising, and was a known issue pre-pandemic. This became even more problematic when Virtual Council meetings were introduced and we faced new challenges, for example devices being so old they cannot run applications such as Zoom or Teams in the intended way. It is very clear that whatever the solution is going forward, all Councils need to ensure that provided devices are refreshed regularly enough to ensure they do not go end of life.

Virtual Council are also an issue for those Councillors with just one device. There were several comments about not being able to see meeting agendas\ papers at the same time as the virtual meeting. Again, this isn't entirely unexpected based on our work to help setup the virtual council meetings in 2020.

One of the other main subjects that were repeatedly raised was the use of an iPad for lengthy emails or reports, when either authoring or reading, as the small screen, awkward keyboard and limited controls was a source of frustration for many Councillors. These comments were often linked to a dislike of using the iPad device and preference to use a Windows or Android device instead, but it is worth mentioning that others actually preferred to use an iPad over these alternatives. There was also a comment around the inability to print, which is worth mentioning particularly as it related to sending letters to constituents.

Less commonly, but no less relevant, was a variety of comments around device restrictions. These ranged from trouble with email attachments (and having to send them to private accounts and then back again), the inability to access certain apps from the store, and trouble managing calendars alongside private or Devon County\ other calendars. These elements all add to the frustration of using the existing supplied devices.

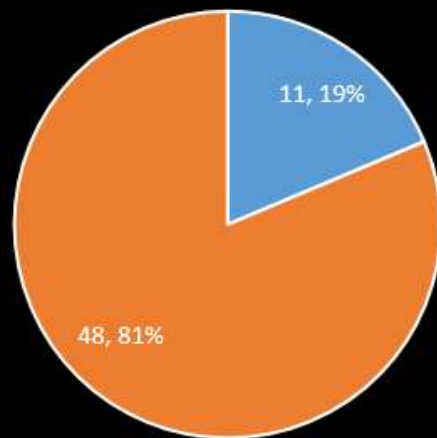
Question: What are you using your council provided IT device for?



Question: Do you often require support from others to help with your IT use?

Do you often require support from others to help with your IT use?

EDDC + ECC

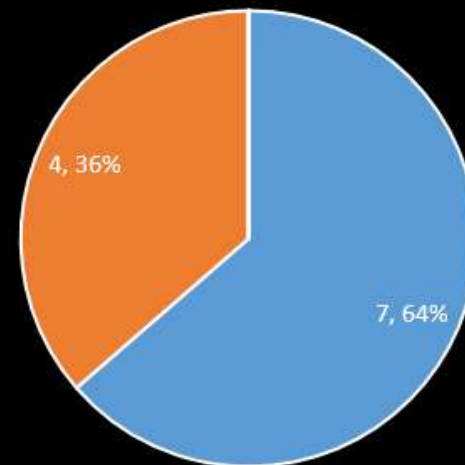


■ Yes ■ No

Yes: 11 (19%)

No: 48 (81%)

Service desk feedback



Very Satisfied: 7 (64%)

Somewhat satisfied: 4 (36%)

Neither satisfied or dissatisfied: 0 (0%)

Somewhat dissatisfied: 0 (0%)

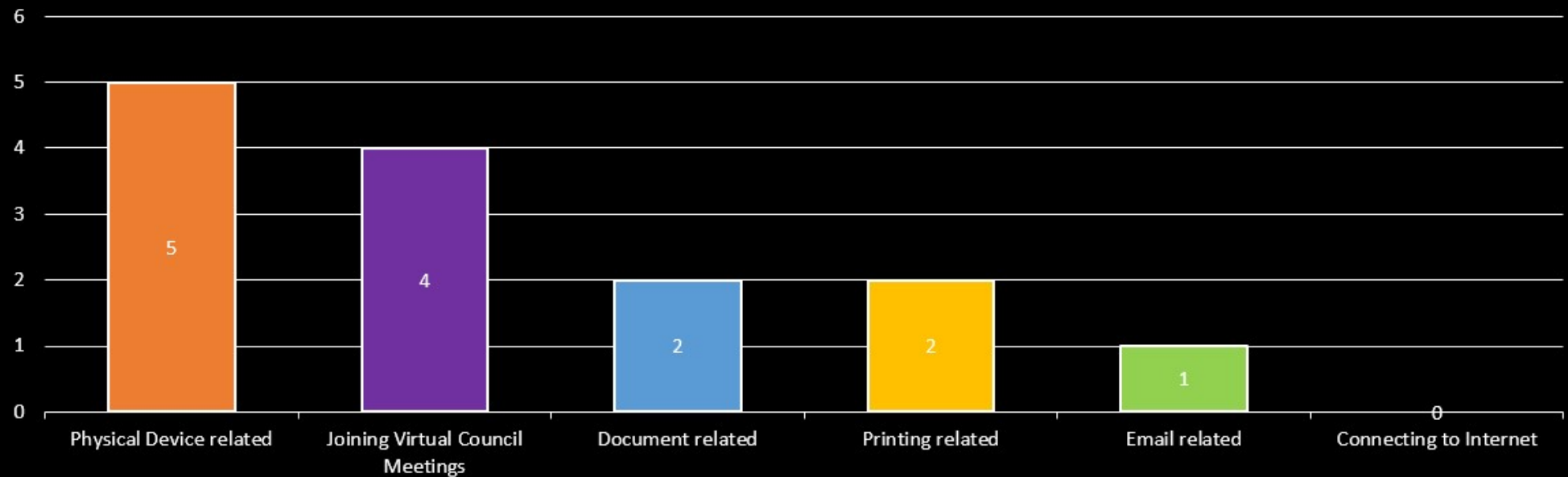
Very dissatisfied: 0 (0%)

I have never used the Strata Service Desk: 0 (0%)

Question: What type of issues you do usually need assistance with?

Do you often require support from others to help with your IT use?

Types of issues

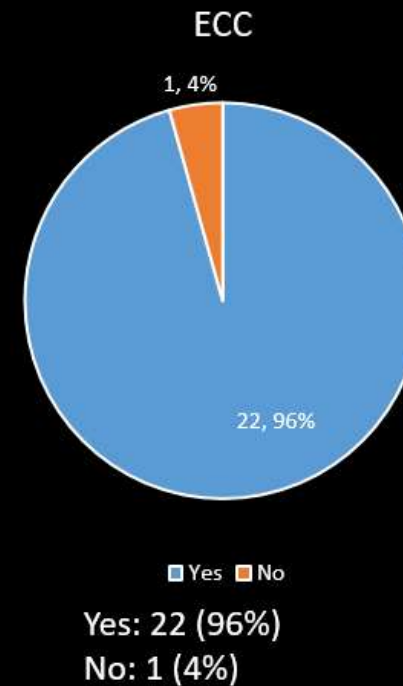
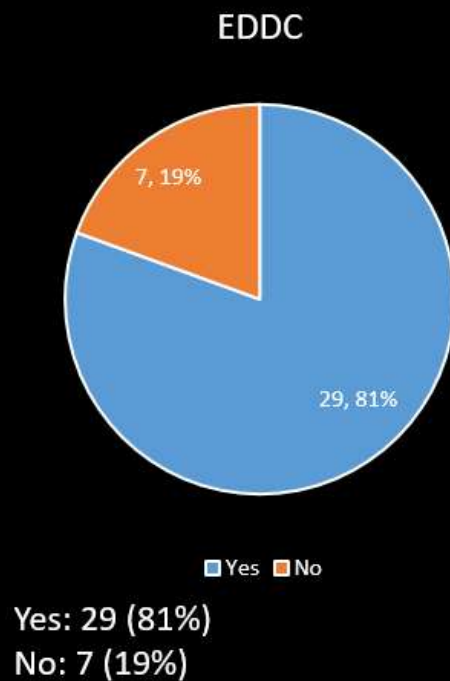


Strata Comment:

Very little support needed from Strata, and we are pleased to see that the feedback of the Strata service was positive when needed.

Question: Are you using your own personal IT equipment to perform or assist you in your role as a councillor?

Are you using your own personal IT equipment to perform or assist you in your role as a Councillor?

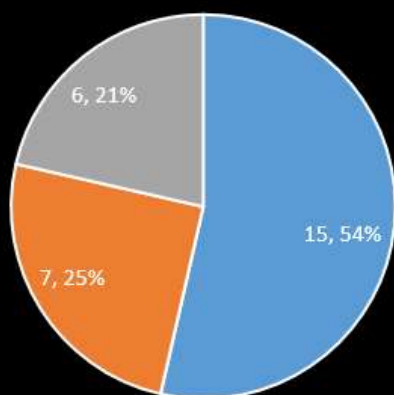


Strata Comment:

The vast majority of Councillors are using a personal device to support their work. The majority simply preferred to use their personal devices when available. In addition these results further support the previous comments that an additional device is needed to manage a virtual council meeting or work with a lengthy report\ email.

Do you use your personal device?

EDDC



■ Prefer using personal device ■ Detailed Work ■ Virtual Council Meetings ■

Prefer using personal device: 15 (54%)

Detailed Work: 7 (25%)

For Virtual Council Meetings: 6 (21%)

"It has the accessories that I like to use"

"One to read documents and the other to use Zoom"

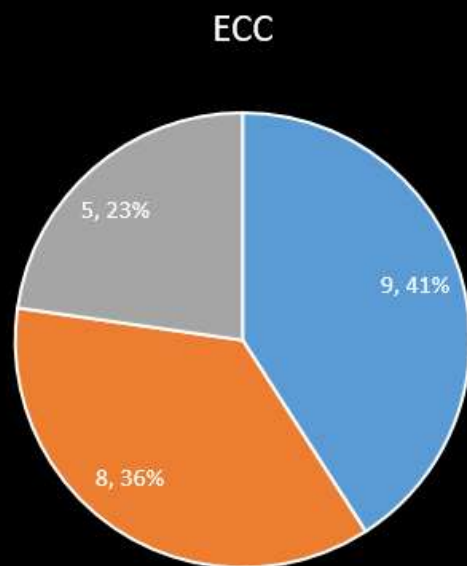
"Desktop is much easier for document and email classification and storage"

"One screen is not enough at meetings"

"Also use own laptop for Zoom meetings as easier to use reactions facilities and see more participants on the screen"

"My laptop offers more usable functionality, and my mobile phone allows me to see my emails when away from wifi which the iPad does not. I find the iPad very useful as a secondary/support device (particularly with remote and physical meetings) and for some specific tasks"

Do you use your personal device?



Prefer using personal device: 9 (41%)
Detailed Work: 8 (36%)
For Virtual Council Meetings: 5 (23%)

"Virtual Council meetings require 2 screens"

"I have access to Global Desktop, much better and allows a better organisation of files and work"

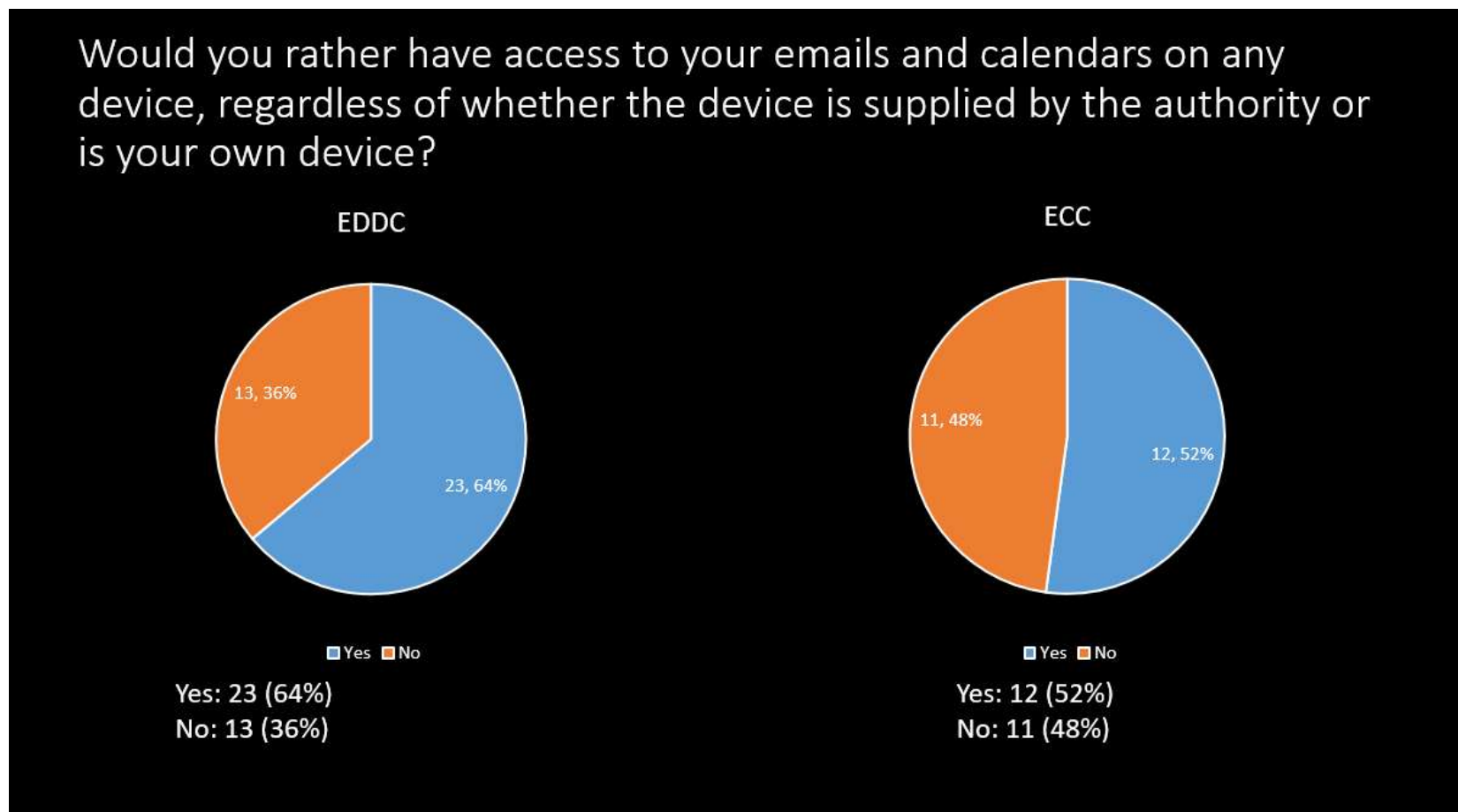
"Executive Cllrs use a WhatsApp group for communication. Meetings arranged via Eventbrite require access to the app which is not available for download on the Cllr iPad"

"I find my laptop better for lengthier document drafting, virtual meetings, MS Teams and research"

"I know how to use it and it postdates 2010"

"My desktop is much easier to use to search research read and write documents. I could not do my job as a Councillor effectively if I was reliant just on the ECC iPad"

Question: Would you rather have access to your emails and calendars on any device, regardless of whether the device is supplied by the authority or is your own device?

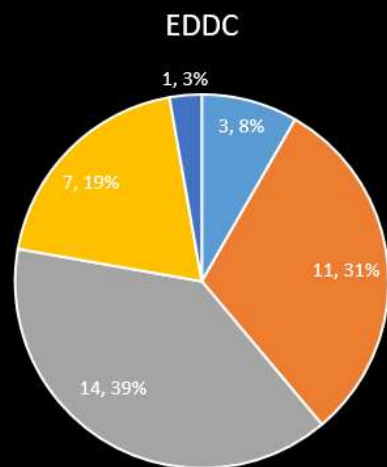


Strata Comment:

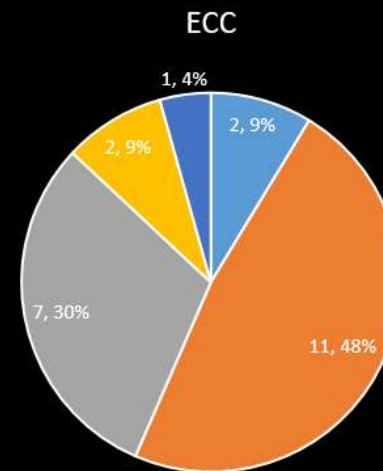
This is one of the more interesting responses and although it favours a “bring your own device” approach, the results aren’t hugely definitive, especially on Exeter’s side. Further on there were comments highlighting the need for separation of Council duties from personal devices to maintain a work\life balance, and other comments suggesting that having personal and councillor activities on one device would actually be beneficial. Other comments highlighted the importance of having access to emails when ‘out and about’, suggesting email access on smartphones or SIM-enabled tablets.

Question: To improve security, would you accept an increase in the number of authentication steps to enable you to access your emails and calendars from any device?

To improve security, would you accept an increase in the number of authentication steps to enable you to access your emails and calendars from any device?



Strongly Agree: 2 (8%)
Agree: 11 (31%)
Neither Agree or disagree: 14 (39%)
Disagree: 7 (19%)
Strongly Disagree: 1 (3%)

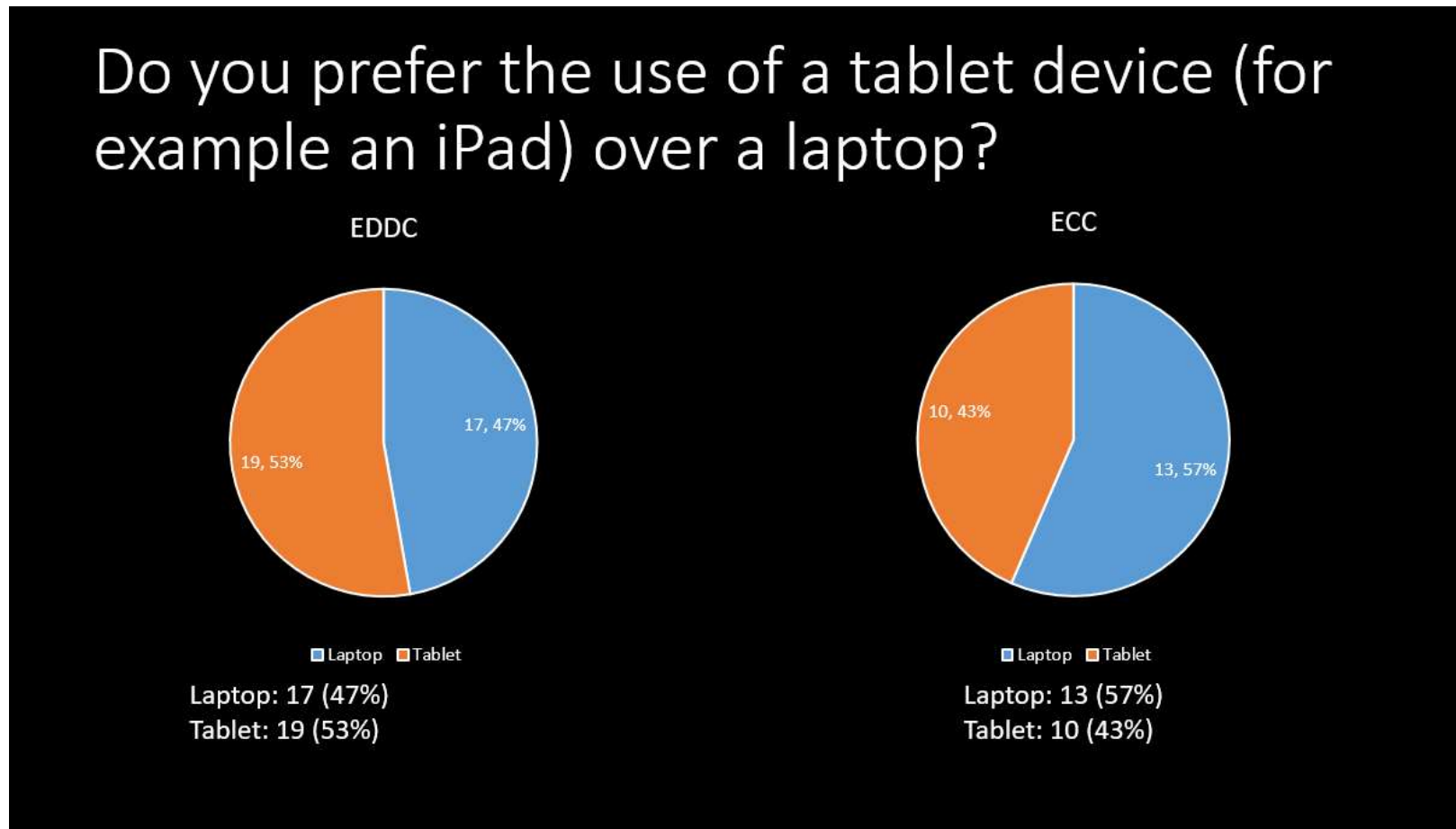


Strongly Agree: 2 (9%)
Agree: 11 (48%)
Neither Agree or disagree: 7 (30%)
Disagree: 2 (9%)
Strongly Disagree: 1 (4%)

Strata Comment:

This was a very mixed response and there are a few reasons for this. Firstly, the implications of answering positively are not presented. Secondly, the question itself may not have been fully understood. Security of the devices and access to Council data will be reviewed as part of this exercise, and as ever the balance of security versus usability is difficult to get right.

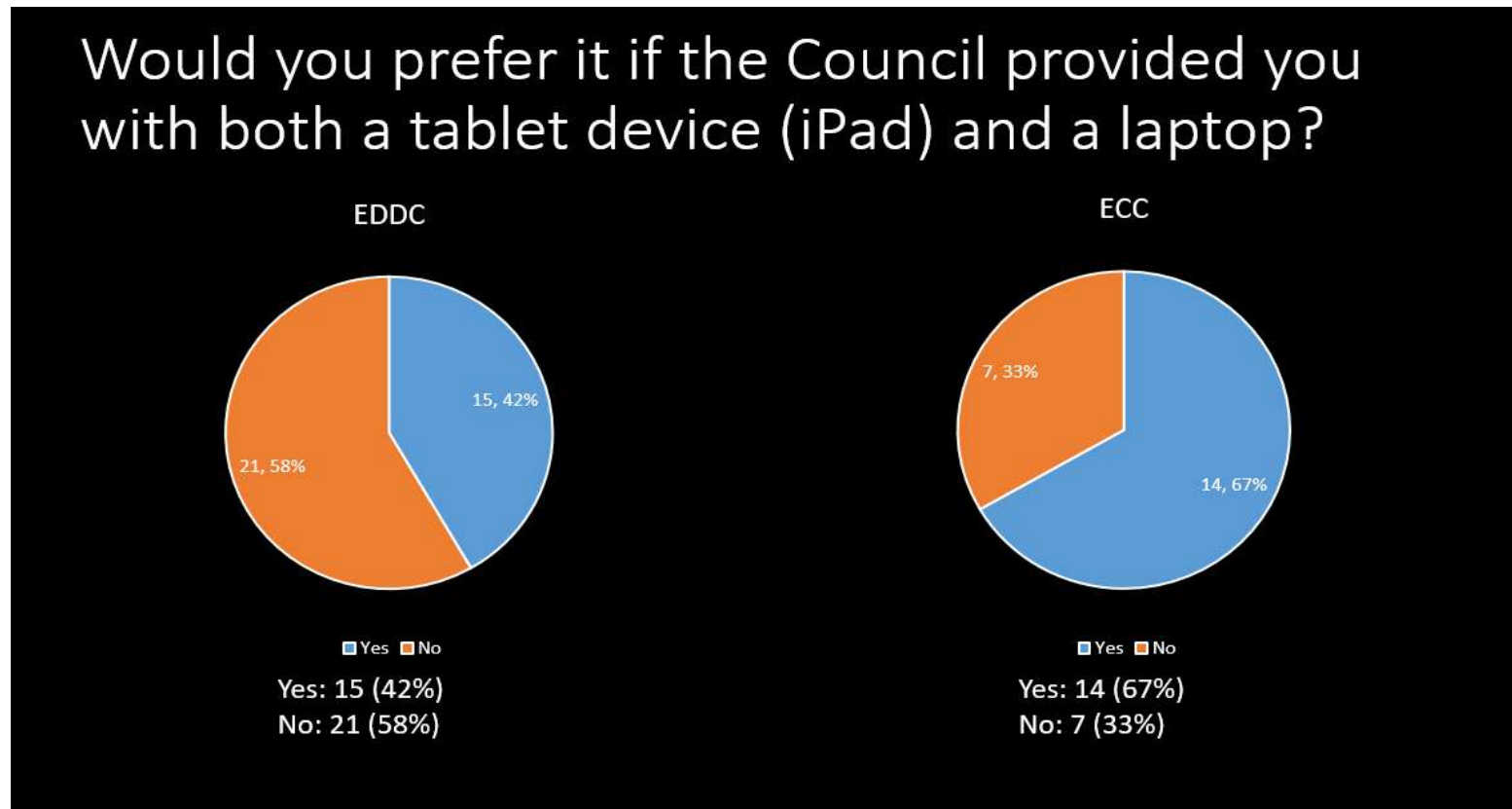
Question: Do you prefer the use of a tablet (iPad device for example) device over a laptop?



Strata Comment:

Not entirely convincing either way for either Council, however the question did not include an answer of "no preference", for which a handful of Councillors separately wrote asking us to discount their answer. However, this will be a cost decision for the Councils to make and also considerations will need to be made on whether or not we wish to provide the Councillors with an option of either.

Question: Would you prefer it if the Council provided you with both a tablet device (iPad) and a laptop?



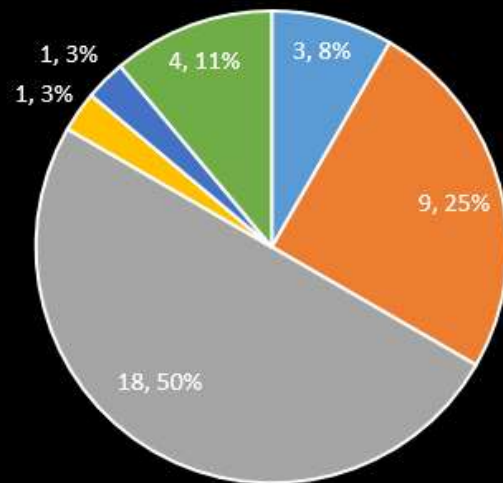
Strata Comment:

Different results for the two authorities. This would be a Council decision based on cost.

Question: How helpful do you find ModernGov?

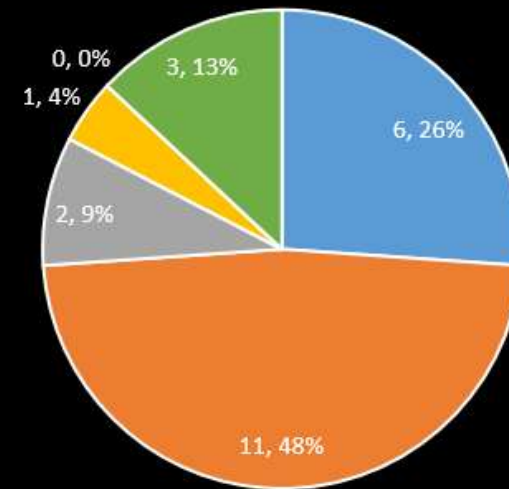
How helpful do you find ModernGov?

EDDC



Very helpful: 3 (8%)
Somewhat Helpful: 9 (25%)
Neither helpful or unhelpful: 18 (50%)
Somewhat unhelpful: 1 (3%)
Very unhelpful: 1 (3%)
I have never used ModernGov: 4 (11%)

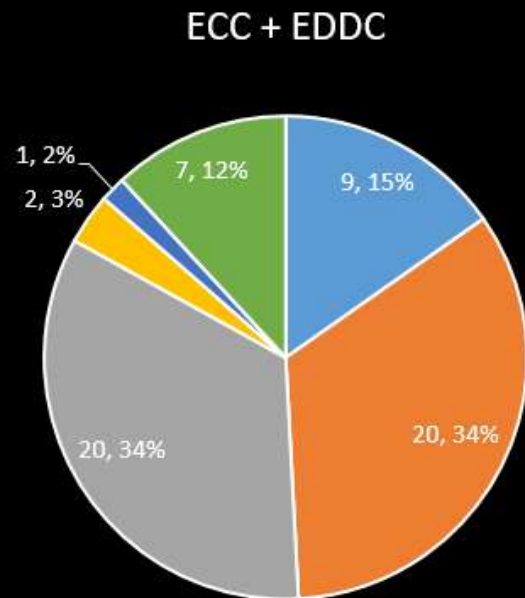
ECC



Very helpful: 6 (26%)
Somewhat helpful: 11 (48%)
Neither helpful nor unhelpful: 2 (9%)
Somewhat unhelpful: 1 (4%)
Very unhelpful: 0 (0%)
I have never used ModernGov: 3 (13%)

Question: Please can you advise what suggestions you would have to improve the ModernGov application?

Feedback on ModernGov



Very helpful: 9 (15%)
Somewhat helpful: 20 (34%)
Neither helpful or unhelpful: 20 (34%)
Somewhat unhelpful: 2 (3%)
Very unhelpful: 1 (2%)
I have never used ModernGov: 7 (12%)

"Accessing ModernGov has been one of my ongoing issues as it has never worked properly – if it does work it is impossible to close a page and move to something else"

"Navigation of documents is challenging where there are over 100 pages"

"The facility to edit documents and highlight sections as well as add in any comments is very useful"

"All I need seems to be in the many emails I get and can't manage like I could in Outlook"

"I don't have confidence in using it and being able to find work when I need it"

"It's OK sometimes difficult to access and crashes"

More comments on ModernGov

“Papers to scroll down and up, rather than side to side as present as I find this very irritating”

“Navigation of documents is challenging where there are over 100 pages. Ideally provide shortcut link to each agenda item”

“I can’t penetrate it. I haven’t sought help. I’m not sure what I’m missing. All I need seems to be in the many emails I get and can’t manage like I could in Outlook”

“When I first used it seemed to have some ability to annotate documents but now I can’t work out how to do it again and it’s not clear how it functions in terms of saving those documents. So I don’t have confidence in using it”

“it doesn’t give me access to all Committee Agendas, etc. eg, Planning Committee”

“I manage without it very well, not sure what I’m missing by not using it, or how it could be useful”

“It is just too clumsy and tedious. For good productivity, operations need to be more fluid or they don’t get used”

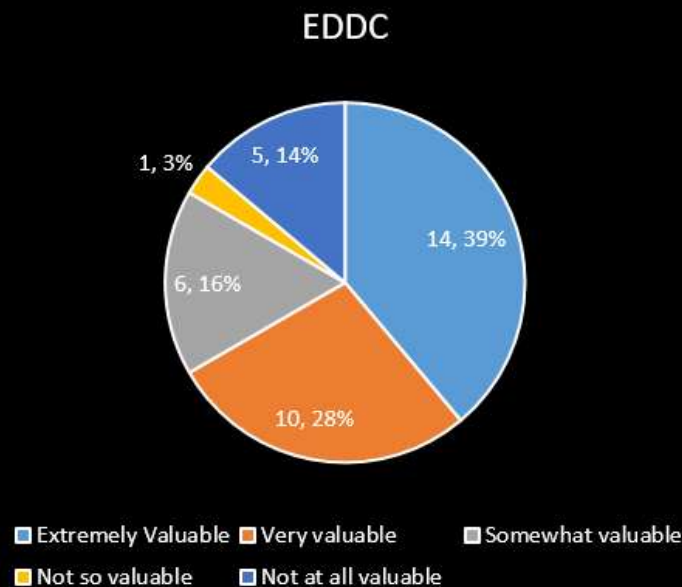
“Very rarely use”

Strata Comment:

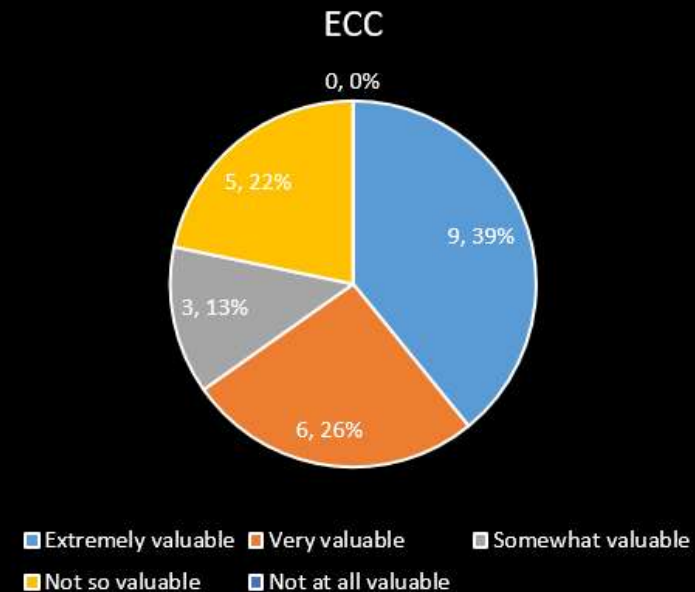
Very mixed from the authorities and it seems clear that the Councils are not getting the most of ModernGov, to the point some Councillors do not know how to use it, or even what it can do. A refresher exercise for the ModernGov system should be undertaken for all Councillors so the usage and understanding is consistent across the board.

Question: Is your current authority provided device valuable for use in both physical and virtual council meetings?

Is your current authority provided device valuable for use in both physical and virtual council meetings?



Extremely valuable: 14 (39%)
Very valuable: 10 (28%)
Somewhat valuable: 6 (16%)
Not so valuable: 1 (3%)
Not at all valuable: 5 (14%)



Extremely valuable: 9 (39%)
Very valuable: 6 (26%)
Somewhat valuable: 3 (13%)
Not so valuable: 5 (22%)
Not at all valuable: 0 (0%)

Strata Comment:

Mostly positive results in Exeter despite the complaints about the aging devices, and less positive in East Devon despite the more recent ones.

More comments future solution

“I prefer an Android laptop [Lenovo]. Whatever is provided must be touch screen and allow you to scroll”

“I am not comfortable with Office software and android laptop software”

“I find it easier to use Microsoft apps”

“Having to use a personal device for Cllr work makes maintaining a work life balance much more difficult”

“I have my own IT equipment and do not want anymore devices”

“A SIM-enabled device would facilitate access to documents, emails, google maps, google search and other location-based tools while out in the field”

Strata Comment:

Comments that highlight the range of solutions that would need to be implemented to satisfy everybody's needs.

Summary & Recommendations

What have we learned from this exercise?

- 1) There is no single solution that will address all of the identified needs of the Councillors who responded
- 2) That having a single device/screen for Virtual Council meetings is very challenging
- 3) That devices need to be refreshed (replaced after a period of time) to ensure they do not go end of life, and budgets need to be set by the Councils to support this
- 4) EDDC and ECC are not maximising or realising the benefits of ModernGov and a refresher exercise is required for Councillors
- 5) Security restrictions need reviewing to improve usability, especially around calendar appointments, email attachments and application installs

Therefore as a next step, Strata will discuss the findings with the Client Leads and Democratic Service Leads of the two authorities and then look to identify potential solutions to the requirements.

These will then be presented back to Councillor representatives for consideration.
