

Consultation Report – Public Spaces Protection Order, Bicester Town Centre

Consultation Approach

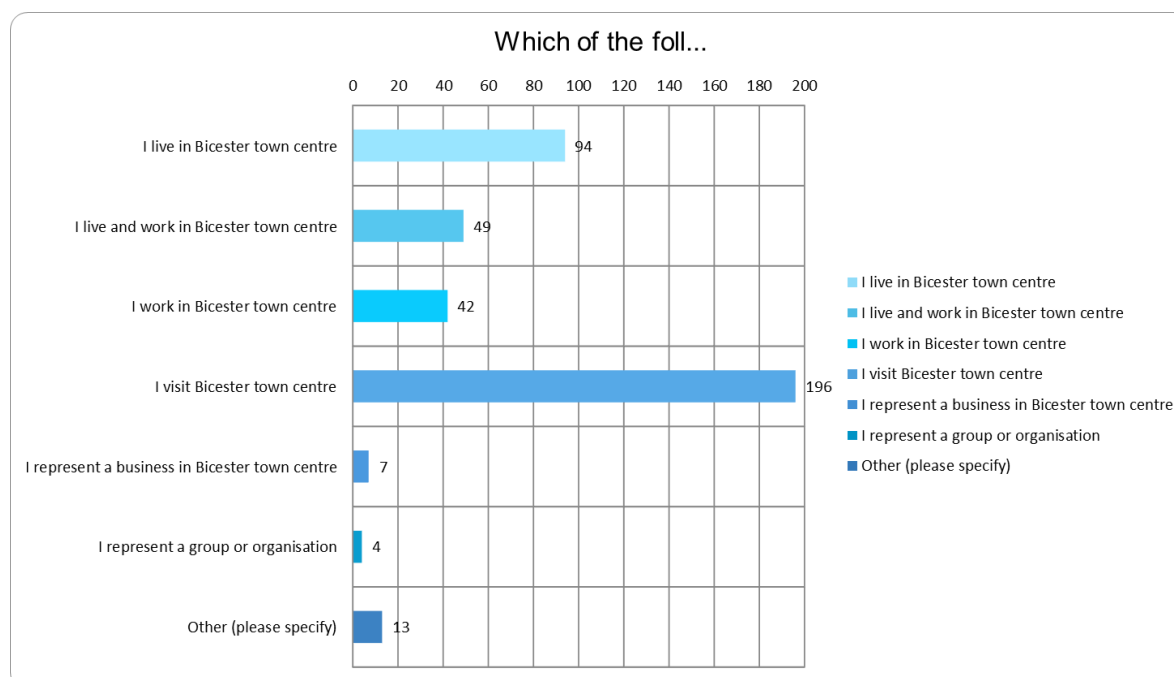
The public consultation on the proposal to introduce a Public Spaces Protection Order for Bicester Town Centre was opened on 18 March 2022 and ran for 3 weeks, closing on Friday 8 April 2022.

The consultation sought views on perceptions of anti-social behaviour (ASB), street drinking and begging in and around the town centre and on the impact of these behaviours. It sought specific responses on whether respondents thought that Cherwell District Council should seek to prohibit ASB, street drinking and begging in Bicester town centre through a Public Spaces Protection Order.

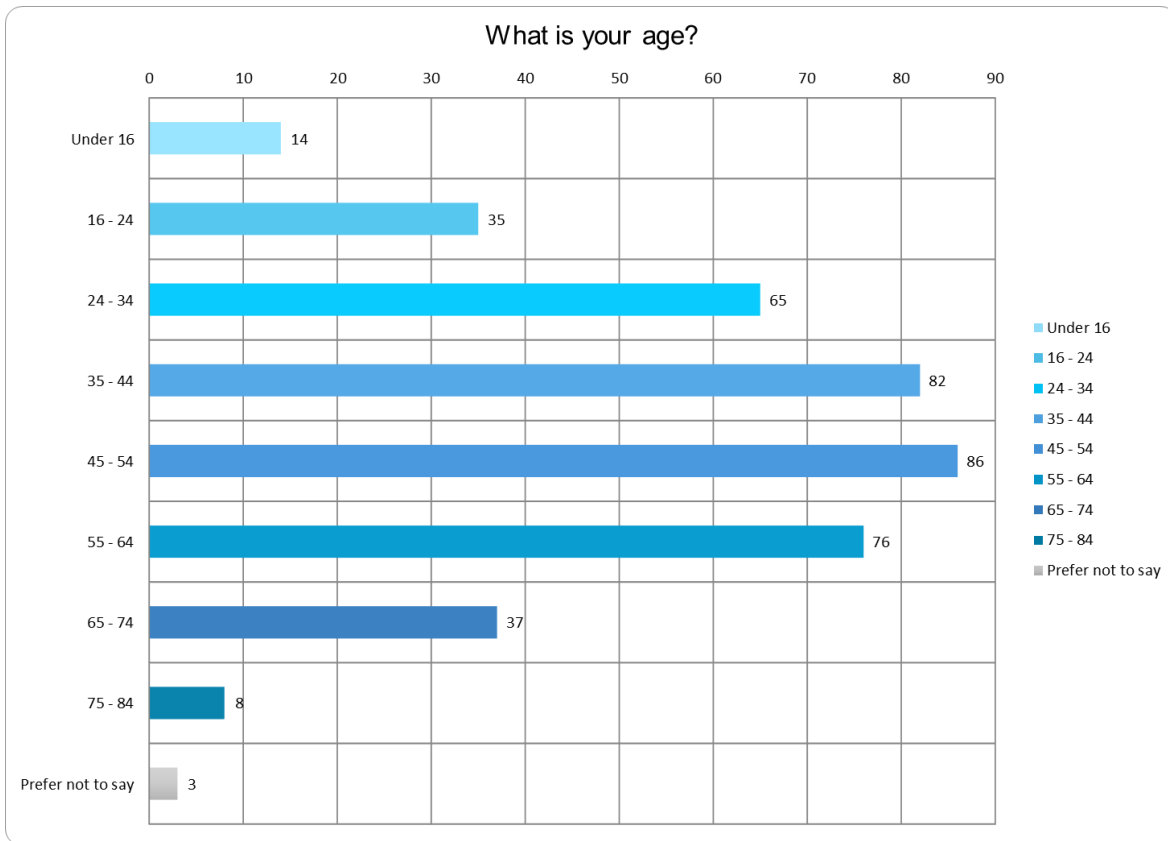
Respondents were able to complete an on-line survey or respond in writing. The survey was promoted on the council's website, via its social media channels and through face-to-face engagement in the town centre with visitors and businesses. Direct contact was made with a number of stakeholders to make them aware of the consultation, including Bicester Town Centre, Thames Valley Police, local elected members, Bicester Chamber of Commerce and Bicester Vision.

Response data

There were 1041 visits to the consultation page on the council's website and 407 responses in total. The table below shows how the respondents described their relationship to Bicester town centre. (Note- not all the respondents replied to all the questions and therefore the total number of responses varies by question).

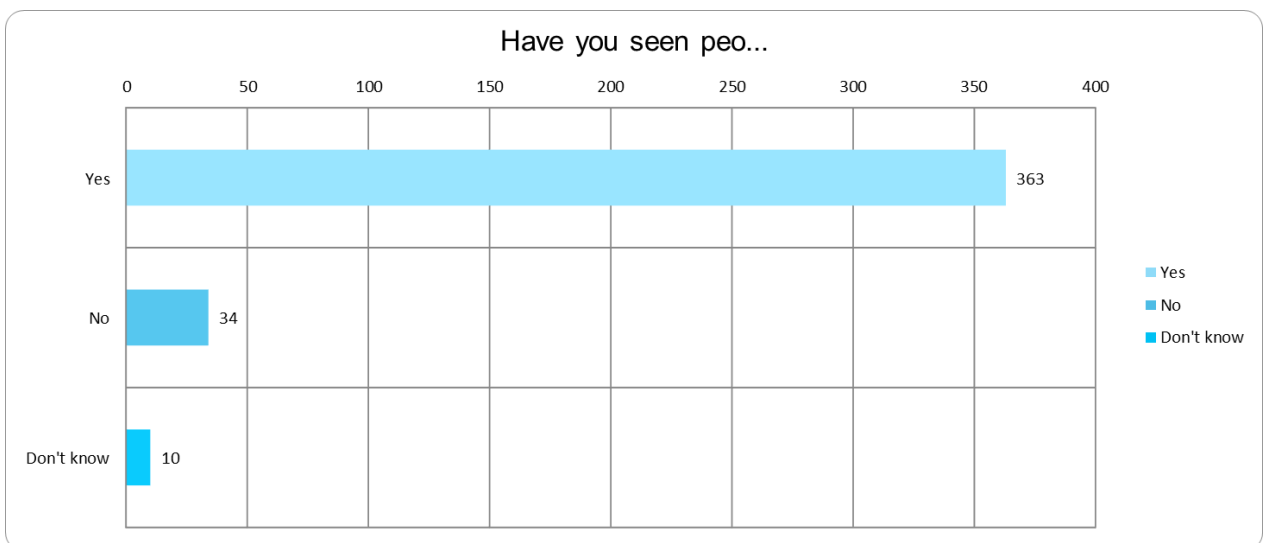


Age Profile of Respondents:

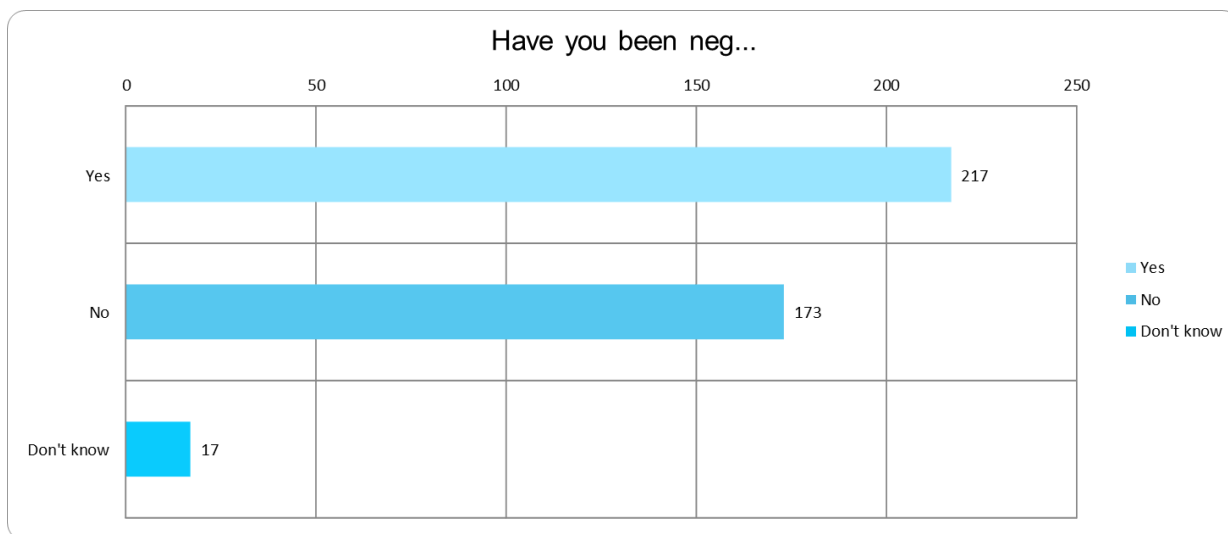


Analysis of Responses to Survey Questions on ASB

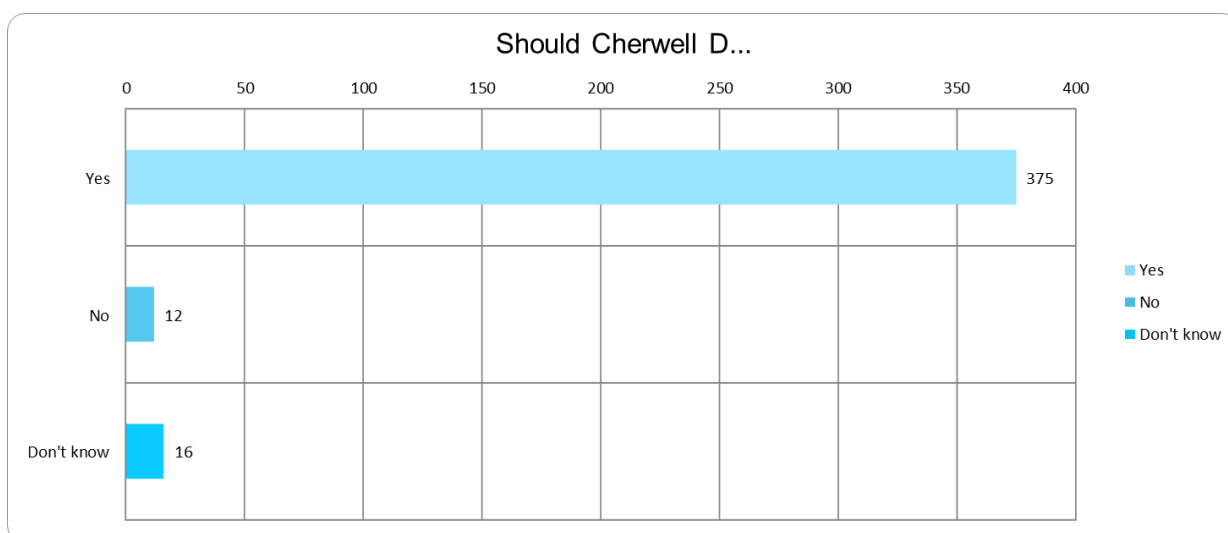
Have you seen people (individual or groups) in Bicester town centre behaving in such a way that is likely to cause alarm or distress or concern for safety in the last 12 months?



Have you been negatively affected by this issue in the last 12 months?



Should Cherwell District Council seek to prohibit anti-social behaviour in Bicester town centre through a Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO)?



Summary of Negative Responses:

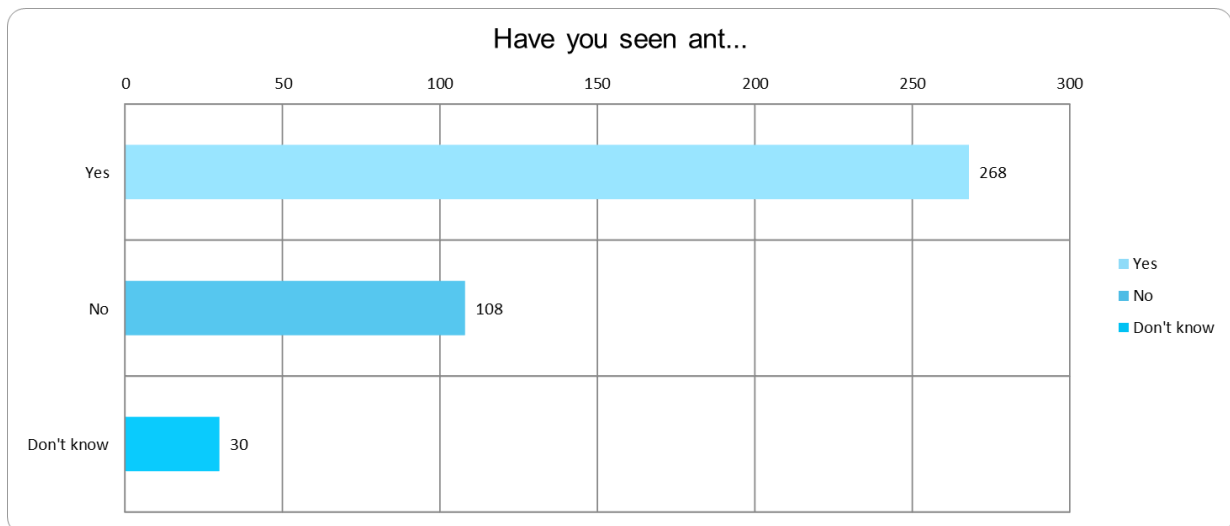
There were 12 responses that disagreed that the council should introduce a PSPO prohibiting ASB in the town centre. Reasons given in the free text comments section of the survey for these responses are summarised below-

- Several respondents commented that further community or youth centres are needed to provide better facilities for young people or the homeless.
- 1 respondent commented on the need to improve the town centre.
- 1 respondent commented that a PSPO would be 'unnecessary overkill' and that it could impact in beggars and the homeless, making their lives more difficult.
- 1 respondent advocated doing more to investigate the cause of the issues and adopting a hybrid approach.
- 1 respondent commented that a PSPO will just move the problem elsewhere

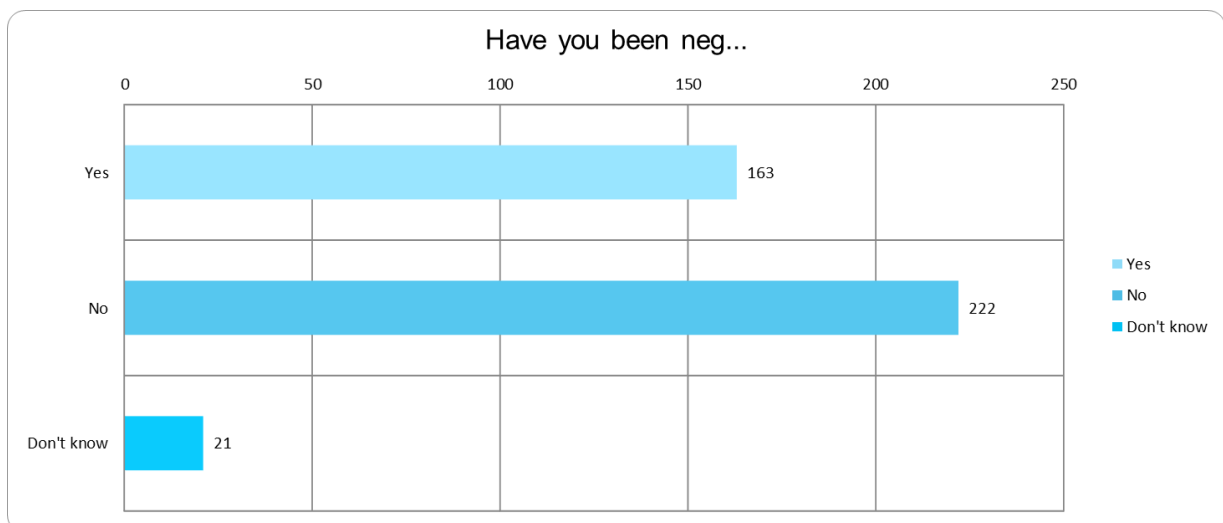
- 1 respondent comment that a PSPO will give people a very negative view of Bicester Town Centre and that the PSPO would be a 'sledge hammer to crack a nut'.
- 1 respondent commented that there are no longer enough Police to carry out low level enforcement effectively, despite their best efforts and that there are already laws to prevent the behaviour subject to the proposed PSPO.
- 4 respondents commented that the Police and council should tackle the individuals causing the problem and not create general restrictions applying to everyone.
- 2 respondents commented on concerns about the potential for abuse of power or over-zealous enforcement.

Street Drinking

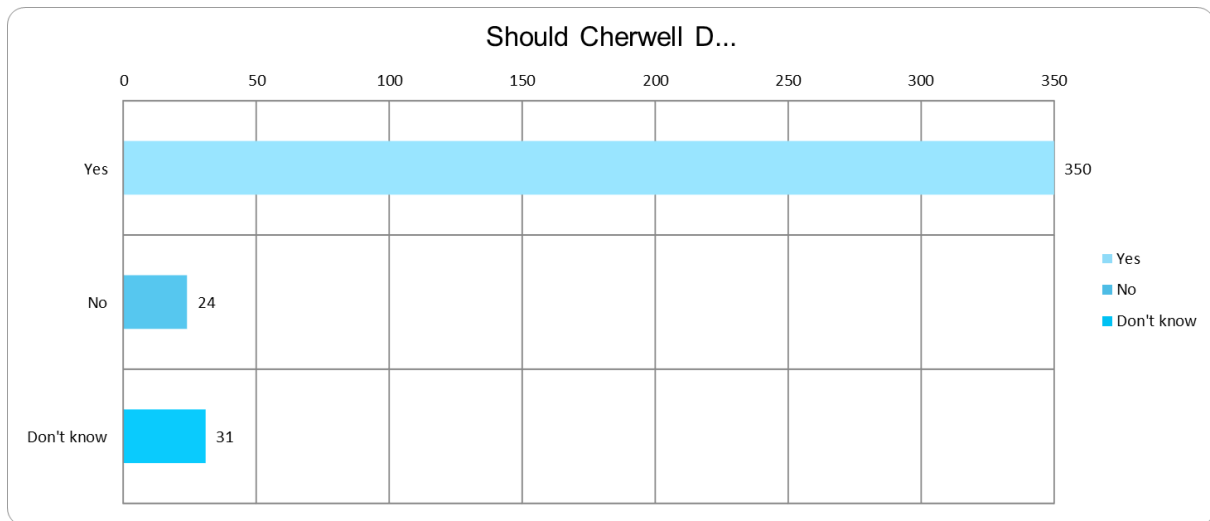
Have you seen anti-social behaviour associated specifically with street drinking in the last 12 months in Bicester town centre?



Have you been negatively affected by this issue in the last 12 months?



Should Cherwell District Council seek to prohibit street drinking in Bicester town centre through a Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO)?

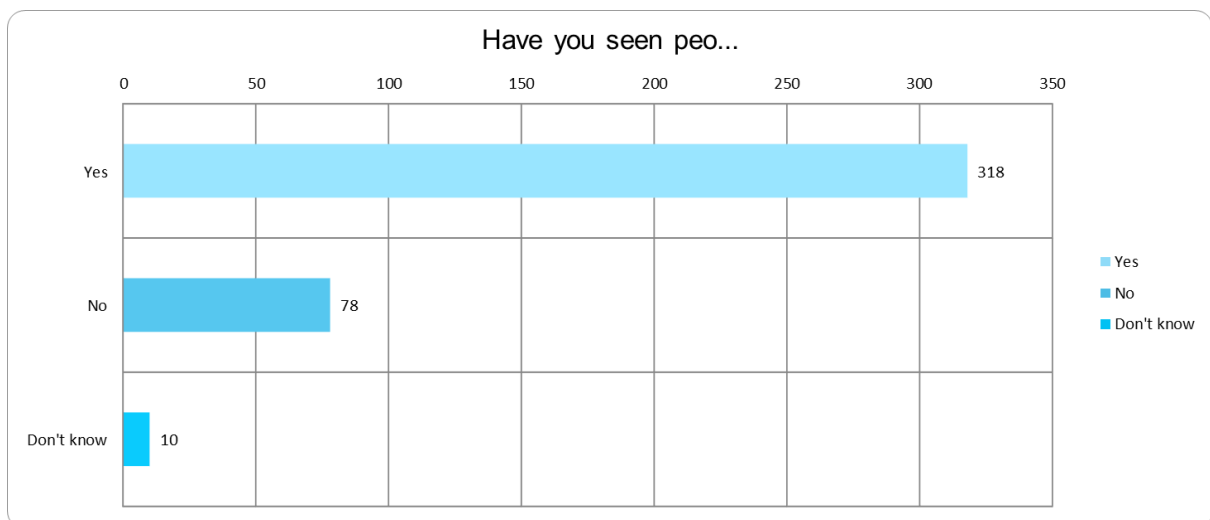


There were fewer comments in support of negative responses to the question of whether the council should introduce a prohibition on street drinking. Some of the comments duplicated the objections to the proposal to introduce a prohibition on ASB (e.g. that the individuals responsible for the behaviour should be targeted and a general prohibition was not necessary or fair on the wider population). The comments which specifically supported a negative response to the proposal to prohibit street drinking were:

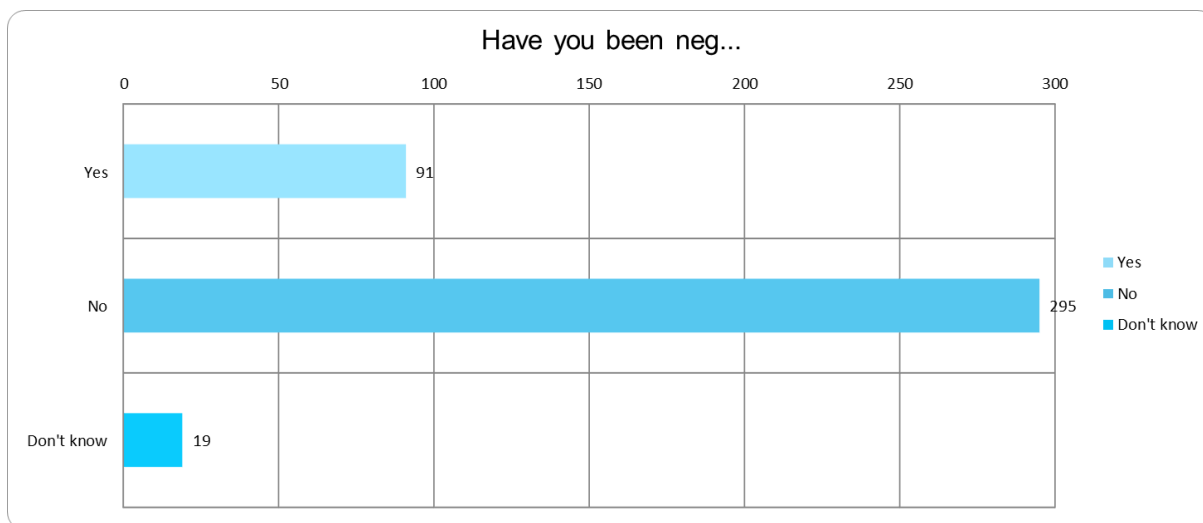
- That 'Street Drinking' itself is not the issue, it is people coming out of Licensed Premises having been allowed to consume too much alcohol.
- That the Police have all the necessary powers already but do not have the resources to tackle the problems.
- That a PSPO would affect events in Garth park.

Begging

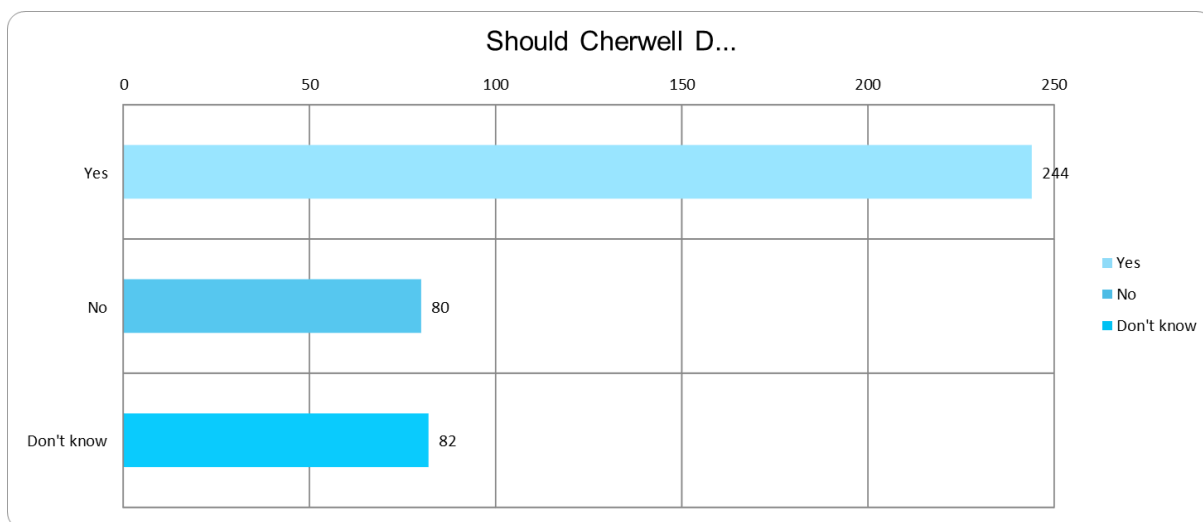
Have you seen people begging in Bicester town centre in the last 12 months?



Have you been negatively affected by this issue in the last 12 months?



Should Cherwell District Council seek to prohibit begging in Bicester town centre through a Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO)?



There were more negative responses to the proposal to prohibit begging. Comments supporting the opposition to this proposal included:

- That punitive action against beggars and the homeless is not appropriate.
- That more help and support is required for the homeless rather than banning begging.
- There are already laws that enable the Police to deal with begging.
- That busking should not be prohibited.
- That the sale of the Big Issue should be allowed to continue.
- That genuine destitute people need sign posting to support agencies rather than being fined.
- That the proposal is a gross misuse of powers. A PSPO would blanket everyone whereas discretion can be applied to our existing laws.
- That individuals can make their own decisions as to whether to donate to beggars, who may or may not be in genuine need.
- That any begging in the area does not affect the respondent.
- Begging doesn't seem to be a large problem in Bicester, so action is not necessary.