

Whixall Parish Council



Chairman: Ian Mercer

To all Members of the Council. You are hereby summoned to attend a Meeting of the Parish Council of Whixall to be held on Wednesday 8 February 2023 at Whixall Social Centre which will commence at 7.30pm in order to conduct the following business enclosed on the agenda below. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

Signed:

A. Mercer

Date: 1 February 2023

1. Chairman's welcome, announcements and public session

Should a member of the public so require they will be permitted to speak. Public speaking time will be limited to 15 minutes, 3 minutes per speaker

2. Apologies

3. Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary or any other interests or requests for dispensations

Declaration of any disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter to be discussed at the meeting and which is not included in the register of interests. Members are reminded that they are required to leave the room during the discussion and voting on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, whether or not the interest is entered in the register of members interests maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

Members are reminded that they must declare non-pecuniary interests relating to agenda items

4. To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 11 January 2023

5. Reports

Shropshire Councillors; Parish Councillors and Clerk

6. Parish Matters

- To receive an activity report from Marlot Conservation Group (Circulated)
- To resolve to extend the existing Grass Cutting Contract until the end of March 2025.
- To receive an update on the Parish Connectivity survey (Cllr Harris)
- Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (Cllr Harris)
- Hollinwood Green parking and maintenance issues update (Cllr Spenser)

7. Planning (to include items received post agenda)

- a) To receive planning applications from Shropshire Council

22/05736/FUL	Proposed Dog Exercise Area	Glebe Farm, Church Lane
23/00037/FUL	Erection of extension to form enlarged kitchen/diner with en-suite over	Hornspike Lane Farm, Dobsons Bridge, SY13 2QD

- b) To note planning decisions made by Shropshire Council
None received.

8. Finance

- To receive Monthly Balance Record and reconciliation
- To resolve to approve outstanding invoices and payments

Recipient	Reason for Payment	Amount	Ref.	Power of Expenditure
HMRC	PAYE	145.60	56.22	LGA 1972 s112(2)
Employee	Salary for January Hours	219.18	57.22	LGA 1972 s112(2)
Employee	Reimbursement	14.39	58.22	LG(FP)A 1963 s5 / LGA 1972 s.142
NEST	Pension Contributions	57.20	59.22DD	LGS(DP)R 1961 s1

9. Items for Next Agenda

To enable Councillors to bring forward items for the 8 March 2023 meeting agenda.

Whixall Parish Council



Chairman: Ian Mercer

Minutes of the Parish Council's Monthly Meeting held on 11 January 2023 at Whixall Social Centre starting at 7:30pm

Present:

Councillors: Cllr Mercer (Chair); Cllr Weedall; Cllr Harris; Cllr Spenser; Cllr Rodenhurst

Shropshire Councillors: Cllr Broomhall; Cllr Towers

Clerk: A Roberts

Other Organisations 0

Members of the Public 1

1/23 Public Session

No matters were raised.

2/23 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Evans (Holiday); Cllr Rawlinson (Holiday); Cllr Howard (work commitment)

3/23 Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

None declared.

4/23 Minutes of Previous Meeting

It was proposed by Cllr Harris that the draft minutes, of the Ordinary meeting of the Council, held on 9 November 2022 were an accurate record. This was seconded by Cllr Spenser and agreed by all present.

Resolved: The minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 November are an accurate record.

The Chair signed the minutes.

5/23 Reports

Cllrs Broomhall and Towers (Shropshire Council) circulated reports prior to the meeting. The content was noted.

The Clerk's update included the following:

- a. Following the Remembrance Service, £50 had been received from Welsh End Chapel with a request for it to be donated to the Royal British Legion. This has now been done.
- b. Before Christmas, a member of the public donated 12 bottles of wine for the Council to use as it sees fit. The Clerk is storing these until a decision is made.
- c. The notice boards at Moss Cottages, The Social Centre and Hollinwood Green are in need of maintenance. This will be brought forward for a decision in the new financial year.
- d. The Social Centre Committee has withdrawn its application for a grant to support Coronation activities. They have confirmed that the activities will still go ahead.

6/23 Parish Matters

- a. The Marlot
- b. i. The content of the Marlot Activity Report was noted
ii The Marlot Strategy document was discussed by members.
Proposed Cllr Harris, seconded Cllr Spenser, agreed all.

RESOLVED: The Marlot strategy document is adopted for use and will be reviewed every 5 years.

c. Grass Cutting Contract

The current contract holder has confirmed that he is willing to extend the contract by a further 2 years. The Clerk will write to the contractor to establish if there will be any change in the rate and a decision will be made at a future meeting.

d. Hollinwood Green Parking and Maintenance Issues

Cllr Spenser explained that a resident had installed temporary parking facilities on the grassed area adjacent to his property and this had involved making physical changes. This is registered as common land and has been a Council asset since 1975. Cllrs Spenser and Mercer will meet the clerk on site to clarify the location. The Clerk will then carry out more research into how common land can and cannot legally be used by the public.

e. The Coronation of King Charles III

As the Social Centre has withdrawn its grant application, the Council will contact the school to discuss its plans for commemorating the Coronation and the feasibility of a grant application being submitted this financial year.

During the discussion, Cllr Harris reminded members that he had a previously declared interest in the school.

7/23 Parish Council Policies

Proposed Cllr Spenser. Seconded Cllr Harris. Agreed all.

Resolved: The Business Continuity Plan with the addition of Natural England's base as a reserve meeting location, the Training Policy and the amended Grants & Donations Policy are adopted by the Council.

In line with the Business Continuity Plan, the Chairman received from the Clerk an envelope containing the current usernames and passwords. This will be retained unopened.

The Clerk will make enquiries about the approach Shropshire Council would take in the event of the Council becoming inquorate.

8/23 Planning

a. To Consider Applications

22/05490/AGR	Steel framed mono pitch building Land to the North of 9 Moss Lane, SY13 2QE	Notification only
22/05458/AGR	Erection of general-purpose agricultural building Rack Lane Farm	
23/00106/AGR	Proposed building for the storage of equipment and small tools Land opposite Green Acre Farm, Abbeygreen	
22/05573/FUL	New oak-framed 2 storey side extension, oak porch & attic conversion. Dragonfly House, 12a Platt Lane, SY13 2NY	Support with comment*

* Comment: The Council supports this application because it believes that the proposed alterations will enhance the appearance of the existing building.

b. No planning decisions received.

9/23 Financial Matters

a. To receive monthly bank balance record.

The Clerk advised the council of the council's bank balances.

DATE	ACCOUNT NAME	AMOUNT
31 December 2022	Current Account (Working Budget)	£3,551.89
	Savings Account (Reserves)	£11,720.43
TOTAL		£15,272.32

The bank recon

ciliation and statements were checked and approved by Cllr Spenser.

b. To resolve to approve outstanding accounts

Orders for the payment of outstanding invoices and all payments approved remotely (under "Power to Spend" LGA1972 s.112(2) and 124(1). Proposed by Cllr Mercer, seconded by Cllr Weedall and agreed by all.

Resolved: The outstanding accounts should be paid and the payment transactions authorised by two nominated councillors.

Recipient	Reason for Payment	Amount £	Ref.
<u>Paid before the meeting</u>			
C Jones	Grass Cutting Contract	1120.00	47.22
Unity Trust Bank	Quarterly Charges	18.00	48.22DD
<u>To be Paid</u>			
HMRC	PAYE	474.40	49.22
J Ankers	Provision of Senior Citizens Meals	400.00	50.22
Employee	Salary for December hours	196.82	51.22
Employee	Reimbursement	14.85	52.22
NEST	Pension Contributions	57.20	53.22DD
Whixall Social Centre	Room Hire	200.00	54.22
Marlot Conservation Group	Reimbursement	49.49	55.22

c. To consider budget options for 2023/24

Members considered the report circulated in advance of the meeting and the proposed budget and precept.

Proposed Cllr Harris. Seconded Cllr Rodenhurst. Agreed All.

Resolved: The budget for 2023-24 is approved and the precept is set at £11,801 which represents a monthly increase of 26p for band D properties within the Parish.

Budget Headings	2022/23 budget £	2023/24 budget £
Staff costs	5,056	5,562
General Admin	627	690
Meeting Room Hire	334	334
Training	200	220
Grass Cutting	1,500	1,650
Marlot	217	238
Marlot repairs	200	200
Insurance	362	362
Chairman's Fund	700	440
Affiliations	438	587
Events	350	440
Earmarked Reserves	1018	1,078
Total	11,002	11,801

Scheduled date of next meeting:
8 February 2023 (7.30pm)

The meeting closed at 8.59pm.

Marlot Conservation Group (MCG)

Work report to Whixall Parish Council meeting 8 February 2023

Period - 8 January 2023 – 2 February 2023

Once again, this month's work has been dependant of weather and availability of volunteers. It was decided to cordon off the pond area from both the main entrance side and the woodland side. This was done to avoid any safety issues with visitors due to the extensive flooding in the pond area and also to avoid any further damage to the muddy pathways. Unfortunately it was found that the cordon tape had been broken and there was evidence of bicycle tracks along the pond pathways which has caused muddy ruts along the length of these paths. Whilst most of the flood water has now rescinded it has been decided to keep the ponds cordoned off until the ground has time to recover and to avoid further damage to the paths.

The water level along the road ditch has remained high along the pond side and is considerably lower on the meadow side with only a trickle of water flowing through. It was thought that this was caused by a blockage of the drainpipe underneath the main entrance bridge and therefore work commenced on clearing the silt and blockage in the pipe. Rod pipes were used to clear the silt and mud from the main drain pipe, however it was found that there was a still a blockage on the pond side of the drain. Due to the high level of water on this side it was difficult to ascertain what the blockage was but it is thought that it is due to numerous willow roots that have grown across the ditch from willows situated on the bankside that are obstructing the drainpipe entrance. Further work to clear any obstruction could not be done until the water level on this side of the ditch reduces. Whilst working on clearing the pipe we noticed that the side of the bank, on both sides, has started to crumble away and that the water has found its own route through the side of the bank, which is reducing the integrity of the bank that the bridge is laid on. Furthermore, we have found that the concrete base of the bridge has a large crack along its centre line, on both sides, which is a cause for concern. Please see the photographs with this report to see the extent of damage. Having seen this damage, it has been decided to stop any vehicular access into the Marlot via the main entrance; it is however still considered safe for pedestrian traffic, but weekly assessments will be conducted to check any further damage. The MCG considers this damage a possible major issue to health and safety on the Marlot and recommends that the Parish Council bring in a professional to properly survey the bank and bridge structure in order to recommend any action for repair as necessary.

Both meadows have now been completely cleared of all the grass and brash cuttings and these have been re-distributed in the numerous depressions and holes situated within the meadow treeline, out of sight of the meadow pathways. A large pile of willow cuttings still remains on the front meadow and this will be burnt later on when the weather improves as the willow will re-grow if we place this in the depressions and holes. Martin has also carried out more cleaning and repair of the birdboxes in the woodland area.

The review and update of the A5 Marlot information 8 page booklet is still continuing but has been slightly delayed and it is hoped that we can submit a finished A5 information booklet to the Parish Council for the March parish meeting for approval and subsequent printing considerations and decision.

Graham Turnbull
Marlot Conservation Group

2 February 2023

Photos to accompany Marlot Report







Whixall Connectivity Survey

Prepared for the Parish Council by Cllr Dr. R.J.Harris, February 2023

Synopsis

Broadband delivery within the Parish is far from satisfactory with poor connectivity (buffering) and unpredictable speeds. Mobile phone coverage is both unreliable and signal reception poor - which impacts safety concerns for a rural and disperse community.

Due to poor mobile phone coverage Parishioners commonly use WiFi calling as a means of communication placing further importance on Broadband provision. Additionally, as traditional landlines move towards VoIP/SIP increased reliability is essential.

Should the Parish experience a power failure the means to call for any sort of assistance would be limited to an act of providence – being in the right place at the right time with mobile phone reception.

Background

Participants were invited to take part in the survey via postings on Community Facebook™ pages, via the Autumn 2022 Parish Council newsletter (which is delivered to every household in the Parish), and via the Council's own webpage (www.whixallparish.org.uk).

The survey consisted of 12 specific questions, some duplicated as appropriate (see Appendix 1), as it related to Parishioner's use, provision, and perceptions of both Broadband and Mobile phone connectivity within the Parish. Besides providing information regarding their service providers Parishioners were also asked to rate the service received (QR, quality rating), expanded somewhat to give good points and bad points. Rating was on a scale of 1 -10 with 10 being 'extremely satisfied'.

By the end of the survey there were 36 respondents, from 23 postcodes (one undeclared).

Broadband within the Parish is served by five contract providers: Airband, BT, EE, Plusnet, and Sky, with Parishioners using the service for both personal and business use. Mobile phone use is represented by nine contract providers: BT, EE, GiffGaff, ID, Lebara, O2, Sky, Tesco, and Vodaphone, using four networks (EE, Three, O2 and Vodaphone). Again usage is both personal and business.

Results

See Appendix 2 for graphed responses.

Broadband

Provider	n	Per	Both	QR satis	QR speed	Rank
Airband	4		4	7	6.5	3
BT	22	13		4.38	4	6
BT	22		9	6.4	6.4	5
EE	4	3	1	8.5	7.66	1
Plusnet	2	1	1	8.5	7	2
Sky	3		3	7.33	4.66	4

n=number of responders, per=number of personal users, both=number of personal and business users, QR satis=Quality rating (average) for satisfaction, QR speed=Quality rating (average) for speed of signal.
Rank=perceived provision across the Parish.

Broadband Good /Bad points

Provider	Good	Bad
Airband	Communication over issues Better than previous supplier	Unreliable speed with temporary losses Expensive
BT personal	Always contactable	Connectivity, speed, and buffering Often blame Openreach if there is a problem Blame infrastructure Speeds typically at the bottom end of guaranteed
BT both	Comparative price Responsive when Broadband fails <i>Installed cable to house</i>	Expensive Frequent buffering poor download speeds Blame infrastructure
EE	Helpline, customer service Stable, reliable	Buffering sometimes
Plusnet	Good customer service Consistent speed and connection	Provided speeds not set high enough Do not always reach guaranteed minimum
Sky	Reliable	Slow speeds Price rises

Changes:

X1 BT to Sky because of price

X2 BT to Airband because of download speeds

X1 BT would like to change but feels infrastructure would not improve provision by anyone

Mobile phone reception /coverage

Provider	Network	n	QR	Good points	Bad points
BT*	EE	6	1.8	Discounted with other BT <i>WiFi calling at home</i>	No reliable signal
EE	EE	12	1.75	<i>WiFi calling at home</i>	No reliable signal
GiffGaff	O2	1	4		'flaky' signal

ID**	Three	1	3	WiFi calling at home	No reliable signal
Lebara***	Vodafone	1	8	Price and overall good signal	None
O2	O2	10	2.1	WiFi calling at home	Poor signal and local coverage
Sky	O2	1	1	Good contract, reasonable price	Poor signal, sometimes none
Tesco+	O2	1	1	None	Everything
Vodafone	Vodafone	7	1.6	Packages (emails and text)	No reliable signal

n=number of responders, QR Quality rating (average).

Discussion.

Broadband.

Provision comes from five contract providers with most using BT, which probably stems from an historical presence within the Parish. Other providers, apart from Airband, make use of the same infrastructure which places all of them on a par with regard to service delivery. Within the Parish broadband connectivity is typically via FTTC/ADSL (aka VDSL2), with the use of existing copper (and in some instances aluminium) cables to deliver signal to customers. Technically FTTC is considered to exist if the terminating fibre is within 1000ft/300m of customer premises. Therefore for many premises within the Parish provision of FTTC is incorrect and the provision of superfast broadband over-hyped. Furthermore, ADSL is only good for distances of 2.75km/1.7m before signal strength starts to decay and it is a technology sensitive to interference via 'crosstalk' - which affects the maximum download link connection (making maximum download speeds only available to a limited number of users).

It is considered that many of the issues surrounding poor provision of Broadband to the Parish is heavily influenced by the dependence on what is an aged infrastructure and dated technology. For one Parishioner, served by infrastructure emanating in Wales, they have FTTP (full-fibre to premises) whereas FTTP for all has been 'promised' by 2027. Checking the Openreach website (<https://www.openreach.com/fibre-broadband/where-when-building-ultrafast-full-fibre-broadband>) accessed on 1st February 2023, for the Whixall Exchange there are 'no major plans to build in this exchange' meaning, possibly, that 2027 is just a number!

Provision of services by Airband, using 'point-to-point' line of sight wireless technologies, is already experiencing some fundamental deficiencies. Physical barriers e.g. trees and especially wet trees can degrade signal reception and things as simple as fog and rain have the potential to affect the signal received. A whole raft of complaints regarding Airband services in Shropshire and Hereford grows daily (<https://www.ispreview.co.uk/index.php/2022/12/airband-suffers-slow-broadband-speeds-in-shropshire-and-herefordshire.html>) accessed 1st February 2023.

As a solution many households may be eligible under the Project Gigabit scheme, and this should be explored further (<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/connecting-shropshire/project-gigabit/>). Households in Whixall are listed under type A – 1A 25.02 – which is the second phase of this roll-out (phase 1 is predominantly in south Shropshire). A decision on this will be known by March 2023.

If households are not included in 25.02, or become deselected from inclusion, they will be eligible for a voucher scheme. This scheme will provide £7000 per household (£4500 from central funding, topped up to £7k by Shropshire Council) as an additional incentive to companies to provide connectivity.

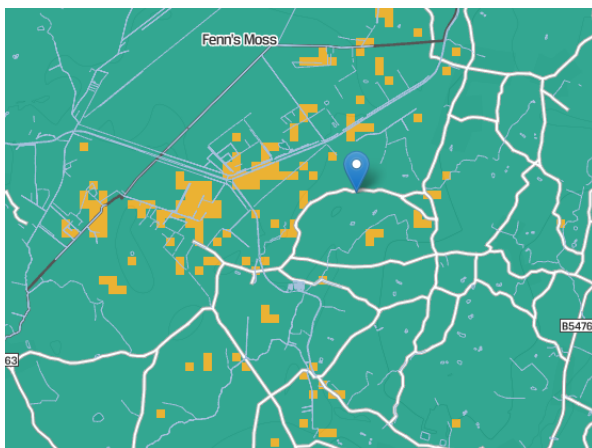
Mobile phone reception /coverage

According to <https://checker.ofcom.org.uk/en-gb/mobile-coverage#pc=sy132sa&uprn=10013137441>

(accessed 1st February 2023) the following table indicates mobile availability within Whixall (using the author's postcode as a filter). 'Voice' means coverage for making phone calls, 'Data' is internet service availability (inclusive of 3G) and 'Enhanced Data includes 4G technology' (or at least speeds greater than 3G). This apparently shows we are "**likely** to have good coverage" with all services.

Provider	Voice	Data	Enhanced Data
EE	✓	✓	✓
Three	✓	✓	✓
O2	✓	✓	✓
Vodafone	✓	✓	✓

Observation and comparisons of 'maps' of coverage show 'OK coverage' for both EE and O2 with no deficiencies (excepting that all show a blackspot area on Alders Lane), while EE (BT) show 'some problems' (see figure, areas marked in orange, green is OK coverage), with problems increasing further if one views the Three Network map (not shown).



There is clearly a discrepancy between what is provided, and user's perception of provision, to what the networks (and Shropshire Authority) consider is being provided. Use of mobile phones away from a WiFi connection may provide 3G (and possibly 4G) connectivity but with such a weak signal use is unviable.

There is movement within Shropshire to roll out 5G (the WMR5G initiative with Worcestershire for healthcare initiatives, 2020), with services providers switching on 5G as soon as they are able. 5G connectivity was switched on in Shrewsbury (by EE) back in September 2021 with EE further stating in May 2022 that they had 50% UK population coverage by this technology. Before Shropshire Authority embraces this technology for urban areas, with many already having decent 4G connectivity, the level and coverage of mobile technology in rural areas requires equal priority if the rural residents of Shropshire, and the businesses rural areas support, are not to be disenfranchised further.

Appendix 1.

Whixall Parish Council Connectivity Survey

What is your postcode?

BROADBAND CONNECTIONS

B1. Who is your current broadband provider?

B2. Do you use broadband mainly for personal or business use?

Mainly personal use

Mainly business use

Both

I do not use broadband

B3. How satisfied are you with the QUALITY of your broadband connection? 1 = not at all / 10 = extremely satisfied

B4. How satisfied are you with the SPEED of your broadband connection? 1 = not at all / 10 = extremely satisfied

B5. What are the good points about your broadband provider?

What are the bad points about your broadband provider?

If you have changed broadband provider within the last 2 years, who were you with and why did you change?

MOBILE CONNECTIONS

M1. Is there a reliable mobile signal at your property?

M2. Who is your current mobile provider?

M3. Do you use your mobile mainly for personal or business use?

Mainly personal use

Mainly business use

Both

I do not use a mobile

M4. How satisfied are you with the QUALITY of your mobile connection? 1 = not at all / 10 = extremely satisfied

M5. What are the good points about your mobile provider?

M6. What are the bad points about your mobile provider?

M7. If you have changed mobile provider within the last 2 years, who were you with and why did you change?

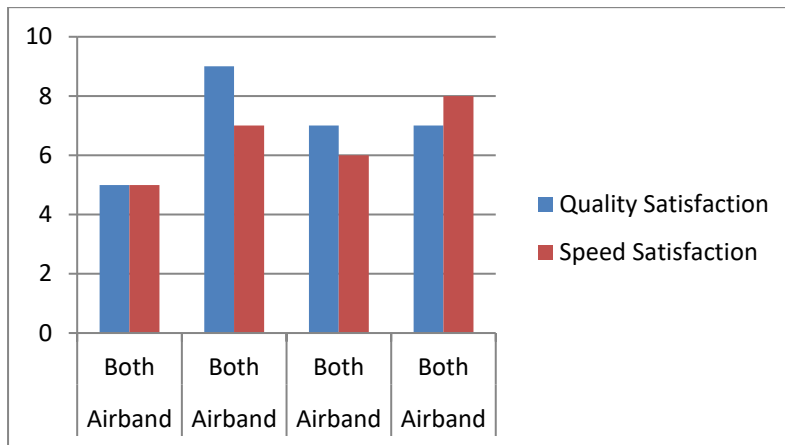
OTHER INFORMATION

Do you have any other comments about broadband or mobile connectivity within the Parish?

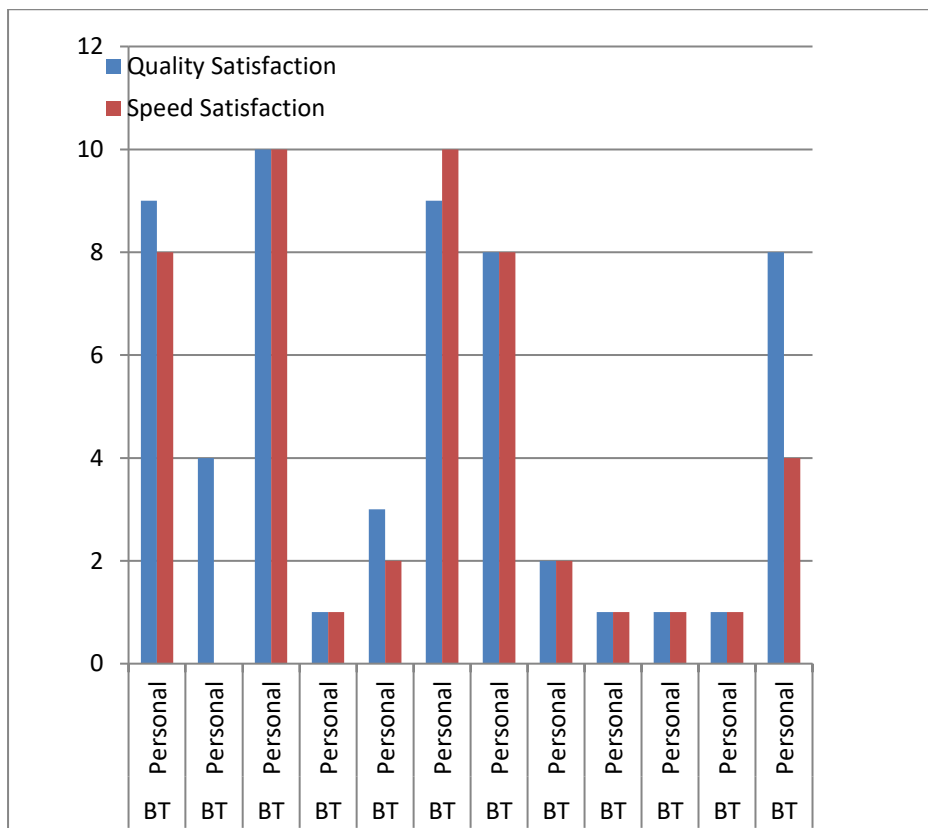
Appendix 2.

Specific responses.

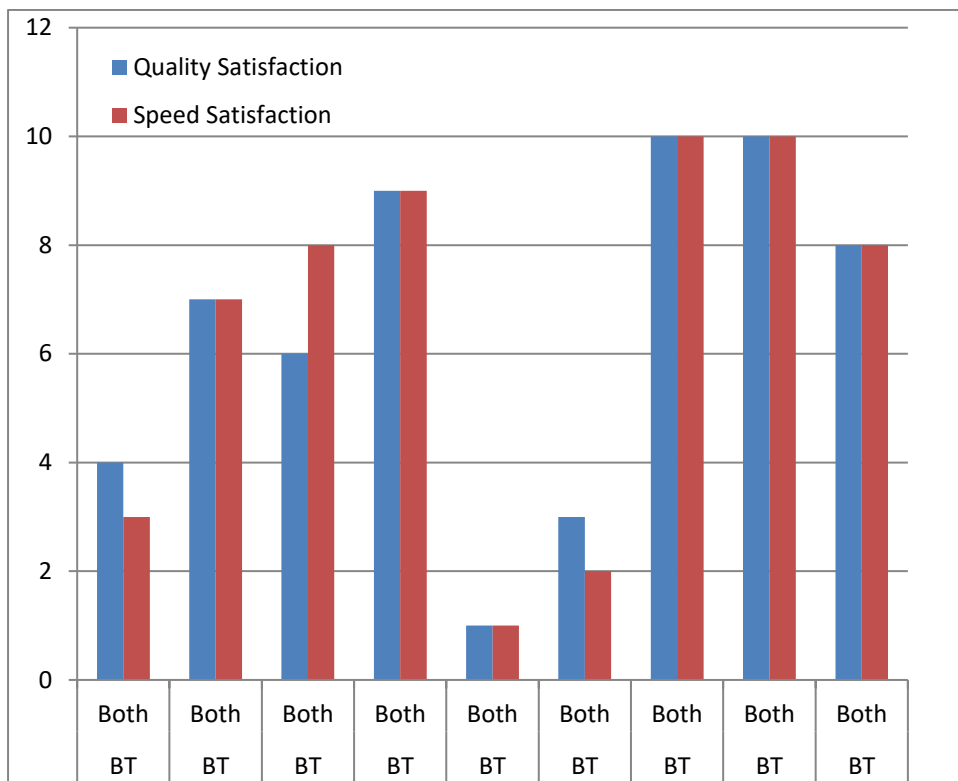
Airband: 4 responders, all dual use



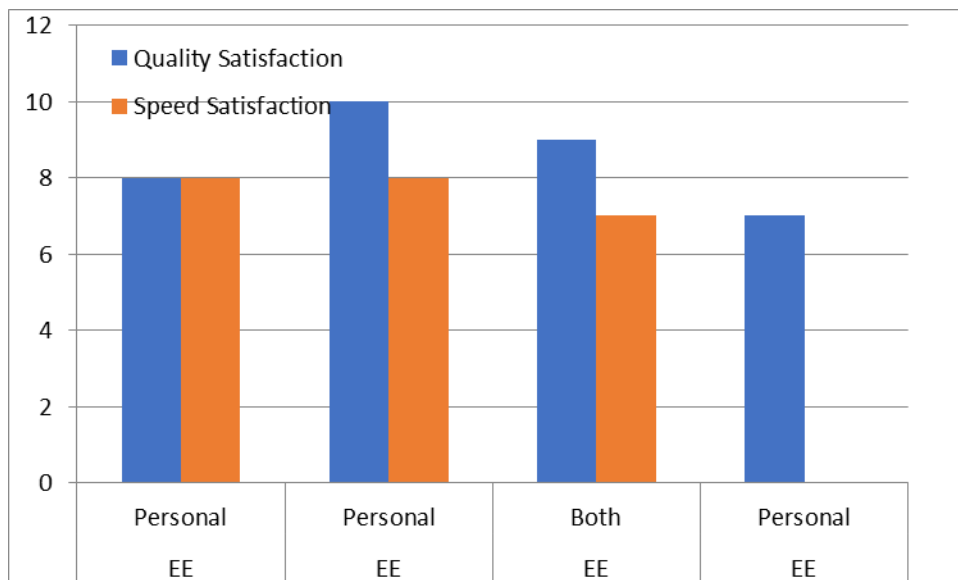
British Telecom: 22 responders, 13 *personal* use only



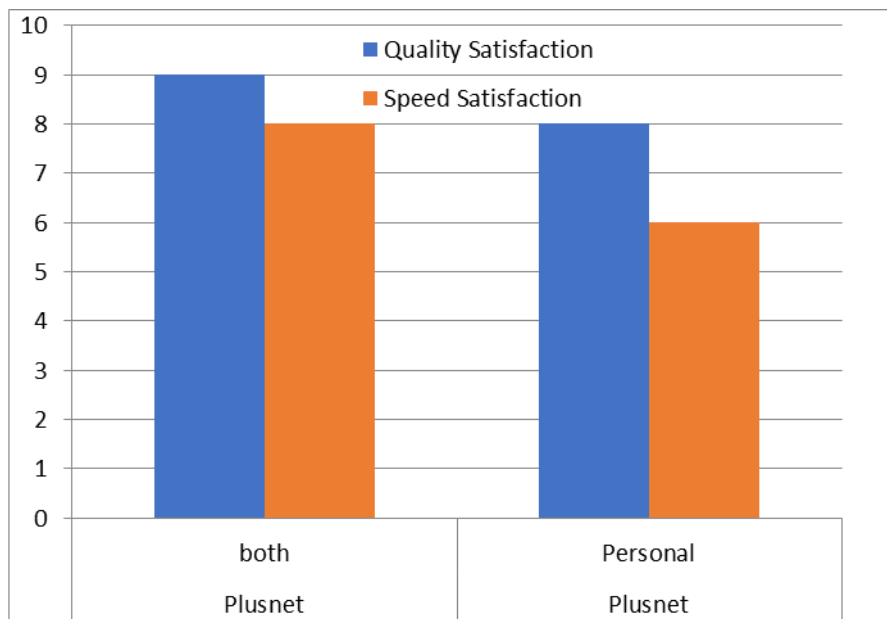
British Telecom: 22 responders, 9 *dual* users



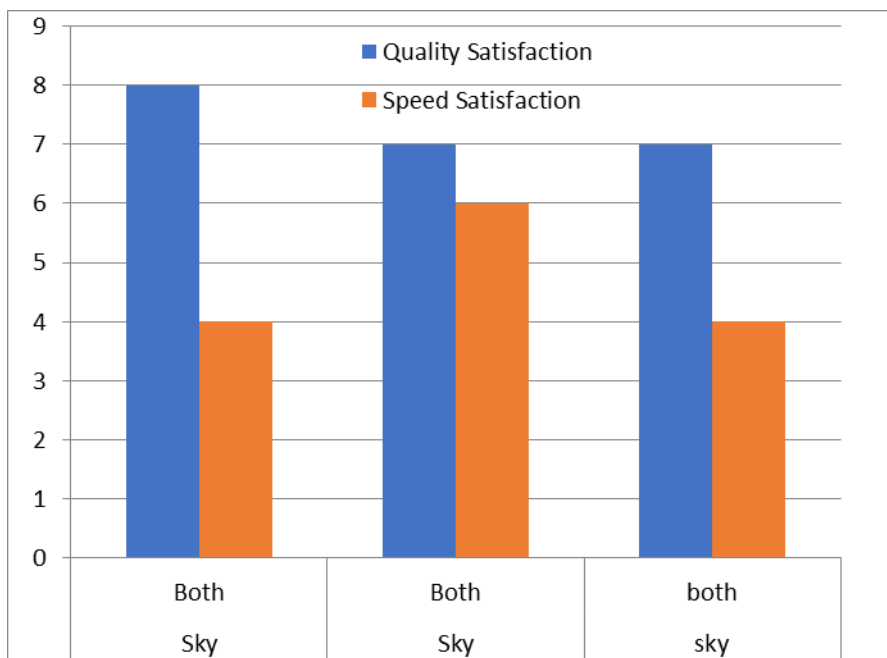
EE: 4 responders, 3 personal, one dual



Plusnet: 2 users, one personal, one both



Sky: three users, all both



Customer: Whixall Parish Council

Account: 60-83-01 20423117

Statement 45 from 01 Jan 2023 to 31 Jan 2023

Date	Description	Serial No	Debits	Credits	Balance
01Jan2023	Brought forward balance			3,551.89	3,551.89
09Jan2023	Direct Debit (NEST)		(57.20)		3,494.69
13Jan2023	B/P to: AJ Roberts		(14.85)		3,479.84
13Jan2023	B/P to: MR Spenser		(49.49)		3,430.35
13Jan2023	B/P to: WhixallVillageHall		(200.00)		3,230.35
13Jan2023	B/P to: HMRC Cumbernauld		(474.40)		2,755.95
13Jan2023	B/P to: Mrs JE Ankers		(400.00)		2,355.95
13Jan2023	B/P to: AJ Roberts		(196.82)		2,159.13
31Jan2023	Direct Debit (NEST)		(57.20)		2,101.93

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Customer: Whixall Parish Council

Account: 60-83-01 20423120

Statement 34 from 01 Jan 2023 to 31 Jan 2023

Date	Description	Serial No	Debits	Credits	Balance
01Jan2023	Brought forward balance			11,720.43	11,720.43
09Jan2023	RAWLINSON AJ&GA			200.00	11,920.43

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Bank Reconciliation
Whixall Parish Council

Balance per Bank statements as at 31 January 2023	£	£
Current Account (Unity Trust)	2,101.93	
Savings Account (Unity Trust)	11,920.43	
Petty Cash	-	
		14,022.36
Less: any un-presented cheques		
cheque no		
		-
Add any unbanked cash		
Net Bank balances		14,022.36
CASH BOOK		
Opening Balance	11,897.66	
Add: Receipts in the year to date	12,116.34	
Less: Payments in the year to date	- 9,991.64	
Balance as at 31 January 2023		14,022.36

Variance -