The Future of Elected Members

2014 Survey for APSE

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The Sample

- Undertaken between January and February 2014.

- 2577 responses, a response rate of 14.5 per cent.

- Repeat 2003 survey undertaken by Cardiff University for APSE.

The Sample

Sample	Per cent
County	15.7
District / Borough	43.9
English Unitary	15.6
Welsh Unitary	2.9
Scottish Unitary	5.2
Northern Irish District	.9
London Borough	7.5
Metropolitan Borough	8.4
Total	100.0

Demographics

Average years as a councillor	11
Average Age	63
Women Elected Members %	29
BME Elected Members %	4

Demographics

- Demographic profile remained relatively stable over the last 10 years or more.

- Councillors remain unrepresentative of the broader population, with an under-representation of women and black and ethnic minorities.

- Lack of impact of the measures undertaken in the last ten years.

Political Structures

Legend:
- Changes in council structures (e.g. the separation of cabinet and scrutiny roles) have worked well
- Decision-making has become more transparent as a result of these changes
- Scrutiny committees are effective mechanisms for holding the executive to account
- Area committees enable members to engage with the local community
- Overall, recent changes in council structures have reduced the influence of non-executive members

X-axis: (1) - Strongly Agree, (2), (3), (4), (5) - Strongly Disagree

Political Structures

- Uncertainty as to how far scrutiny committees hold the executive to account.

- Influence of non-executive members deemed to be on the wane.

- Decline in support for neighbourhood working or area committees as an instrument to engage communities.
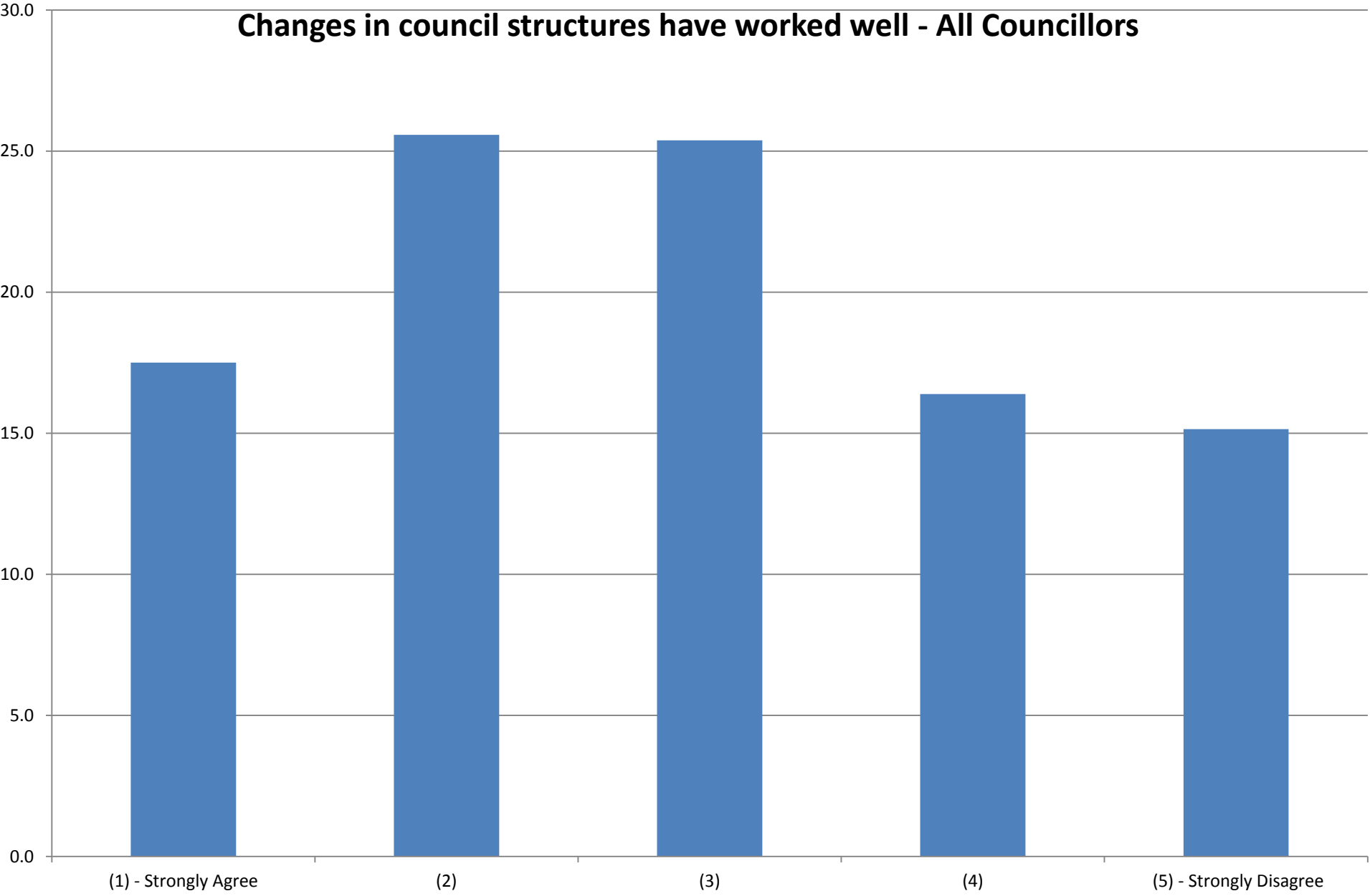
Political Structures

- Partnership working continues to exercise a hold over elected members, BUT
  - there are significant numbers who believe that the motivation for collaboration is accessing new sources of funding;
  - Concerns over the transparency of local decision-making in public-private partnerships;
  - Relatively few councillors devote significant proportions of their time to outward facing collaboration with other public bodies, agencies or partners.
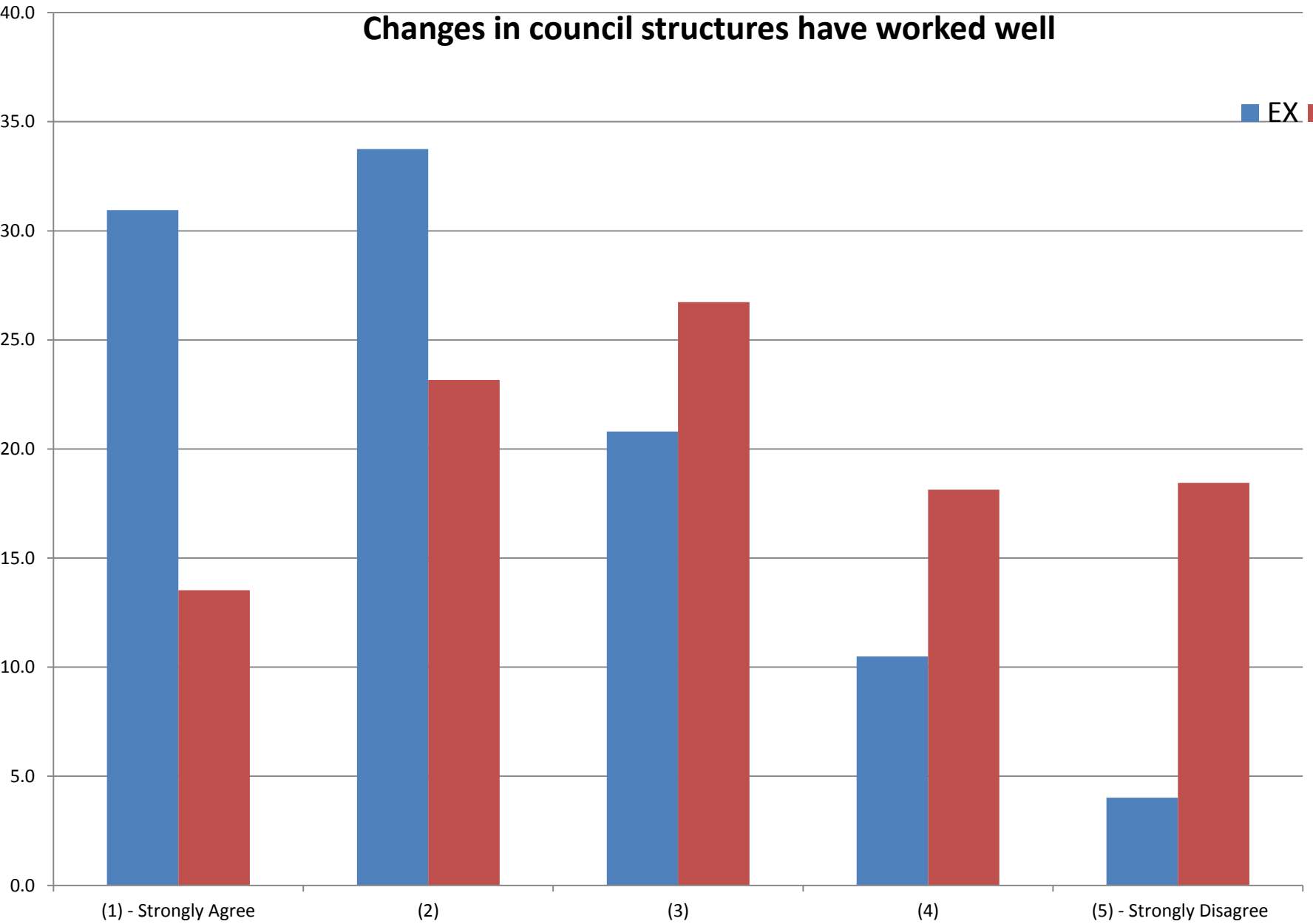
Future Prospects

- Lack of confidence among councillors that the actions plans that authorities have in place will lead to significant improvements in services.

- Only approximately half of councillors judged this to be the case.

- Only half believed that they would be personally able to contribute to such efforts to improve services.

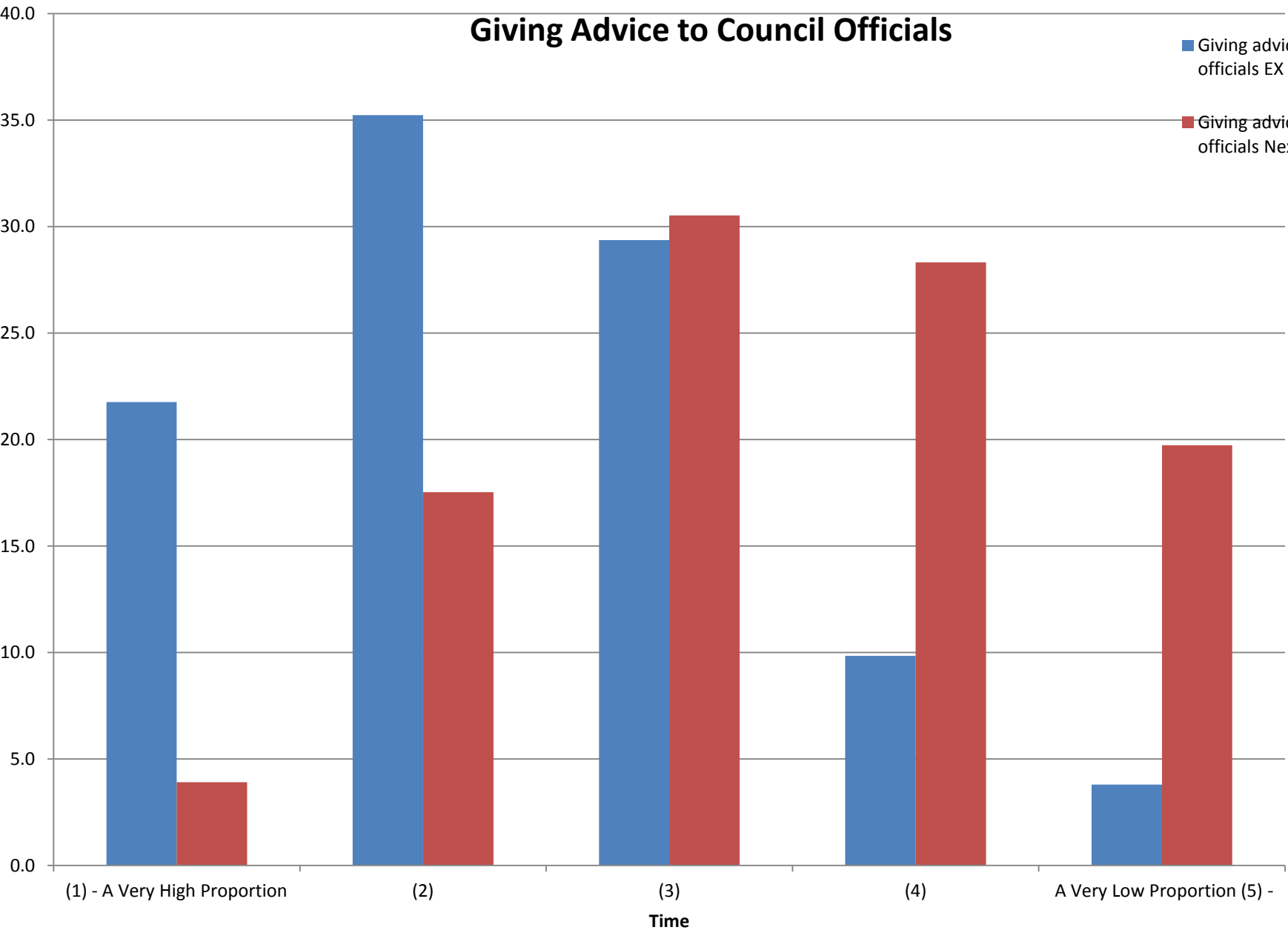**Changes in council structures have worked well - All Councillors**

| | (1) - Strongly Agree | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) - Strongly Disagree |

Changes in council structures have worked well

Legend: ■ EX ■ Nex

	(1) - Strongly Agree	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5) - Strongly Disagree
EX	31.0	33.8	20.8	10.5	4.0
Nex	13.5	23.2	26.7	18.1	18.4

Giving Advice to Council Officials

Legend:
- Giving advice to council officials EX (blue)
- Giving advice to council officials Nex (red)

X-axis: **Time**
- (1) - A Very High Proportion
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- A Very Low Proportion (5) -

Do you act as a representative of your authority on any other outside authorities or bodies?
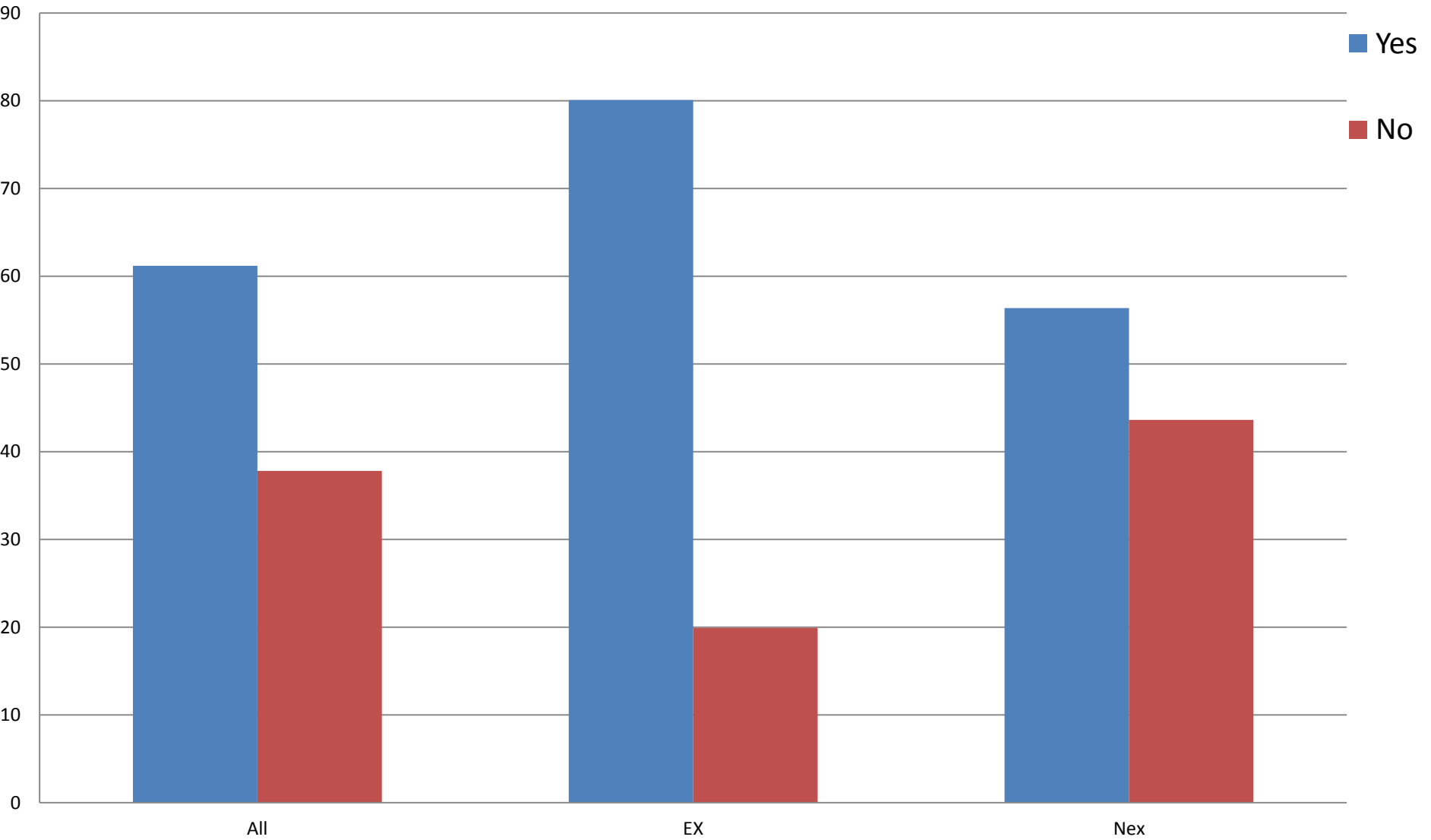
Two Tribes

- Existence of two tribes within local authorities: executive and non-executive members.

- Key is whether elected member sits on the executive or not.

- Across all areas (apart from neighbourhood working) statistically significant differences between the attitudes and views of executive and non-executive members.

Two Tribes

- For example, if executive members are more likely to support recent changes to political structures, non-executive members are more likely to doubt their effectiveness.
- Equally, if executive members are likely to be more optimistic about their capacity to impact upon service improvement, non-executive members are on the contrary more pessimistic.
- Relative dissatisfaction with area or neighbourhood working stands out as an isolated point of consensus.

What does this mean for political leadership?

- Ensuring council grounded in local stewardship and political decision-making.
- Tackling issues holistically to improve economic, environmental, political and social well being

- How far does the existence of 'two tribes' diminish the capacity of all elected members to exercise such roles effectively?