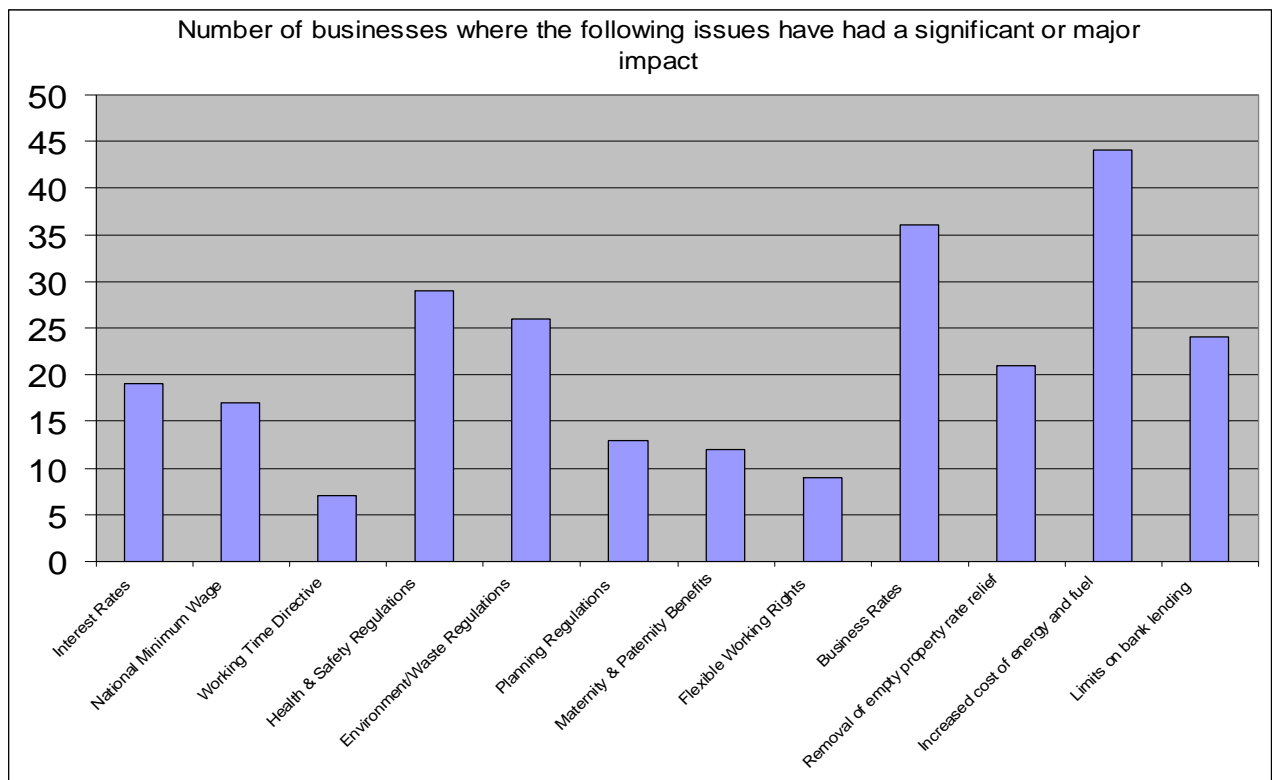


Analysis of Margot James's Local Business Survey

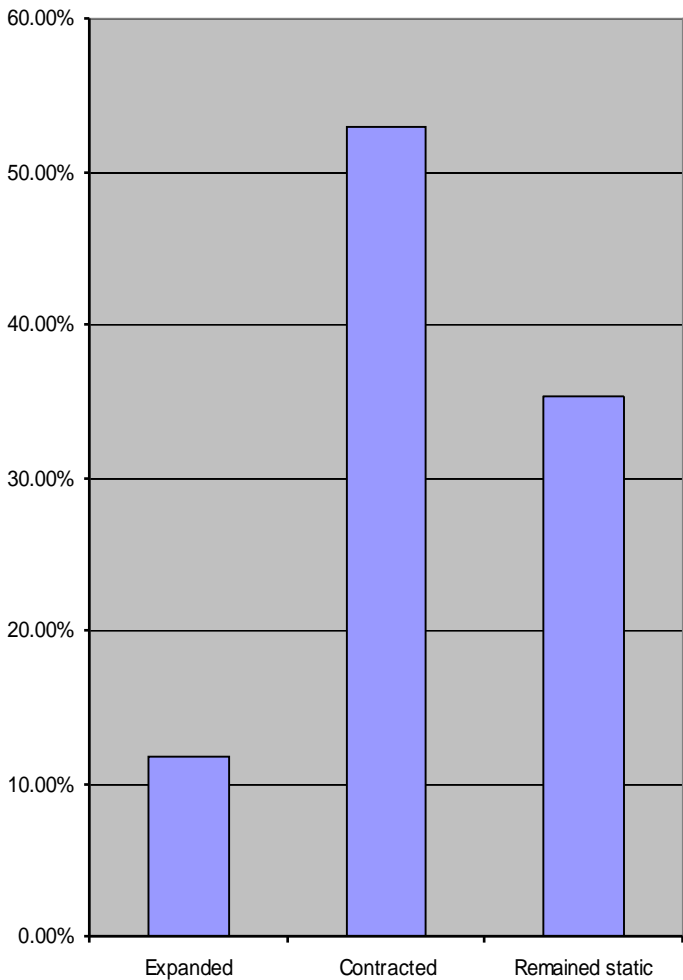
Business Issues

As can be seen by the graph entitled 'Number of businesses where the following issues have had a significant or major impact', the largest single impact on businesses is the increased cost of energy and fuel. 44 Respondents said that this was a significant or major issue for their business. This was followed closely by business rates, which 36 respondents highlighted as significant or major issues.

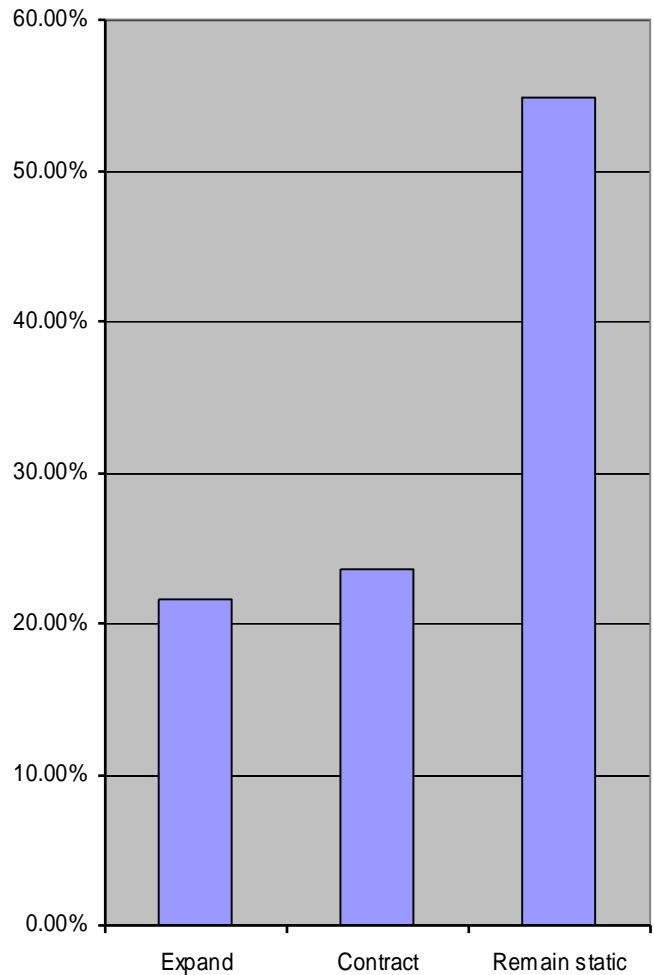


Middle ranking concerns were often regulations dealing with health & safety, the environment, waste and planning. Some of these regulations, planning for instance, may significantly affect some businesses such as those in the construction industry while being a reasonably negligible concern for others. The issue that the least respondents raised was the Working Time Directive, which only 7 respondents thought was a significant or major issue. Flexible working rights and maternity/paternity benefits were generally considered to be less significant also.

Over the last twelve months has your business...



Over the next twelve months do you expect your business to



The survey showed that the last year has been tough for businesses in Stourbridge. An astonishing 52.9% of respondents felt that their businesses had contracted over the previous twelve months. While only slightly over 10% of respondents had enjoyed growth over that period.

The survey showed that while most businesses felt their prospects were better for the next twelve months, most were not confident that their businesses would expand. Over half of those who returned the survey thought that their businesses would remain static over the next twelve months.

While marginally more respondents thought that their businesses would contract than expand, the two were at fairly similar levels; roughly 21.5% looked forward to growth while 23.5% feared contraction. These results show that while most believe that the worst of the recession is over, many are not yet confident that their businesses are in a position to expand.

Is the Black Country a good place for business?	Respondents	% of Respondents

Overall, however, respondents felt that the Black Country was a good place for business. In total,

Yes, fully	11	22.45%
Yes, partly	20	40.82%
Not very much	13	26.53%
Not at all	5	10.20%
TOTAL	49	100.00%

over 60% felt that it was a good place to run a business to some extent. Only 5 respondents felt that the Black Country was not a good place to run a business at all.

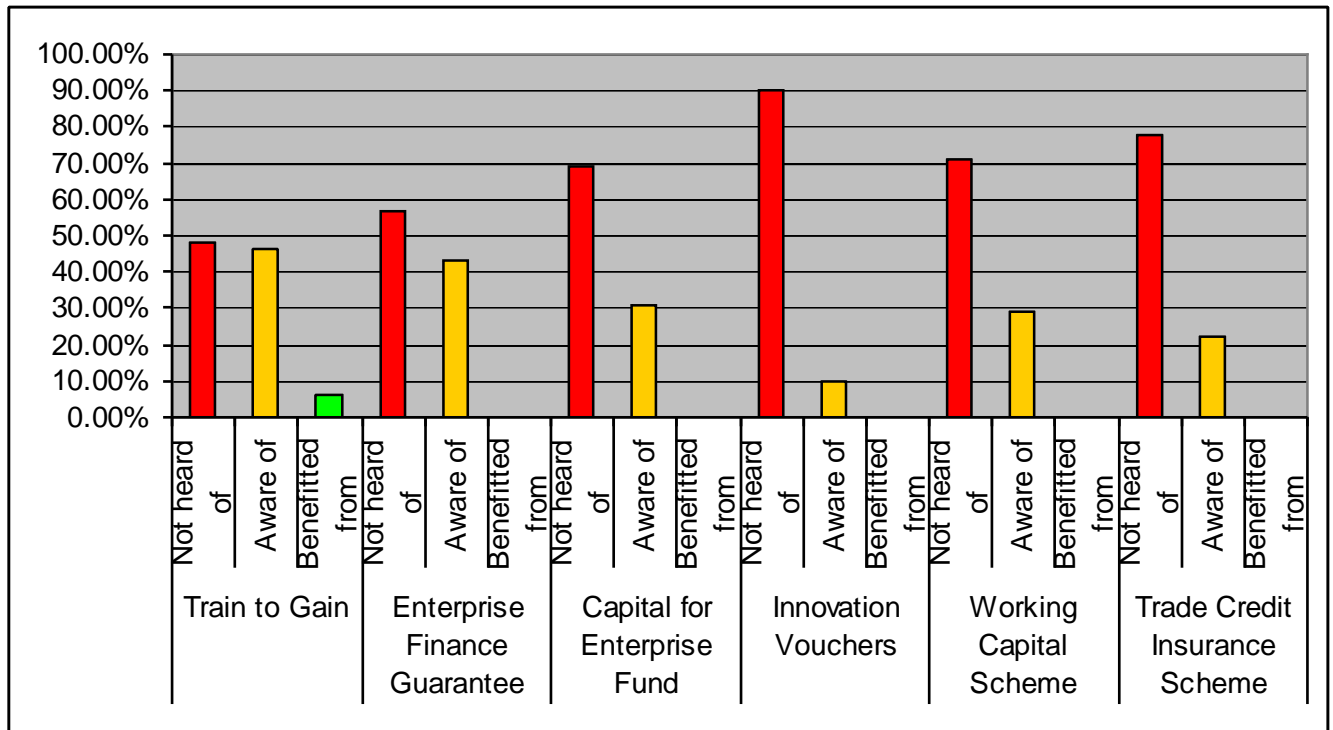
However, there was pessimism about the government’s relationship to the Black Country. Nobody felt that the government fully understands the needs of the Black Country while only a small minority (14%) felt that the government even partly understood the regions needs. Yet almost half of respondents (46%) felt that the government did not understand the needs of the Black county at all.

Does the Government understand the needs of the Black Country?	Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes, fully	0	0.00%
Yes, partly	7	14.00%
Not very much	18	36.00%
Not at all	23	46.00%
Don’t Know	2	4.00%
TOTAL	50	100.00%

Government Programmes

Largely, the respondents to Margot James's business survey were either not aware or had not benefited from government programmes designed to help businesses through the recession. The most widely known scheme on the survey was Train to Gain, but 46.00% had not heard of it while only 3 respondents had benefited from this programme. This was the only programme that any respondents had benefited from.

On the other end of the scale, 89.80% of respondents had not heard of Innovation Vouchers, a government programme to allow small businesses to utilise innovating skills and personnel from higher and further education facilities. Almost 80% had not heard of the Trade Credit Insurance Scheme while over 70% had not heard of the Working Capital Scheme.



Conservative Policies

The survey showed that while respondents felt that the National Loan Guarantee Scheme was the most promising Conservative policy, there was no majority in favour of any single policy. In general, the pledges to cut corporation tax for small companies and support workplace apprenticeships were well received. While the commitment to reform insolvency laws to allow good companies time to restructure their business was the least popular policy listed.

However there is little deviation between the most and least popular responses. One reason for this may be that the question, near the end of the survey, was not well read by the respondents. Another may be that respondents were not as interested in the details of specific policies as the general attitude of the Conservative Party towards the business community. In a write in slot asking which single measure the Conservative party should pursue, many indicated that they would like to see the government supporting business more proactively.

