

Residents' Survey 2023

Audit & Scrutiny Committee Tuesday 26 September 2023

Report of: Head of Policy and Communications

Purpose: For information

Publication status: Open

Wards affected: All

Executive summary:

The Council carried out a Residents' Survey in June and July 2023.

The survey aimed to help the Council find out what residents think about the services the Council provides, where they live, how well the Council communicates with them and their knowledge and experience of digital tools and channels.

This report presents the findings of the survey.

This report supports the Council's priority of: Building a better Council

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Recommendation to Committee:

The committee notes and accepts the report, as well as the survey findings.

Reason for recommendation:

The Residents' Survey is a snapshot of opinion and provides quantitative data. If more detailed information is required to help inform decision making, additional qualitative research will need to be carried out.

Introduction and background

1. The Council carried out a Residents' Survey in June and July 2023. The survey aimed to help the Council find out what residents think about the services the Council provides, where they live, how well the Council communicates with them and their knowledge and experience of digital tools and channels.
2. The Residents' Survey is a useful tool to gauge residents' views and satisfaction at a point in time and to highlight any possible areas of concern. Appendix A - Have your say about council services 2023 provides full details about the results.
3. 2,500 randomly selected households received postal questionnaires, 738 were returned, giving a 30% response rate. Based on the completed questionnaires, there is 95% confidence the findings are statistically correct, with a margin of error of + or - 3.7%.
4. In addition, 109 surveys were submitted online which were not part of the postal survey sample. Only 72 of these surveys were fully completed. While the responses and comments made can be considered alongside the main results, it is important to remember they are not statistically valid, so are not representative of residents' views in general.
5. There was general publicity about the survey and a special request went out to all secondary schools in the district to invite those aged under 25 to complete the survey. This request was also shared widely with councillors, on social media and across other channels. Despite this targeted approach to encourage responses from younger residents, very few responses were received.
6. The Council carries out a postal Residents' Survey every two years and includes some of the same questions the Local Government Association (LGA) uses in its quarterly telephone survey. This allows councils to benchmark against national trends. The survey is prepared and carried out in-house.
7. The results from the survey will be used to inform the new Corporate Plan, which is being drafted and the digital transformation programme.

Key findings

8. 80% of respondents are satisfied with the area as a place to live and 52% with the way the Council runs things. 41% agree the Council provides value for money, while 34% neither agree nor disagree. This is an improvement from 31% in 2021 and in line with national figures. 60% think the Council keeps them well informed.

9. 66% feel safe outside in the local area after dark, while 90% feel safe outside during the day. 90% don't think noisy neighbours or loud parties are a problem, 76% don't think vandalism, graffiti or other deliberate damage to property or vehicles is an issue.
10. 83% feel ensuring the district's needs are heard by government, county council, police and other service providers is extremely or very important. 80% feel protecting and improving the environment is extremely or very important. 80% feel supporting a thriving local economy is extremely or very important.
11. 43% of respondents have contacted the Council up to three times in the last year, while 41% have not contacted the Council at all. 88% usually contact the Council by phone, 84% by e-mail and 84% use the website.
12. 74% use the Council's website at least once every few months. 85% visited the website to get advice or information. 73% would be more likely to use the website if it meant their concern or issue was processed more quickly. 77% would be very or fairly likely to get information about the Council from its website and 70% would use the website to order a service/pay a bill/report a problem.
13. Table A shows how the results compare to the LGA's national survey carried out in June 2023. As the LGA conducts telephone surveys, responses are likely to be more favourable than postal surveys. For most results the Council has comparative scores.

Table A: Tandridge District Council and LGA results

Organisation	Satisfied with area	Way council runs things	Value for money	Acts on concerns	Well informed	Safe after dark	Safe during day
Tandridge	80%	52%	41%	44%	60%	66%	90%
LGA	73%	60%	42%	52%	61%	71%	90%

Context

14. Any quantitative survey is just a snapshot of opinion. This means responses can be affected by external events or activities, or what is happening at the time it is completed. If you asked the same sample the same questions at another time, responses could vary.
15. For some questions there are high percentage responses for neither satisfied or dissatisfied. This could be because the respondent's direct knowledge or understanding of the Council's involvement in their day to day life or impact on the district is limited.

16. For many residents their main interactions with the Council will be paying their council tax or having their bin collected. If these key transactions take place without issue, there is no need for residents to contact the Council. This correlates with the 41% of respondents who have not contacted the Council in the last year.
17. This survey should be considered within the context of the last two years, such as the impact of the pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine.
18. In two and three tier local government areas there is always confusion about which organisation provides which service. Despite the information provided, when residents complete the survey they may also consider and make comments about county council services. This is reflected in the many comments about road conditions, traffic safety and street lighting.
19. Other factors such as national issues and politics, will also have an impact on respondents' views.

Analysis

20. Overall, the results have not changed significantly since the last survey in 2021. A 10% increase or decrease in results is considered to indicate significant change.
21. Respondents are highly satisfied with the area as a place to live, feel well informed, feel safe and don't have an issue with anti-social behaviour.
22. Responses evidenced high levels of internet access and use, confidence online and in particular using websites and apps. This supports the launch of the digital transformation programme, which will also make sure those unable to access services online will be supported.
23. Although the sample size is statistically valid, there is some bias in the sample. Slightly more women completed the survey than men and census data shows Tandridge is 52% female and 48% male.
24. There were very few responses from anyone under 24 and more responses from the 55 and over age group than represents the population.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

As the recommendation is to note the report, there are no direct financial implications. The requirement to provide services that deliver value for money for residents is a key part of the Future Tandridge Programme and wider efforts to improve the Council's financial position. While it is encouraging residents' perception of this has improved and the Council's score is similar to the national average, the Council would still aspire to improve this in future.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

The results of the residents' survey will contribute to the Council's overall understanding of what is most important to the residents and help councillors and the Extended Management Team to confirm areas of good performance and areas where improvements are needed.

Any findings have been published in accordance with all relevant data protection regulations. As such no individual will be identifiable as a result of the survey publication.

Equality

There is some bias in the sample which could be perceived to exclude the views of those under 24 and include the views of older residents.

Climate change

There are no significant environmental / sustainability implications associated with this report.

Appendices

Appendix A - Have your say about council services 2023 survey results.

Background papers

None.

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