

Residents' Survey results 2021

Audit & Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 2 November 2021

Report of: Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer

Purpose: For decision

Publication status: Open

Wards affected: All

Executive summary:

The Council carried out a Residents' Survey in July and August 2021. The survey aims to help the Council find out what residents think about the services the Council provides, where they live and how well the Council communicates with them.

This report presents the findings of the survey and puts forward recommendations for next steps.

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

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Recommendation to Committee:

That, in accordance with its delegated powers, the Committee determines that:

1. A communications campaign is developed to increase residents' awareness about services and initiatives, as well as to demonstrate value for money.
 2. Further research, including focus groups, is carried out to supplement the results and inform any future prioritisation work.
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Reason for recommendation:

The Residents' Survey is a snapshot of opinion and can only provide quantitative data. As part of ongoing improvements to customer service and to help inform decision making qualitative research should be carried out. In addition, an ongoing campaign should be developed to make residents' aware of the services, how to access them and to build greater trust between residents and the Council.

Introduction and background

1. The Council carried out a Residents' Survey in July and August 2021. The survey aims to help the Council find out what residents think about the services the Council provides, where they live and how well the Council communicates with them.
2. Approximately 2,510 randomly selected residents received postal questionnaires, 914 were returned, giving a 36% response rate. Based on the completed questionnaires, there is 95% confidence the findings are statistically correct, with a margin of error of + or - 3.3%.
3. In addition, 156 surveys were submitted online which were not part of the postal survey sample. Only half 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.
4. 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 on social media and across other channels. There were 18 responses.
5. The Council carries out this 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.

Key findings

6. 82% of respondents are satisfied with the area as a place to live and 57% with the way the Council runs things. 33% agree the Council provides value for money, while 33% neither agree nor disagree. 75% strongly feel they belong to their local area and 57% trust the Council.
7. 66% feel safe outside in the local area after dark, while 90% feel safe outside during the day. 87% 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.

8. 66% think the Council keeps them well informed. 82% of respondents read the Tandridge Magazine, 77% think it keeps them informed about the Council's work and local services.
9. 48% of respondents have contacted the Council up to three times in the last year, while 38% have not contacted the Council at all. 89% usually contact the Council by phone, 82% by e-mail and 75% use the website. 70% use the Council's website at least once every few months.
10. 86% of respondents think it is important the Council does whatever it can to tackle climate change and 59% want more electric charging points in the area.

Context

11. 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.
12. This survey should be considered within the context of the last two years, with the majority of that time being taken up living through and dealing with the pandemic. In addition, the Council's financial crisis and other issues have been well publicised.
13. In two and three tier local government areas there is always confusion about which organisation provides which service. When residents complete the survey, they may be thinking about county, not just district services. This is reflected in the many comments about road conditions, traffic safety and street lighting.
14. Other factors such as national issues and politics, will also have an impact on respondents' views.

Analysis

15. Overall, the results have not really changed since the last survey was carried out in 2019. A 10% increase or decrease in results is considered to indicate significant change.
16. Respondents are highly satisfied with the area as a place to live, feel well informed, feel they belong to their local area, are safe and don't have an issue with anti-social behaviour.
17. Table A shows how the results compare to the LGA's national survey carried out in June 2021. As the LGA conducts telephone surveys, responses are likely to be more favourable than postal surveys.

18. Although the figures are lower than the LGA's, since the last survey there has been no further decline in responses to questions about how the Council runs things, or the degree of trust in the Council, as well as around providing value for money.

Table A: Tandridge District Council and LGA results

Organisation	Satisfied with area	Way council runs things	Value for money	Safe after dark	Safe during day	Well informed	Acts on concerns	Trusts local council
Tandridge	82%	57%	33%	66%	90%	66%	46%	57%
LGA	82%	68%	49%	79%	94%	61%	62%	64%

19. 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 51% female and 49% male.

20. There were very few responses from anyone under 24 and this group makes up 22% of the population, while there are more responses from the 65+ age group than represents the population.

Next steps and recommendations

21. The Residents' Survey is a useful tool to gauge residents' views and satisfaction and to highlight any possible areas of concern. Ideally these views should be validated with qualitative data.

22. There is a strong relationship between well informed residents and satisfaction with services. In this survey the score for residents feeling they are being kept informed is higher than the national average.

23. Taking that into account, it is recommended an ongoing proactive communications campaign is developed which could have three main objectives:

- To continue to keep residents informed about the Council and its services, ensuring access to services is easy and clear to understand.
- To demonstrate services do provide value for money.
- To build greater trust between residents and the Council.

24. To further validate the findings, it is recommended qualitative data is gathered to test some of the responses and to probe deeper into residents' views, as well as gather views from younger people. This work can form part of the review of the Strategic Plan.

25. This research can be gathered by organising focus groups, as well as talking to parish councils, partners and other community groups. If appropriate, councillors can also be involved in attending and leading some of these groups.

26. Depending on the outcome of that further research, an action plan can be developed to address any key areas of concern.
27. Following the 2019 survey, similar recommendations were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 November 2019, but unfortunately the work was not carried out due to the start of the pandemic in early 2020.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

Whilst the survey does not result directly in financial implications, there are a number of areas in these findings which should be reviewed and explored further as part of the Council's Twin Track approach to setting the budget for 2022/23 and 2023/24, for example channel shift.

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 Senior 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.

Climate change

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

Appendices

Appendix A - Have your say about council services 2021 survey results

Background papers

None.

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