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# Residents' Survey 2021 – Key Findings

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Executive
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	9 June 2022
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Lynne Doherty
<b>Report Author:</b>	Catalin Bogos
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX4200

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## 1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the West Berkshire Resident's Survey 2021.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the positive feedback provided by residents about satisfaction with the area and the Council; service improvement and prioritisation; communication and engagement; safety and feeling that they belong to the local area.
- 2.2 To note that the results of the survey will be used to inform the decisions about what will be prioritised in the Council Strategy 2023-2027 and to identify further communication and engagement activities with residents, especially from the groups with lower response rates to the survey. In addition, a number of actions are already being taken in response to the feedback received.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. However, the residents' feedback will inform the Council Strategy and the Medium Terms Financial Strategy. The approval of these strategies will highlight any financial implications.
<b>Human Resource:</b>	none
<b>Legal:</b>	none

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<b>Risk Management:</b>	none			
<b>Property:</b>	none			
<b>Policy:</b>	The findings of the residents' survey will inform a new Council Strategy for the period 2023 – 2027.			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	Y			The survey was delivered based on a methodology to ensure the findings are representative for the District's population.
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	Y			As the results of the survey will inform the priorities of the new Council Strategy, this will create the premises for positive impact on the lives of all residents in West Berkshire.
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>	Y			Positive environmental impact is expected as a result of the residents' views informing the new Council Strategy.
<b>Health Impact:</b>	Y			Positive health impact is expected as a result of the residents' views informing the new Council Strategy.
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		Y		There is no specific direct ICT impact as a result of this report.

<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>	Y			The views of the residents highlight insights that will be considered as part of the digitisation agenda.
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>	Y			The residents' survey was delivered as part of the current Council Strategy commitment to enhance communication and engagement with our residents to develop a better understanding of their needs. The results will inform the re-write of the Council Strategy to address residents' needs during 2023 - 2027.
<b>Core Business:</b>	Y			The results of the survey reflect residents' feedback on Council's core business.
<b>Data Impact:</b>		Y		A Privacy Notice accompanied the residents' survey, detailing how data will be collected, processed and stored, and ensuring residents' anonymity in relation to the feedback they have provided.
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	A representative sample of West Berkshire's residents have been asked to complete a paper or online version of the questionnaire. This paper presents the findings of this consultation exercise conducted based on a methodology which is best practice in the public sector.			

## 4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This paper presents the results of the Residents' Survey 2021. This survey was delivered as a result of a number of planned actions to enhance the Council's approach to interacting with West Berkshire residents. These actions, including the survey, are detailed in the Council's Communication and Engagement Strategy. Budget was allocated from Covid recovery funding to be able to fund the delivery of the survey and follow up residents' engagement (focus groups and interviews).
- 4.2 West Berkshire Council commissioned M E L Research, a social research and behavioural insight company, to carry out a representative residents' survey. The contract was awarded following the Council's procurement process. As part of this, invitation to submit quotations through the Council's In-Tend procurement portal have been sent to all the organisations registered on the Local Government Association's (LGA) website as potential suppliers of residents' survey services.
- 4.3 The survey methodology followed the LGA's 'Are You Being Served' guidance, aiming to ensure consistency and comparability of similar surveys conducted by other local

authorities. In addition, the LGA conducts a telephone survey nationally covering the same questions. Whilst the methodology for the national survey is different, the results are included in this report for context.

4.4 As per the LGA methodology, all residents aged 16+ had the same chance of being invited to take part in the Residents' Survey. A total of 5,000 addresses have been randomly selected (proportionally from each ward, considering the total population living there) to receive the questionnaire. A total of 1,248 completed surveys have been received online and on paper. This is a good response rate, as it is exceeding the required threshold that allows the results to be statistically representative for the entire population in West Berkshire. However, more should and is done to capture the voices of younger generations (16 – 44 year olds), people in Thatcham North East Ward and residents from more deprived areas, as these are the groups of residents with lower response rates to the Residents' Survey. In addition, the Council is supplementing the usual survey based consultations with a number of actions to ensure that children and young people under-16 have the opportunity to provide their feedback and to better interact with the Council. Such activities include the development of a Youth Council, a Hackathon session (presenting a challenge and working with young people so they suggest the solution) and other online and face to face engagement sessions, including with primary school pupils.

4.5 The results of the survey are grouped on the key themes of the questionnaire:

**a) Attitudes towards the local area** – overall a high proportion of residents are satisfied with the local area (89%) and with the way the Council runs things (64%). For context, the results from the LGA national telephone survey are 78% and 56% respectively.

37% of residents agree that the Council provides value for money, whilst 25% would disagree. For context, it seems that nationally a lower percentage of residents are undecided (Neither agree or disagree). In addition, 33% of residents would speak positively about the Council compared to 16% that would speak negatively, and of the residents that contacted the Council in the previous six months, 56% reported a positive experience, compared to 15% that reported a negative one. Work is underway to better inform our residents about the services we deliver, our lower costs compared to similar councils and to adopt a customer charter developed with our residents.

**b) Service improvement and prioritisation** – the areas with the highest proportion of residents considering that require improvement are: *Environment* (in particular, the desire for better recycling/waste management/more materials collected and improved facilities/services), *Development and Planning* (concerns about the quality of the planning process and effects of overdevelopment), *Communities and Wellbeing* (desire for more/improved services, concerns about insufficient support), *Education* (need for additional funding, improved choice and SEN support) and *Adult Social Care* (need for better services, support, facilities and funding). Over 60% of residents stated that they would take actions to help achieve carbon neutrality.

The Council has made good progress to extend the advice, support and tools made available to residents to support more recycling, composting and reusing.

Plans are well under way to offer a separate food waste service. We are working to prepare a new development plan and are finalising a review of our Planning Service (through a Place Review) to better respond to residents' needs. The needs for Health and Wellbeing, Education, Social care and other services are being re-assessed so we can prioritise the services that West Berkshire residents need over the next four years.

- c) Sense of belonging, safety and community** – more than three quarters of residents reported that locally people get on well together and that friendships and associations in the neighbourhood meant a lot to them. More than half of the respondents agree that local people pull together to improve the local area. Under a third responded that they have volunteered in the previous 12 months and they intend to do so in the future.

The problems in their local areas are *rubbish or litter laying around* (44% of residents reported this) and *people using or dealing drugs* (32%). We have agreed with the contractor for street cleanliness to progressively re-focus on this activity after they had to divert staff to bins collection due to Covid sickness levels. The Council waste officers have increased the monitoring across the district. We are encouraging residents to report any concerns or provide any intelligence to Thames Valley Police via 101 telephone number or the website, so that the Police can use that information adapt their patrol plans. The Council work closely with the Thames Valley Police within the Building Communities Together partnership. In addition, the Building Communities Together team in particular works very closely with the Neighbourhood Police Teams within the District.

- d) Communication and Engagement** – Almost 60% of the residents agreed that the Council acts on their concerns and that they felt well informed about services and benefits provided by the Council. However, 45% responded that they were not aware of the e-bulletins from the Council. 48% of the residents have contacted the Council in the previous six months to request services, report a problem or request information.

20% agree that they can influence decisions that affect their local area, whilst 47% disagreed.

A high proportion of residents (75%) prefer to receive information about the Council by e-mail. Subgroups of population (older residents, diverse ethnic groups) prefer other methods (phone, face to face) of communication. We have planned a number of activities (including the Residents' Survey), as part of our Communications and Engagement Strategy, focusing on improving the ways in which we are communicating with residents and how we reach out to ensure that people and businesses that usually do not or can not take the opportunities to express their views, are proactively invited to inform the Council's decisions and to shape the ways in which we deliver Council services.

- e) Personal wellbeing** – The overall results show that West Berkshire residents reported a high level of life satisfaction, feeling worthwhile and happy. The anxiety score is within the low thresholds. However, approximately a quarter of the residents reported low and medium well-being score. These results are within the same thresholds as the national results reported for the period just before the start of the pandemic. The wellbeing of all our residents is what we are seeking to

achieve through a number of plans such as the Council's Recovery Strategy or the partnership Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

- 4.6 The feedback from residents will be further analysed and further engagement activities are taking place to ensure a more detailed understanding of residents' views. Residents' views will be used to inform the new Council Strategy for 2023 – 2027.

## **5 Supporting Information**

- 5.1 Appendix A provides the detailed responses to each question of the Residents' Survey 2021.

### **Next Steps**

- 5.2 The feedback received through the Residents' Survey will inform the production of the Council Strategy 2023-2027. This will ensure that residents' needs are assessed not only based on the statistical evidence available at national and local level, but also through the consideration of views expressed directly by residents in response to the survey.
- 5.3 Further communication and engagement activities (such as targeted interviews, focus groups and webinars) are taking place in order to reach residents from sub-groups with a lower response rate to the survey. In addition, any areas where a more in-depth understanding is needed about residents' messages will be further explored with residents. This will ensure a complete and clear understanding of the reasons why residents have reported some of the views expressed in the survey, so that the appropriate actions will be included in the Council Strategy and other more specific plans.

## **6 Other options considered**

- 6.1 n/a

## **7 Conclusion**

- 7.1 The results from the Residents' Survey 2021 form an important part of the evidence base that will be used to identify the priorities for the new Council Strategy for 2023 – 2027.
- 7.2 Further engagement work (targeted interviews, focus groups, webinars etc.) will be organised to ensure the views of residents are covered extensively and a more in depth understanding of the feedback received wherever necessary.

## **8 Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix A – Residents' Survey 2021 Final Report

**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes:  No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position

Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

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