

8 March 2017		ITEM: 15 (Decision 01104414)
Cabinet		
Residents Survey Results		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Councillor Deborah Huelin, Cabinet Member for Performance & Central Services		
Accountable Head of Service: Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services		
Accountable Director: Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

This report provides the headline results of the recent Residents Survey carried out by BMG Research on the council's behalf. 1,000 telephone interviews with Thurrock residents were carried out between late November and early December 2016, achieving a representative sample of the population across the borough.

This is the first survey since 2010 and is an important opportunity to capture local people's experiences and perceptions of the place, their community, the council and its services, that can be considered representative of the wider Thurrock population.

Through the survey, the council can establish a new baseline for perception levels to inform areas of focus across the borough and in specific wards as well as our approach to service delivery and communication and engagement with residents. The results will also inform the key performance indicators (KPIs) used going forward to reflect the issues of most concern to residents as well as provide evidence to help with policy direction and decision-making.

The majority of residents are satisfied with Thurrock as a place to live with many feeling a sense of belonging, where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

The results clearly show that the issues of most importance to Thurrock residents are the maintenance of roads such as fixing potholes, waste and recycling collections, and parks, playgrounds and green spaces. The most common

neighbourhood issue is rubbish or litter lying around. Satisfaction with these services has room for improvement. Tackling these issues is already a priority as part of the clean it, cut it, fill it approach with additional investment in these services committed part way through 2016/17 and now agreed for 2017/18.

This report sets out some of the actions to be taken in the coming year to address the areas identified for improvement, ahead of a follow up survey in September 2017.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 Cabinet consider the headline results from the Residents Survey as set out in Appendix 1;**
- 1.2 Cabinet agree the immediate high level actions as set out at 3.7 and request that detailed action plans are developed in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member;**
- 1.3 Cabinet agree that the results are used to inform the key performance indicators (KPIs) for 2017/18;**
- 1.4 Cabinet agree to repeat the Residents Survey in September 2017;**
- 1.5 Cabinet invite Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the headline results in Appendix 1 and actions at 3.7.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Between 2000 and 2010 the Government required local authorities to undertake a three-yearly Best Value Resident Satisfaction Survey and latterly a Place Survey. In 2010 this requirement was abolished and Thurrock Council decided not to continue with a survey of this sort. The Local Government Association (LGA) have continued to advocate an annual survey providing guidance to councils, with many still carrying out an annual or bi-annual survey.
- 2.2 Although the council has not carried out a resident survey since 2010, individual services regularly engage with their users to measure satisfaction levels and improve performance. Examples include within Housing and Adult Social Care services, which both undertake regular consultation and engagement exercises. There is also an optional feedback survey at the end of a call to the council's contact centre. Information from complaints and other methods is also used. However, this engagement activity and consultation on specific services does not provide a quantitative analysis of perceptions that can be considered representative of the wider Thurrock population.
- 2.3 BMG Research were therefore commissioned to carry out a Residents Survey on the council's behalf. 1,000 telephone interviews with Thurrock residents

were carried out between late November and early December 2016. The headline report is provided at Appendix A.

- 2.4 Through the survey, the council can establish a new baseline for perception levels to inform areas of focus across the borough and in specific wards as well as our approach to service delivery and communication and engagement with residents. The results will also inform the KPIs used going forward to reflect the issues of most concern to residents as well as provide evidence to help with policy direction and decision-making.
- 2.5 The LGA Peer Challenge in February 2016 emphasised the need for improved data and intelligence to inform decision making for Members. Carrying out a survey was also one of the recommendations of the independent Fairness Commission. The Commission felt that a regular survey would help ensure perceptions about Thurrock are taken into consideration when developing policy.
- 2.6 A resident survey of this kind is only one source of data and information, which focuses primarily on services and issues impacting on or delivered to the majority of residents. The council provides many other services such as through adults and children's social care that are not included. The survey results and action taken in response should be considered in that context.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1. The headline results report prepared by BMG Research is included at Appendix 1.
- 3.2. The majority of residents are satisfied with Thurrock as a place to live with many feeling a sense of belonging, where people from different backgrounds get on well together. In summary, the most positive results about the place were:
 - 69% of residents satisfied with their local area as a place to live
 - 70% feel that they belong strongly to their local area
 - 61% agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
 - 89% feel safe when outside in their local area during the day
- 3.3. The results clearly show that the issues of most importance to Thurrock residents are the maintenance of roads such as fixing potholes, waste and recycling collections, and parks, playgrounds and green spaces. The most common neighbourhood issue is rubbish or litter lying around. Satisfaction with these services has room for improvement, although waste and recycling services is the most well regarded with 70% of residents satisfied. Areas for improvement include:
 - 23% of residents satisfied with the maintenance and upkeep of roads (61% dissatisfied)

- 45% satisfied with street cleaning
 - 46% satisfied with parks, playgrounds and open spaces
 - 50% satisfied with the grounds maintenance service
 - 55% satisfied with the way the council runs things
 - 56% feel safe when outside in their local area after dark
- 3.4. Tackling these issues has already been identified as a priority as part of the clean it, cut it, fill it approach with additional investment in these services committed by Cabinet part way through 2016/17 and now agreed for 2017/18.
- 3.5. 72% of residents think that Thurrock Council staff are friendly and polite which is positive. The results show that 48% feel that the council responds quickly and efficiently to queries which could be improved. The survey also provides information on how residents prefer to contact the council and their willingness to use services online. This will help inform the work already underway to develop a Customer Service Strategy. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided feedback on the draft strategy in November 2016.
- 3.6. The majority of residents find out information about the local area from council sources or local newspapers. Word of mouth is also key for people staying informed. 58% of residents feel the council keeps them well informed. These results will feed into the development of a Communication Strategy as well as the feedback from the update provided to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2017.
- 3.7. Areas where perceptions are less positive and require improvement are set out under five themes below alongside the actions planned to address these:

Residents Survey Results	Actions
<p>Service Delivery</p> <p>Satisfaction levels at or below 50% for services such as grounds maintenance, street cleaning, parks playgrounds and open spaces, and roads maintenance which are also those identified as the most important</p>	<p>Work to address these priorities for residents is already underway through the clean it, cut it, fill it initiative with additional resources allocated for 2017/18</p>
<p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68% of residents find out about the local area from council sources (leaflets/posters, website and social media) however 58% feel that the council keeps residents well informed about services • Use of specific feedback on what would help residents recycle more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communications strategy informed by the results for Cabinet in April 2017 • Use the feedback on recycling to improve communication about the service and increase recycling rates

Residents Survey Results	Actions
<p>Customer Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48% of residents feel that the council responds quickly and efficiently to queries • 81% prefer to contact the council by phone with 73% willing to contact the council online in the future 	<p>Use the results to inform the Customer Service Strategy for Cabinet in April 2017 including a consistent approach to service standards. Work is underway in services and through learning from complaints. Build on positive results for staff in customer services training and link to emerging People Strategy.</p>
<p>Community</p> <p>Community cohesion and participation is vastly different between wards across the borough although positive overall</p>	<p>Further analysis of the detailed data to identify ward specific issues where good practice can be shared or problems identified and resolved</p>
<p>Safety</p> <p>56% of residents feel safe in their local area after dark and other anti-social behaviour issues are an area that residents are concerned about</p>	<p>Where the council works in partnership the issues will be referred to the Community Safety Partnership</p>

3.8 In addition, detailed analysis will be undertaken across the full range of results by service area, wards and demographic groups, and where the results are below average, to identify any targeted activity that may also be required. Following this, detailed action plans will be developed for the service areas included in the survey. The plans will be developed in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

3.9 55% of residents were satisfied with the way the council runs things and 13% think that there has been an improvement in the last 12 months with 53% thinking that it has stayed the same. Addressing the issues in the themes identified above should have a positive impact on residents' perceptions of the council overall. This will be measured by carrying out another survey in September 2017.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 This report provides the results of the Residents Survey 2016 for Cabinet to consider and agree the recommended actions to address areas for improvement.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 This report provides a factual analysis of the recent Residents Survey following consultation with 1,000 residents at the end of 2016. The results have not been consulted upon. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited by Cabinet to consider the report and recommend any additional areas of focus.
- 5.2 The results of the survey will be communicated to residents following publication of this report. Over 600 residents participating in the survey indicated that they would be willing to be contacted again to participate in further surveys.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The Residents Survey provides a valuable source of independently compiled statistically representative perception data to inform the council's policies, priorities and performance alongside the use of other quantitative and qualitative information. The data will be used to inform the development of key strategies in the coming months as well as improve service delivery with a positive impact on the community.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Senior Finance Officer

The Residents Survey cost £19k from within existing budgets with a budget available in 2017/18 to repeat the survey. There are no other direct financial implications from this report. Any costs associated with implementing the actions above are expected to be met within existing budgets.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Monitoring Officer

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

The results from the Residents Survey will help to inform the overall strategic direction, policies and performance of the council including those areas

delivered in partnership. The results regarding feelings about the place and local community are generally positive with the opportunity for more detailed analysis of the results to assess whether the perception of residents differs by geographical area and other demographic characteristics e.g. age and ethnicity.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

As set out above the results, where relevant, will be referred to existing partnerships such as the Community Safety Partnership, to review and consider any specific action to be taken to address areas for improvement or of concern to local residents.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Residents Survey Headline Findings 2016, BMG Research

Report Author:

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