

CABINET
8 MARCH 2022

Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021

Cabinet Members: Councillor Bob Deed – Leader

Responsible Officers: Deputy Chief Executive (S151) – Andrew Jarrett

Reason for Report: To provide Cabinet with an update of the results of the Mid Devon residents' survey which was undertaken in November 2021 and included questions in relation to statutory consultation on the budget.

RECOMMENDATION: That Cabinet note the survey results.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Gaining insight from our residents enables the Council to understand how our residents value and prioritise the services that we provide.

Financial Implications: There are no direct financial implications.

Legal Implications: Under the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council has a statutory duty to consult ratepayer representatives on its annual spending proposals, ahead of setting its budget.

Risk Assessment: There are no direct risk issues emanating from this report.

Equality impact assessment: No equality issues identified from this report.

Impact on climate change: Residents' comments on climate change are included in the report.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council conducted a combined residents' and budget setting survey in November 2021. The survey ran for one month. Whilst it was an online survey, paper copies were also available and this was publicised. Customer Services staff were also able to assist anyone who was unable to complete the form, but wanted to have their say.

1.1.1 We would like to thank all of the residents who took the time to engage with our survey.

1.2 The survey was shared as far as possible using in-house communication team resources. This included sending posters, social media graphics and the survey link to:

- All parish clerks
- All Members
- MDDC staff

- All primary schools
- The local press
- Social media - including local Facebook groups such as Positive Cullompton, Crediton Community Noticeboard, What's on Tiverton, etc.
- Our 10k news bulletin subscribers
- Posters at the Market Walk vaccination site, Tiverton Pannier Market and the three Mid Devon Leisure centres

1.3 1,682 people clicked on the survey link, with 1,161 answering the questions (66% completion rate).

1.4 Many of the questions used were from surveys carried about by the LGA in order to have a level of benchmarking. Where a % figure is shown in brackets this shows results from the Local Government Association resident satisfaction telephone survey, conducted in October 2021.

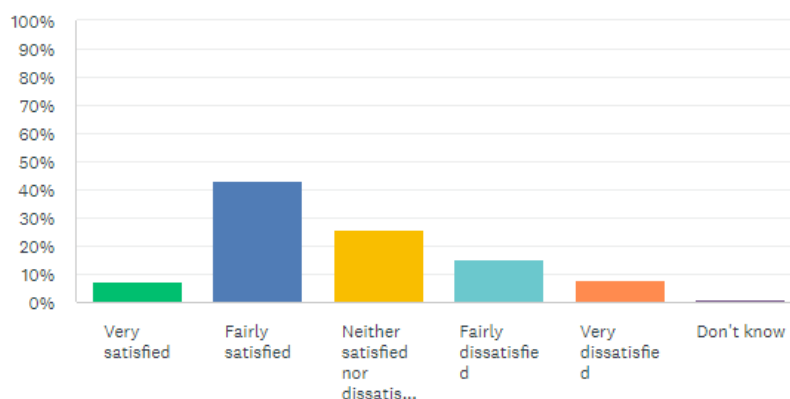
2.0 Summary responses

2.1 81% of residents are very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live. (78% LG Inform).

2.2 51% of residents are very or fairly satisfied with the way MDDC runs things (56% LG Inform), 23% are fairly or very dissatisfied.

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Mid Devon District Council runs things?

Answered: 1,162 Skipped: 521



2.3 41% strongly agree or tend to agree MDDC provides value for money. (43% LG Inform), 29% neither agree nor disagree, while 27% tend to or strongly disagree. 38% feel the Council acts on concerns of residents (52% LG Inform) while 49% think the Council does not.

NB – for 2022/23 the annual Council Tax on a Band D property is £218.84 which equates to £4.21 per week.

2.4 45% feel very or fairly well informed, (57% LG Inform) while 52% don't. 48% trust MDDC a fair amount or a great deal, 32% indicate not much trust, while 12% don't trust MDDC at all.

NB – The Council uses a number of channels to keep members of the public informed. These include a free online newsletter subscription service which currently has 11,000 subscribers. We also post council news stories on social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Nextdoor. These news stories are also sent to local news organisations such as Radio Devon, Mid Devon Gazette, Crediton Courier and Tiverton Community Radio, as well as to all of the parishes in our communities.

2.5 50% trusted their local council to make decisions about local services, compared to 3% trust for the Government.

2.6 57% trusted their local councillor to make decisions for their local area, but 38% didn't trust any of their councillors, MPs or government ministers.

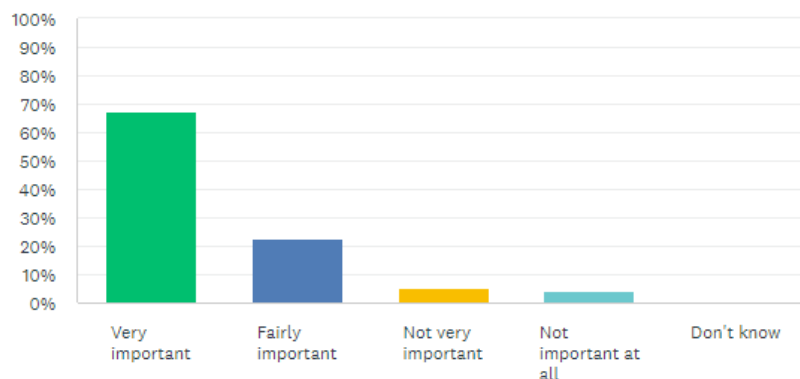
2.7 8% think the media has viewed local councils positively in the last few months. (25% LG Inform) 55% think it's neither positive nor negative.

3.0 Specific services

3.1 90% felt it fairly or very important for MDDC to tackle climate change.

How important or not do you think it is for your Council to undertake activities to tackle climate change?

Answered: 1,162 Skipped: 521



3.2 81% were fairly or very satisfied with MDDC's waste collection service (75% LG Inform).

3.3 47% were fairly or very satisfied with MDDC's street cleaning service (65% LG Inform).

- 3.4 39% were fairly or very satisfied with MDDC leisure services (58% LG Inform) and 57% were fairly or very satisfied with MDDC provision of parks and green spaces (75% LG Inform).
- 3.5 61% felt fairly or very safe after dark (71% LG Inform).
- 3.6 88% felt fairly or very safe in the day (92% LG Inform).
- 3.7 In areas where we have scored below the LG Inform data we will look to review these services in order to establish, why and importantly how we can improve.

4.0 Pandemic recovery

- 4.1 The table below is in response to the question: 'As the country recovers from the pandemic, which, if any of the following do you think it is important for the Council to do?'

	VERY IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL
Delivering housing for local people	59.01% 681	31.54% 364	6.33% 73	2.17% 25	0.95% 11	1,154
Supporting local businesses and high streets	62.36% 719	31.83% 367	4.08% 47	0.95% 11	0.78% 9	1,153
Introducing measures to encourage more walking and cycling	41.72% 479	36.59% 420	14.90% 171	5.49% 63	1.31% 15	1,148
Supporting people who still have to self isolate	41.43% 476	42.47% 488	11.66% 134	2.96% 34	1.48% 17	1,149
Supporting people who lose their jobs	41.72% 479	44.25% 508	9.58% 110	2.61% 30	1.83% 21	1,148
Supporting parks and open spaces	46.09% 530	43.91% 505	7.91% 91	1.39% 16	0.70% 8	1,150
Promoting activities that improve the public's health	47.22% 543	37.30% 429	11.04% 127	2.96% 34	1.48% 17	1,150

5.0 Spending and budget setting

5.1 When asked about what was the most important priority when making spending decisions 38% said providing basic statutory services, 21% tackling climate change, 19% said providing affordable housing.

5.2 46% said when making spending plans the Council should protect services even if it means it will need to increase council tax and fees and charges. 29% said the Council should share services with other organisations.

NB – the Council currently operates its Building Control Service in partnership with North Devon District Council and has a shared procurement arrangement with Devon County Council.

5.3 52% think the Council should seek to generate additional income from commercial investments while 49% think this should come from planning and building control.

NB – the Council has budgeted to earn gross income of £1.1m in 2022/23 from its commercial investments in: 3Rivers, Market Walk and Fore Street, Tiverton and from our industrial estates.

5.4 Of the discretionary services provided by MDDC there was a fairly even balance about which services should be protected. 67% favoured parks and open spaces, 63% public toilets, 52% town centre regeneration.

5.5 Of our statutory services 93% felt waste and recycling service was the most important service, followed by food and water sampling with 68%, and homelessness at 60%.

6.0 General comment questions

6.1 We asked four open ended questions. The comments were wide ranging but a summary of these are below, categorised by common themes.

6.2 897 comments were received in response to the question:
What is the single most important thing the council could do to improve quality of life in your community?

6.3 Recurring themes and some examples were:

6.3.1 Leisure:

- Improve accessibility
- Review pricing policy for lower income families
- Consider a swimming pool in Cullompton
- More sports facilities and cycle paths

6.3.2 **Housing:**

- More affordable housing for local people
- Set higher standards for new build developments (houses with more outside space, electric vehicle charging points, solar panels, heat exchange heating systems)

6.3.3 **Climate:**

- Continue to address the issues of climate change
- Make it compulsory that all new builds must have solar panels, heat exchange systems, grey water systems and enough car parking for each house.

6.3.4 **Street Scene and Recycling:**

- Simplify the waste collection service
- Change the way waste and recycling is stored in homes and collected

6.3.5 **Planning:**

- Need to revert to pre-covid opening hours or they need to get the IT Infrastructure in place so you can phone planners/individuals.
- Review your planning process.

6.3.6 **Members:**

- Ask councillors to be more involved with the residents they 'represent'.
- I would like to see my local representative out and about in the community more. And all councillors having to state their aims and objectives for the coming year to the public. This may encourage members of the public to become more engaged in what is happening in the town.
- It would be good to have written updates from our local District Councillor in our local village magazine. This would reach many people who do not look at online material.

6.3.7 **Non MDDC remit:**

- Slow the traffic down on the A377
- Mend potholes and pick up rubbish along roads
- Put back streetlights
- Social care, more buses, more police
- Improve schools
- Implement measures to reduce speeding vehicles in rural lanes

6.3.8 So what are we doing to address some of these issues? Here is just a flavour of what the Council is or will be doing over the next couple of years.

Leisure – we continue to invest significant sums in order to continually improve our 3 leisure centres and ensure our pricing strategy delivers value for money.

Housing – we have recently agreed a new Housing Strategy that will look to deliver a minimum of 500 new Council Houses over the next 5 years and it also includes a major decarbonisation investment programme across our 3,000 unit housing stock.

Climate – we have already included significant revenue and capital investment across our corporate building estate for 2022/23 and have been successful in obtaining a number of Government grants to help deliver an enhanced decarbonisation programme. In addition, we have just ordered our first batch of electric vehicles.

Street Scene – we are planning to roll out a 3 weekly waste collection service in September in order to meet challenging Government recycling targets, reduce our carbon footprint and to improve the cleanliness of our District.

General comments – we will of course consider all of this feedback and ensure where we can make more improvement to the services we provide, this is embedded wherever practicable.

6.4 612 comments were received in response to the question:

Are there any particular services areas you feel should not reduce their expenditure?

6.5 The majority of these comments were focused on waste and recycling services but also many answers focussed on suggesting social care expenditure should not be cut, which is a county council function.

6.6 404 comments were received in response to the question:
Is there anything else you think the Council should consider a priority when setting the budget?

6.7 The key themes for these responses were - climate change, council value for money/efficiency and again a focus on functions which are provided by either Devon County Council or the Police (e.g. social care, pot holes, street lighting, greater police presence, etc.).

6.8 230 comments were received in response to the question:
If you have any specific issues not covered in this survey, please comment.

6.9 Many of these comments were repetitions of comments to the previous open ended responses and again included; roads, pot holes, broadband, parking, anti-social behaviour and how Council meetings/processes could be more inclusive.

7.0 Budget setting

7.1 All of the budget feedback that we received, which is summarised in paragraph 5, was utilised in the Council's 2022/23 budget setting process. Our 4 Policy Development Groups and the Cabinet all made their decisions with regard to how residents had prioritised our services and decisions around the associated level of Council Tax.

8.0 Next steps

8.1 Resident and customer feedback is a powerful source of information that will enable us to ensure that we are directing our resources to the areas of highest priority and take remedial action in areas that our public are voicing concerns over.

8.2 Having this overarching resident feedback enables the Council to focus on the key concerns/messages, whilst also providing an important baseline which we can utilise in order to measure feedback against in future years and assess our direction of travel.

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Circulation of the report: Cabinet and Leadership Team