

CABINET
7 MARCH 2023

Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2022

Cabinet Member: Leader of the Council

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/December 2022 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/December 2022. The survey ran for six weeks. 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.

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

1.3 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 within the district
- The local press

- Social media - including local Facebook groups such as Positive Cullompton, Crediton Community Noticeboard, What's on Tiverton, etc.
 - Our 11,000+ e-bulletin subscribers
 - Posters at Phoenix House, Tiverton Pannier Market and the three Mid Devon Leisure centres
- 1.4 1,423 people clicked on the survey link, with 1,015 answering the questions (71% completion rate).
- 1.5 These results are only a sample of our residents who choose to engage. The population of Mid Devon is 82,800 (Census 2021), hence we don't record any demographics as it is not a representative sample.
- 1.6 Many of the questions used were from surveys carried out by the LGA in order to have a level of benchmarking. The LG Inform results shown in brackets are from the Local Government Association resident satisfaction telephone survey, conducted in June 2022.
https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Resident%20Satisfaction%20Polling%20Round%2032%20-%20FINAL_MJ_Accessible.pdf
- 1.7 A comparison to the previous residents' survey results (2021) is also shown in brackets.

2.0 Summary responses

- 2.1 78% of residents are very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live. (81% LG Inform 2022 / 81% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021).
- 2.2 49% of residents are very or fairly satisfied with the way MDDC runs things (63% LG Inform 2022 / 51% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021), 25% are fairly or very dissatisfied (23% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021).
- 2.3 46% strongly agree or tend to agree MDDC provides value for money. (45% LG Inform 2022 / 41% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021), 24% neither agree nor disagree, while 29% tend to or strongly disagree.
 NB – Mid Devon households pay on average £218.84 per year (£4.20 per week) in 2022/23.
- 2.4 39% feel the Council acts on concerns of residents (52% LG Inform 2022 / 38% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021) while 48% think the Council does not (49% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021).
- 2.5 62% feel very or fairly well informed, (57% LG Inform 2022 / 45% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021) while 36% don't.
 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.

- 2.6 50% trust MDDC a fair amount or a great deal, 30% indicate not much trust, while 12% don't trust MDDC at all.
- 2.7 52% trusted their local council to make decisions about local services, compared to 3% trust for the Government.
- 2.8 55% trusted their local councillor to make decisions for their local area, but 40% didn't trust any of their councillors, MPs or government ministers.
- 2.9 5% think the media has viewed local councils positively in the last few months. (24 or 16% LG Inform 2022 / 8% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021) 55% think it's neither positive nor negative.

3.0 Specific services

- 3.1 84% felt it fairly or very important for MDDC to tackle climate change (90% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021).
- 3.2 71% were fairly or very satisfied with MDDC's waste collection service (81% LG Inform 2022 / 81% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021).
- 3.3 41% were fairly or very satisfied with MDDC's street cleaning service (66% LG Inform 2022 / 47% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021).
- 3.4 35% were fairly or very satisfied with MDDC leisure services (55% LG Inform 2022 / 39% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021) and 54% were fairly or very satisfied with MDDC provision of parks and green spaces (81% LG Inform 2022 / 57% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021).
- 3.5 61% felt fairly or very safe after dark (76% LG Inform 2022 / 61% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021).
- 3.6 89% felt fairly or very safe in the day (95% LG Inform 2022 / 88% Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2021).
- 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	54.32% 547	33.66% 339	6.85% 69	2.88% 29	2.28% 23	1,007
▼ Supporting local businesses and high streets	57.64% 581	34.52% 348	5.85% 59	1.69% 17	0.30% 3	1,008
▼ Introducing measures to encourage more walking and cycling	32.07% 322	35.46% 356	23.41% 235	7.47% 75	1.59% 16	1,004
▼ Supporting people who still have to self isolate	30.17% 302	43.26% 433	18.08% 181	5.09% 51	3.40% 34	1,001
▼ Supporting people who lose their jobs	31.74% 318	48.20% 483	13.37% 134	3.69% 37	2.99% 30	1,002
▼ Supporting parks and open spaces	37.08% 373	47.32% 476	13.02% 131	1.49% 15	1.09% 11	1,006
▼ Promoting activities that improve the public's health	37.74% 380	41.71% 420	15.29% 154	4.07% 41	1.19% 12	1,007

5.0 Spending and budget setting

5.1 When asked about what was the most important priority when making spending decisions 42% said providing basic statutory services, 16% seeking to support and develop the economy, 15% tackling climate change, and 14% said providing affordable housing.

5.2 50% 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. 26% 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 63% think the Council should seek to generate additional income from planning and building control.

5.4 Of the discretionary services provided by MDDC there was a fairly even balance about which services should be protected. 52% public toilets, 51% favoured parks and open spaces, 46% town centre regeneration.

5.5 Of our statutory services 92% felt waste and recycling service was the most important service, followed by food and water sampling with 69%, and homelessness at 56%.

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.

6.2 773 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:

- Review pricing policy for lower income families.
- Consider a swimming pool in Cullompton.
- More cycle paths.
- Lack of 24 hour offering, closing at 9pm is early.

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).
- Temporary housing for the homeless.

6.3.3 Climate:

- Continue to address the issues of climate change.
- Tailored advice for residents to reduce their climate impact.
- Provide warm spaces during winter.
- Improve air quality.
- More EV charging points.
- Plant more trees.

6.3.4 Street Scene and Recycling:

- Change the way recycling is stored and collected.
- More frequent recycling collections.
- Enforcements for dogs.
- Tackle ASB.
- Provide more car parking.
- Maintain overgrown footpaths, verges, etc.
- Re-open all public toilet facilities.
- Reduce parking penalty fees and/increase time for free parking.

6.3.5 Planning:

- Review your planning process.
- Address issues facing Cullompton Town Centre. Traffic, parking, only housing (no additional doctors, schools, etc.) and relief road. Stop building without infrastructure.
- Prioritise footpaths and cycle paths over roads. Car free zones.
- Protect and provide green spaces.
- Enhance town centres. Empty shops.

6.3.6 Members:

- More engagement with parish councils who can address resident's issues to the Council.
- 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.

6.3.7 Finance:

- Invest in areas other than Tiverton.

6.3.8 Non-MDDC Remit:

- Mend roads (potholes) and maintain signage.
- Car parking enforcement on roads.
- Replace 30mph with 20mph limit in villages.
- Streetlights lit throughout the night.
- Broadband, faster rural internet speeds.
- Maintain regular bus services.
- Make Devon unitary.
- Social care, more buses, more police.
- Community resources for youth. Youth clubs, community centres, etc. Improve youth services, reduce ASB.

6.3.9 So what are we doing to address some of these issues?

The full report on what the Council is doing to address these issues is included in Appendix 1.

6.4 539 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 as well as affordable housing but also many answers focussed on suggesting social care expenditure should not be cut, which is a county council function.

6.6 316 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 – those who are vulnerable, 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.).

6.8 209 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, 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 2023/24 budget setting process. Our four Policy Development Groups and the Cabinet all made their decisions with regard to

how residents had prioritised our services, reflected on the level of our fees/charges 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.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 When reflecting on this overall consultation exercise, it is very encouraging to reflect on the fact that 62% felt very or fairly well informed by the Council, which is 5% higher than the national average and 17% higher than the Council scored in 2021.

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Circulation of the report: Cabinet and Leadership Team