



Communities Scrutiny Group

Thursday, 27 January 2021

Residents Survey Feedback

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To present the results of the Residents' Survey that took place in Summer 2021 and facilitate a Group discussion about the feedback provided by residents through the survey. The Residents' Survey is conducted every three years and seeks feedback from residents on key Council services and suggestions for making the Borough an even better place to live and work.
- 1.2 To identify where the Council can take action leading to improvements in resident satisfaction in the future.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Communities Scrutiny Group:

- a) Discuss the results and identify if any further actions should be taken as a result of the survey findings
- b) Agree for the Council's communications team to set up a focus group with residents to explore views presented in the survey relating to ways in which residents can contact and engage with the Council with a view to making improvements in the area and to formalise the production of an action plan

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. It is important that the Council takes a proactive approach to listening to residents' views on its services and quality of life where they live so they feel wider support from the authority and its partners can address the key topics they raise.
- 3.2. Identifying possible improvements where the Council can take action directly or tailor existing actions to be more impactful in line with the survey feedback enables the Council to further shape services in line with resident needs.

4. Supporting Information

Background Information

- 4.1. The Council conducted a residents' survey in June, July and August 2021 which has provided insight into what residents think about the Council and how satisfied they are with the services provided.
- 4.2. The structure, format and questions are all based on previous surveys conducted by the Council and allow it to track satisfaction over a number of years.
- 4.3. The survey was contained within the summer edition of the residents' magazine Rushcliffe Reports, delivered to every home in the Borough and heavily publicised across the Council's website and other digital channels.
- 4.4. 1,147 residents completed the survey, double that of the survey in 2018, the last large scale residents' survey, when 547 submitted their views. Of these 972 did so online and 175 completed a paper- based version of the survey from the magazine.
- 4.5. A table of results is at Appendix A including comparisons to data collected in 2018, the last large scale residents' survey undertaken.

Cautionary Notes

- 4.6. There is a small downward trend in the levels of satisfaction indicated by residents in a number of areas. This was anticipated given the impact of the COVID-19 over the last 18-months on Rushcliffe communities. This downturn in public confidence as a result of the pandemic could overshadow some responses and have an impact on how people feel about the Council and other public service providers.
- 4.7. This is not a local finding. The Local Government Association has reported that councils who surveyed this year are seeing a drop of 4-6% on previous results – due to the COVID impact.
- 4.8. The Group is also asked to bear in mind that in local government surveys residents tend to group all public service providers together and it is often not clear whether views are directed specifically to Borough Council or other parts of the public sector.
- 4.9. Results may also have been influenced by the change in residents' working patterns over the last two years which has been unprecedented with the impact of working from home, meaning that involvement in local communities may have changed. This could be two-fold, positively such as in the case of community cohesion, and negatively such as perceptions of more littering in local areas of disposable masks and gloves.

- 4.10. Lockdowns and more remote working are likely to have had an effect on the perceptions or realities of accessibility of public sector services.

General Questions – high levels of satisfaction

- 4.11. Of the 23 main questions surveyed, five are above 80% and eleven are below 60% in line with the Council’s long-standing thresholds for resident satisfaction.
- 4.12. The survey contained 18 general questions which all residents should have been able to express a view on. The Council has parameters for what it considers to be good levels of satisfaction and areas of satisfaction that are lower than desired– these are over 80% or under 60%.
- 4.13. Of these 18 general questions, three present high levels of satisfaction from residents:

	2021	2018	Difference
Percentage of people who have overall satisfaction with their local area as a place to live	84%	83%	+1%
Percentage of people who feel safe when outside in their local area during the day	91%	92%	-1%
Percentage of people who are satisfied with the refuse and recycling service	81% satisfaction in both surveys		

- 4.14. This compares to four questions falling into this high performing category in 2018 and the last time the survey was conducted. The three above were joined by the percentage of people who feel they belong to their local area which is now at 79% so just dropping below the 80% threshold.

General Questions – levels of satisfaction lower than 60% threshold

- 4.15. In terms of areas in which satisfaction is being reported as lower than three 60% threshold, nine questions have solicited a response of less than 60%:

	2021	2018	Difference
Percentage of people satisfied with the way the Council runs things	59%	63%	-4%
Percentage of people who agree that the Council provides good value for money	41%	47%	-6%
Percentage of people who will speak positively about the Council	44%	48%	-4%
Percentage of people who	44%	45%	-1%

think the Council acts on the concerns of local residents			
Percentage of people who trust the Council	55%	54%	+1%
Percentage of people who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area	57%	52%	+5%
Percentage of people who agree that they can influence decisions that affect their local area	26%	31%	-5%
Percentage of people who are satisfied with Rushcliffe Reports	50%	61%	-11%
Percentage of people satisfied with the variety of ways they can contact the Council	59%	72%	-13%

4.12. Of the two questions with the higher percentage decreases, subsequent proposed actions will be discussed later in the report.

Satisfactions increases and declines

4.13. Satisfaction in seven areas has improved – in two areas, this is by more than 5%: percentage of people who agree that local people pull together to improve their local area (+6%) and percentage of people who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area (+5%).

4.14. One area has remained the same – percentage of people who are satisfied with the refuse and recycling service.

4.15. Satisfaction in eleven areas has declined – in five areas, this decline has been more than 5% as shown in the table below:

	2021	2018	Difference
Percentage of people who agree that the Council provides good value for money	41%	47%	-6%
Percentage of people who think the Council keeps them well informed	64%	69%	-5%
Percentage of people who agree that they can influence decisions that affect their local area	26%	31%	-5%
Percentage of people who are satisfied with Rushcliffe	50%	61%	-11%

Reports			
Percentage of people satisfied with the variety of ways they can contact the Council	59%	72%	-13%

- 4.16. Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic some drop in satisfaction levels as outlined above was expected and, therefore, these decreases will be areas focussed on later in this report.
- 4.17. The Council appreciates it can be difficult for residents to distinguish between the work of the Borough Council and the County Council or, in some cases, other public service providers.
- 4.18. Open comments at the end of the survey cover feedback to a range of different providers and, therefore it is consistent that the numerical questions also express some dissatisfaction with other partners' services.
- 4.19. This is then considered in line with the topics residents have raised in the next section.

More service specific questions

- 4.20. The survey also contains questions specifically related to the Events and Planning Services. In both cases respondents are asked if they have used the service and, if they have, how satisfied they were.

Events

	2021	2018	Difference
Percentage of people who are aware of the Council's events programme	83%	87%	-4%
Percentage of people who are satisfied with a Council event they have attended	84%	86%	-2%

- 4.21. Awareness and satisfaction levels of over 80% have been maintained. Very slight decreases could be linked to all events during 2020 were cancelled due to COVID19 and most 2021 events took place after the survey deadline. It is very clear that the events programme is still valued by residents.

Planning

	2021	2018	Difference
Percentage of people who have used the Council's planning service	58%	56%	+ 2%
Percentage of people who are satisfied with the Council's planning service	44%	43%	+ 1%

- 4.22. There is a slight increase in the percentage of survey respondents reporting that they have used the planning service but does not reflect the significant increase of 42% in actual numbers of planning applications received.
- 4.23. Of those that have used the service, only 44% of people reported being satisfied. However, it is noted that respondents may have been applicants or objectors who may not have received the planning outcomes they were seeking, and this can have a huge impact on the way responses are given.

Resident feedback on specific issues

- 4.24. The final set of questions are phrased differently to the rest of the survey and ask whether respondents feel a number of factors are a problem in their local area rather than asking how satisfied respondents are. They are mainly connected to feelings of safety and anti-social behaviour. In the main, there are very low percentages of people reporting that these factors are an issue in their area. Highlighted below are the three areas where there has been an increase of over 5% since the last survey in 2018:

Percentage of people who feel that the following factors are a problem in their local area:	2021	2018	Difference
Rubbish or litter lying around	42%	34%	+8%
People using or dealing drugs	25%	18%	+7%
Dog fouling	49%	42%	+7%

- 4.25. 25% of respondents to this question felt that people using or dealing drugs in their area was a problem. To set this perception in context, the Police reported five drug related crimes in August 2021, the same month that this survey was conducted.
- 4.26. 42% of respondents felt that rubbish and litter lying around and 49% of respondents felt that dog fouling were problems in their areas. In the same survey, satisfaction with street cleanliness and the cleanliness of parks and opens spaces have both improved. Quarter 1 performance data from Streetwise Environmental shows that 97.5% of streets inspected in Rushcliffe have passed the clean streets inspection.
- 4.27. Whilst residents may be concerned that these issues are a problem in their area, performance data collected by the Council and partners would suggest otherwise. This is not to say that residents are incorrect, but that reality and perception do not always agree. The Council is always mindful that environmental concerns are a key priority for residents and continually seeks to promote the work the Council and its partners do to target action to address these issues.

Open feedback provided by residents

- 4.28. The final section of the survey asked respondents if there was anything else they wished to inform the Council about. Kindly, over 80 people left compliments about the Council and its services including many comments on the Council's response to COVID-19, the distribution of business relief and the excellent waste services.
- 4.29. The largest proportion of less positive comments related to services run by the County Council – out of 264 comments overall, the largest number related to potholes, road and pavement maintenance. In addition, 68 comments made by respondents to the survey related to services provided by the Police including anti-social behaviour associated with teenagers in villages and the perception that a greater police presence was needed.
- 4.30. These comments will be passed on to our partners to raise their awareness of the concerns expressed by residents. The fact that so many residents left feedback that relates to other organisations suggests that there is still a lack of understanding of which organisation does what and so feedback relating to levels of satisfaction may also be influenced positively or negatively by residents' perceptions of services that we do not provide.
- 4.31. 193 comments left by respondents to the survey related to waste and recycling. The comments mainly related to the collection of glass, a wider range of plastics, and kitchen scraps for recycling via a doorstep collection service. Whilst Rushcliffe provides the Borough's waste collection and recycling service not many residents understand that what we can collect and recycle is determined by the County Council and the longstanding Veolia contract. It is anticipated that the upcoming Environment Bill will resolve many, if not all, of these points.
- 4.32. There were 249 individual comments relating to the planning service. In the main, residents expressed concerns about the number of houses being built around the Borough and the perception that there is too little corresponding development of infrastructure. Some concerns were also expressed about development on Green Belt and in-fill sites.
- 4.33. 167 comments related to the Council as a whole. These included requests to stop increasing Council Tax. 164 comments related to the environment including litter on pavements and in open spaces, and a lack of bins, dog fouling, street sweeping, weeds and fly-tipping. A small number of comments were received about the Council's Leisure and Cultural Services, Communications and Customer Services.

Proposed Actions

- 4.34. The percentage of people satisfied with Rushcliffe Reports decreased to 50% from 61% in 2018 and those satisfied with the variety of ways they can contact the Council decreased from 72% to 59%.

- 4.35. A focus group is therefore proposed so the Council can target its response to the survey feedback in areas where it believes it can make a measurable difference as well as continuing to deliver positive communications to influence views in other areas.
- 4.36. This includes further positive promotion on what and how services are operated to increase their knowledge.
- 4.37. Further investigation into the satisfaction with Rushcliffe Reports will take place, listening to further views on where the Council can change content for Rushcliffe Reports and ways residents can contact the Council.
- 4.38. Officers are investigating areas of dissatisfaction to determine what, if anything, can be done at the present time to improve resident satisfaction in these areas.
- 4.39. The formation of the focus group will seek to formalise an action plan from its discussions but also other ways the Council can keep residents informed in line with its 2022-2025 Communications Strategy, set to be finalised this Spring.
- 4.40. As part of the Council's actions it could highlight examples to the group and subsequently communicate more widely the actions that it has taken in some areas of concern for example, in relation to fly-tipping that has seen the Council record a four-year low in quarter two in 2021.
- 4.41. Work is also taking place to review access to the Council's services post-pandemic including face to face, over the phone, by email and through the Council's website.
- 4.42. This will result in a new Customer Services Strategy which will be published mid-2022 and improve residents' understanding of the variety of different ways in which they can contact the Council.
- 4.43. Residents were asked how they would like to receive news and 67% stated this update was their preferred option possibly highlighting that a less digitally based engaged audience completed the survey even though the vast majority of respondents did so online (972 out of 1,147).
- 4.44. Any concerns connected to the environmental impact of printing and distributing a paper update will also be raised through this channel. The focus group will also consider if social media, the proactive seeking out of information, and alternative media cover connections with residents sufficiently.

5. Risks and Uncertainties

If no action is taken as a result of the feedback identified in the survey this may result in disengagement in local democracy and/or reputational issues with residents. Failure to listen to residents may also have an adverse effect on the quality of life in the Borough in direct contradiction of the Council's key priorities.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

Possible third-party co-ordination of the focus group, employing an engagement provider to assess and deliver the format, met from existing budgets.

6.2. Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications associated with this report.

6.3. Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

6.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no crime and disorder implications associated with this report.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	It is important to ask residents of the Borough how they feel about living and working in the Borough so that this information can be used to inform decision making.
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	
The Environment	

8. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that Communities Scrutiny Group:

- a) Discuss the results and identify if any further actions should be taken as a result of the survey findings
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Background papers available for Inspection:	None.
List of appendices:	Appendix 1

