

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 19 January 2015

Wards: All

Subject: Annual Residents' Survey: Key Messages

Lead officer: Ged Curran, Chief Executive

Lead member: Councillor Mark Allison, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Recommendations:

A. That Cabinet note the results of the Annual Residents' Survey 2014

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This paper reports the results of the Annual Residents' Survey 2014, highlighting key messages and findings. The results are displayed graphically in the presentation charts that can be found on the council's website.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Annual Residents' Survey (ARS) is Merton's principal survey of local residents. It elicits information on local people's concerns and their perceptions of local services, the image of the Council and a host of local issues.
- 2.2 The survey is conducted with more than 1,000 adults and ensures that key groups within our local population – segmented by age, ethnicity, gender, tenure, residence, and family composition – are broadly represented in the sample of respondents. The survey is conducted by TNS-BMRB, a company commissioned by the Council. The Council also buys into a London-wide survey to provide comparative data for the core questions in the survey. Interviews take place in homes and public places. In addition, a specific survey of 200-250 young people aged 11 – 17 is carried out.
- 2.2 The survey was conducted in September and October 2014. This closely reflects the timetable for the results for the London wide survey and the timetable in previous years, which is useful for comparison.
- 2.3 The results have been tested for statistical significance to ensure that changes reflect public perceptions and are not anomalies. Changes quoted as significant have passed this validation.

Highlights from the 2014 results

2.4 The 2014 Annual Residents' Survey results are in line with or better than the 2013 survey, which recorded some of the Council's best ever results. Among the findings are:

- The number of people saying that the Council is efficient and well run is at a record high, 72%, up 2% on last year, which was also a record high.
- The council has beaten its highest ever Value for Money score of last year (56%) with 57% this year.
- 79% agree that Merton is doing a good job, the same as 2012 and 2013; the only year in which the score has been bettered was 2011.
- The number of people saying that the council is doing a better job than one year ago is up by 4% to 47%.
- Respondents are asked to identify three issues that are a concern to them. The number saying that council tax is a concern has fallen by 3% to an all time low of 19%.
- Satisfaction with the way the Council deals with litter has risen 1% to 61%. The proportion rating the Council street cleaning service as good to excellent remains at 54%, consistent with the trend of higher scores since 2010. The number of people saying they are concerned about litter and dirt on the streets has risen by 4% to 34%, making it the top concern amongst residents in the borough.
- Satisfaction with policing has fallen by 3%, and crime remains the second largest concern for respondents, although the number of people saying crime is an issue of concern has fallen slightly for the sixth year running.
- The number of people saying traffic congestion is a concern has increased by 2% on last year to 27%, making it residents' third biggest concern.
- Concern about lack of jobs and the quality of health services has fallen.
- A record number of people think the council involves residents in decision making (56%, up by 4% since 2013).
- However, fewer people think the council responds quickly when asked for help (-4%) and more think the council does not do enough for people like them (+2%).
- There has been an increase in residents' opinions of several services, namely repair of roads, recycling facilities, activities for young people, and fly tip removal.
- Satisfaction with leisure and sports has decreased by a noticeable 7% from last year's record levels but satisfaction levels remain higher than at any time before 2010. Satisfaction among users is at an all-time high of 63%.
- Levels of satisfaction with public transport, housing benefit and council tax collection have also all dropped.

- Satisfaction with Merton's libraries has never been higher, with 66% of residents saying it is good to excellent, and a record 82% of users saying so.

Top concerns

- 2.5 Respondents are asked to identify three issues that are a concern to them.
- 2.6 The order in which the top concerns appear has altered since last year. Although satisfaction with the street cleaning service remains higher than pre-2010 and satisfaction with the way the Council deals with litter has risen 1% to 61%, concern about litter on the streets has seen a rise for the second successive year (+6% in 2013; +4% in 2014) and is now the sole top concern. Crime, which last year was joint top, is now second. Concern about traffic congestion follows, coming above council tax and then lack of affordable housing, quality of health service and lack of jobs. In keeping with previous years, the level of concern about crime and council tax continues to steadily drop. Concern over lack of jobs, having gone down by 3% last year, has gone down by another 8% this year.
- 2.7 Concern about traffic congestion (+4%) and litter on the streets (+4%) remains significantly higher in Merton than across the rest of London. Concern about crime remains below the pan-London score, however the difference is no longer significant, having lessened from -7% last year to -3% this year.

Overall image of the council

- 2.8 Whilst there are some slight changes in the overall image of the council from 2013, none of these are significant, suggesting a consistent level of approval of the Council. As shown below, residents are very positive about Merton council, with the same number as last year - 79% - agreeing that Merton is doing a good job. This is a significantly higher score than the London average and has only been bettered once, in 2011.
- 2.9 At 72%, the number of people saying the Council is efficient and well run is at a record high, and the number saying the Council offers Value for Money is also at a record score of 57%.
- 2.10 Merton residents are significantly more positive than London residents with regards to how difficult it is to get through to the council by phone, how good the council is at keeping residents informed and how friendly and polite staff are.

Your council....	% In agreement	Change since 2013	Merton v. Pan-London
Is doing a good job	79	0	+4*
Is efficient and well run	72	+2	+2
Involves residents in making decisions	56	+4	+3
Listens to concerns of local residents	60	0	+2
Is difficult to get through to on the phone [^]	39	-1	-7*
Responds quickly when asked for help	52	-4	0
Keeps people informed	76	0	+5*
Has friendly and polite staff	78	+1	+4*
Doesn't do enough for people like me [^]	45	+2	-1
Provides good value for money	57	+1	+3
Is doing a better job than one year ago	47	+4	+2
Is making the local area a better place	73	-1	-1

[^]Negative polarity – disagreement is desirable

*Significant difference between London and Merton scores

- 2.11 Residents who consider themselves to have a disability continue to rate the Council significantly lower than those without a disability on the council doing a good job (72% vs. 79% respectively). Disabled respondents also continue to be less likely to agree that the Council is making the area a better place to live to a significant degree (65% vs. 74%), less likely to agree that the Council is efficient and well run to a significant degree (63% vs. 73%), and less likely to agree the council responds quickly when asked for help (41% vs. 53%).

Satisfaction with services

- 2.12 There have been no significant increases in satisfaction with services in 2014, but two services have seen a significant decrease as set out in the table below:

Service	% Good	Change since 2013	Merton v. Pan-London
Refuse collection	70	-2	+2
Street cleaning	54	0	-2
Street Lighting	72	-1	0
Repair of roads	42	+3	+1
Parks, playgrounds, open spaces	72	+2	+4*
Nursery education	33	+1	+6*
Primary education	44	+1	+5*
Secondary education	33	0	-1
Adult education	29	-1	+4
Leisure and sports	44	-7*	-2
Libraries	66	0	+10*
Social services for adults	21	-3	+2
Recycling facilities	72	+3	+6*
Local health facilities	64	-1	-1
Public transport	76	-3	+1

Policing	59	-3	+10*
Housing benefit	15	-3	N/A
Council tax collection	62	-5*	-4*
Activities for young people	30	+3	+14*
Fly tip removal	46	+3	N/A
Social services for families and children	24	-1	+4*
Parking	35	+1	+3
Planning	29	+1	N/A
Childcare across the borough	25	+1	-1

*Significant difference between London and Merton scores

- 2.13 Although satisfaction levels remain higher than at any point before 2010, opinion on leisure and sports has dropped sharply by 7% since last year's all-time high, although perceptions continue to be more positive among users (a record 63% of users scoring this positively, compared to 44% of Merton residents).
- 2.14 Views on council tax collection have also dropped, down 5% on 2013, significantly lower than London (-4%).
- 2.15 However, many services are still performing significantly higher than the London averages, including for young people, policing, libraries, recycling facilities, and nursery education. Scores for primary education, parks, playgrounds and open spaces, adult education and evening classes and social services for children and families are also significantly above the London average.
- 2.16 There were some changes in user satisfaction with services, with 21% increase in the rating by users of social services for children and families and a 34% decrease in the rating by users of social services for adults. It should be noted, however, that these are from a low base size, less than 40 respondents in each case, so tend to be subject to more volatility, and the figures are therefore not statistically reliable. The rating for adult social services does not reflect the findings of the larger scale Adult Social Care User Survey. The 2013/14 survey saw increase on the previous years satisfaction with services.

The Council and the local area

- 2.17 Additional questions were placed in the ARS this year various partners and departments in the council. These additional questions focused around waste services, keeping up-to-date with what's going on in Merton, voluntary work, and Public Health.
- 2.18 There has been an increase in the number of respondents who are satisfied with the way the council deals with graffiti (63%) and litter (61%).
- 2.19 Residents in Village/ Hillside/ Raynes Park/ Wimbledon Park (area 1) and Cannon Hill/ Merton Park/ West Barnes/ Lower Morden (area 3) were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the way the council deals with litter than the average.

- 2.20 Satisfaction is lower with the way the council deals with fly tipping and dog fouling, with levels of satisfaction at 54% and 49% respectively, both down by 1% on last year.
- 2.21 The most-used method of keeping up-to-date with what is going on in Merton is the council publication 'My Merton' (37%) which is a significant increase from 2013 (5%). Use of information leaflets has significantly decreased over the past year (down by 6%), but remains the second most common method of keeping up-to-date. Use of the Merton website to keep up-to-date is significantly higher than last year, having increased by 6%, making it the third most common method.
- 2.22 One fifth of Merton residents has done voluntary work within the past 12 months. Of those that have not, the most common reason given is that they do not have time to volunteer (68%), with 10% saying that it had never occurred to them.
- 2.23 Overall Merton residents are positive about their health and wellbeing, with around 90% reporting that they are satisfied with life, felt happy yesterday and feel that life is worthwhile
- 2.24 Reflecting continuing high levels of concern about crime, 'feeling safe in your local area' is the area that most residents feel needs to be improved to better their sense of health and wellbeing (52%). Residents in Ravensbury/ St Helier/ Cricket Green (Area 5), are significantly more likely to say that 'feeling safe in your local area' could be improved than the average.
- 2.25 About a third (31%) of Merton Residents say that their sense of health and wellbeing could be improved by increasing their satisfaction with how their area looks.

Crime

- 2.26 Although satisfaction with policing has fallen by 3%, and crime remains the second largest concern for respondents, concerns about crime, anti-social behaviour and people being drunk and rowdy appear to be plateauing, following a downward trend over recent years.
- 2.27 Despite a positive overall performance there are some regional differences: as in 2013, residents in Colliers Wood/ Graveney/ Longthornton (Area 6) are significantly more worried about crime and drug users versus the Merton average (65% vs. 50% for crime; and 46% vs. 32% for drug use).
- 2.28 Residents of Lavender Fields/ Pollards Hill/ Figges Marsh (Area 4) are more worried about anti-social behaviour than the average (54% vs. 42%).
- 2.29 Residents also feel less informed about the council's measures to tackle antisocial behaviour than they did in 2013 (-6%).

Community Cohesion

- 2.30 There is high agreement that people in the local area treat each other with respect and consideration (91%, the same level as in 2013); agreement tends to

be higher among higher social grade respondents (AB – 94%) compared to lower social grade respondents (DE - 88%).

- 2.31 89% of respondents feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together, with just 7% disagreeing with this statement. Disagreement is slightly higher amongst Black respondents, although this figure has fluctuated widely, from 14% in 2012, down to 3% in 2013 and up to 10% this year.
- 2.32 Despite a slight drop (down by 3% to 60%), the majority of respondents continue to agree that the council treats them in a fair and non-discriminatory way
- 2.33 On average, 14% of respondents feel that the council does not tackle racism, whilst 42% feel it does and the remaining 44% unsure. Whilst Asian residents were slightly more likely to agree that the council does tackle racism (50%), they were also slightly more likely to disagree (19%).

Young People's Survey

- 2.34 Young people's concerns are similar to those of adults, and although young people's satisfaction with the Council's street cleaning service remains high (50%, down 1% on last year) litter and dirt in the streets is now their top concern, a significant increase from 2013 (up by 9% to 38%).
- 2.35 Concern about crime has fallen significantly (down by 11% to 35%), but it remains the second highest concern for young people in Merton, and is 8% higher than the London average. Bullying and bad behaviour also remain key concerns.
- 2.36 Merton council continues to be viewed fairly positively by young residents, with 77% feeling they get the services they need (a slight increase from 2013), and 84% feeling that the council does enough to protect young people (a significant increase from 2013). 89% of young people surveyed also agree that Merton is a good place to live, whilst significantly more young residents in Merton feel that the council involves young people when compared to the London-wide average (+15%).
- 2.37 The level of concern about health is significantly higher than the London average (+16%), and the same is true of the standard of education (+7%).
- 2.38 There are no significant differences in ratings for any services in 2014 versus 2013, and the only significant difference to the London averages is a higher score for social services for children and families (+11%).
- 2.39 Political involvement amongst young people has remained broadly stable, and generally slightly lower than the London average. Participation in voluntary work is significantly lower than London (-10%).

- 2.40 As with adults, feeling safe in the local area is a key factor that young people feel could be improved to increase their sense of health and wellbeing (54%). However, overall young people are fairly positive about their health and wellbeing, with 92% saying that they are fairly satisfied with life.

Next steps

- 2.41 The results are available to the public from the council website. Briefings on the results will be provided to partner organisations and local community groups over the next few weeks.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1 None.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1 The survey is typically conducted with just over 1,000 people and ensures that key components of the local population are broadly represented in the sample of respondents. The survey is conducted by means of interviews in homes and public places, and also contains a specific set of questions for young people, which were put to just under 250 11-17 year-olds.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1 The results have been made publicly available and will then be shared with partner organisations. Further analysis of the data will be undertaken to support individual services areas.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The 2014 ARS has cost £45,250 met from departmental budgets.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Council has a best value duty to consult residents and the survey helps meet this duty.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A number of questions in the survey measure equalities and community cohesion targets. The survey also enables the Council to understand the views and priorities of local people, so that services can be tailored accordingly.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The survey is a key tool for identifying the crime and disorder concerns and priorities of local people. The findings will be fed into the statutory Crime and Disorder Strategic Assessment to set priorities for 2015-16.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None.

11 APPENDICES – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

- 11.1 None.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS – the following documents have been relied on in drawing up this report but do not form part of the report

- 12.1 Annual Residents Survey presentation charts available from the website at <http://www.merton.gov.uk/council/performance/residentssurvey.htm>
- 12.2 Annual Resident Survey cross-tabulations and charts.

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