Cabinet

Date: 3 June 2019

Agenda item: 10

Subject: **Results of the Residents' Survey 2019**

Lead officer: **Caroline Holland, Director Corporate Services**

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

Reasons for urgency: The Chair has approved the submission of this report as a matter of urgency so that the data is available for the next published performance monitoring report

Recommendations:

A. That Cabinet note the results of the Annual Residents' Survey 2019

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This paper reports the results of the latest Residents' Survey, highlighting key messages and findings. A detailed report from the research provider is available in Appendix 1.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Between 1999 and 2014 the Annual Residents' Survey was based on the Survey of Londoners model previously commissioned by London Councils on behalf of boroughs. The former provider withdrew from delivery of this survey in 2015, and in 2017 BMG was commissioned by Merton Council to provide a new survey that kept elements of the Survey of Londoners but also incorporated questions recommend by the Local Government Association (LGA). This was published in July 2017.

2.2 Following a new competitive procurement exercise DJS Market Research was appointed by Merton in November 2018 to deliver a new survey. As before, this is a face-to-face survey with 1,000 adults that reflect our local population – segmented by age, ethnicity, gender, tenure, residence, disability and family composition. In addition, a different survey of 271 young people aged 11 – 17 was carried out in parallel.

2.2 The survey fieldwork was conducted in February and March 2019 for adults, with additional surveys with young people taking place throughout March and into early April.

2.3 There is no longer a matching London-wide survey to compare the results against but by incorporating standard questions set by the Local Government Association (LGA) it is possible to make some comparisons against the national telephone survey commissioned by the LGA that takes place three times each year involving 1000 adults across England. The most recently available survey took place in October 2018 so has been used for comparison.

2.4 Where it is possible to compare results to previous surveys in Merton the results have been tested for statistical significance to ensure that changes reflect public perceptions. Changes quoted as significant have passed this validation. Testing for different demographic groups has also been conducted and any significant differences have been highlighted.

2.5 Wards have been placed in clusters in order to provide more local analysis at a meaningful level and to be consistent with previous surveys. The clusters are:

- North Wimbledon: Village, Hillside, Raynes Park, Wimbledon Park
- South Wimbledon: Dundonald, Trinity, Abbey
- South West Merton: Cannon Hill, Merton Park, West Barnes, Lower Morden
- East Merton and Mitcham: Lavender Fields, Pollards Hill, Figge's Marsh
- South Mitcham and Morden: Ravensbury, St Helier, Cricket Green
- North East Merton: Colliers Wood, Graveney, Longthornton

Highlights from the 2019 results

2.6 Overall satisfaction levels remain high and generally above the LGA benchmark, with particularly positive feedback on services key to the objective for the council of being a great place for families, including crime, education and leisure services, although satisfaction with environmental services has been impacted by recent service changes. The most notable results were:

- The vast majority of Merton residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (89%). This is 11-percentage points higher than the national benchmark of 78%.
- A clear majority of residents feel safe in their local area both during the day (98%) and after dark (84%). Again, this compares favourably against national benchmarking (93% and 76% respectively).
- Overall satisfaction with the Council has increased slightly (70% up from 67%) and is well above the LGA benchmark (60%)
- The proportion of residents who feel the council delivers value for money, acting on the concerns of residents and informing residents are all still tracking above the LGA benchmark, despite decreases compared to 2017.
- There was a significant increase in the rating of street lighting but most other services have seen a decrease, in particular refuse collection, recycling and street cleaning where the survey coincided with service changes that have resulted in service disruption; similar changes have resulted in an impact on satisfaction levels in other local authorities.

- Amongst service users there was an increase in satisfaction with education provision, libraries and leisure and sport facilities.
- Residents were asked what they valued most in Merton and the top three responses were public transport, parks and open spaces and low levels of crime.
- When asked what most needs improving nearly half said affordable housing was one of their top three issues.
- Merton residents were more likely to feel positive about their well-being than residents across London and the whole UK.
- Young people gave more positive ratings for parks, playgrounds and open spaces, public transport, libraries, primary schools, secondary schools, and sixth form/further education than in 2017.

LGA Questions

2.7 A number of questions have been taken from the LGA 'Are you being served?' question set so that comparison can be made with a national telephone survey conducted in October 2018. These are set out in the table below.

Question	**Merton 2019 % positive**	**LGA % positive**
Satisfaction with the local area	89%	78%
Satisfaction with the way the Council runs things	70%	60%
Agree the Council provides value for money	56%	44%
Council acts on the concerns of local residents	63%	56%
Informed about Council services and benefits	70%	58%
Feel safe after dark	84%	76%
Feel safe during the day	98%	93%

2.8 The same question set was asked in 2017 and the table below shows the change since the last survey.

Question	**Merton 2019 % positive**	**Merton 2017 % positive**	**Change since 2017**
Satisfaction with the local area	89%	92%	-3%
Satisfaction with the way the Council runs things	70%	67%	+3%
Agree the Council provides value for money	56%	65%	-9%
Council acts on the concerns of local residents	63%	75%	-12%
Informed about Council services and benefits	70%	81%	-11%
Feel safe after dark	84%	85%	-1%
Feel safe during the day	98%	96%	+2%

2.9 In terms of cluster wards, residents of North East Merton are the least likely to be satisfied (82%) with their local area and those from South Mitcham and Morden are the most likely (96%). Levels of satisfaction have increased by 8% points in South Mitcham and Morden since 2017, but there have been decreases of 8% points in North Wimbledon and North East Merton. Satisfaction decreases amongst residents who are new to the borough (83% compared to 91% for those who have lived here for over 5 years), and is markedly lower where residents feel refuse collection are poor (82% satisfaction with the local area) and for those who rated recycling facilities as poor (76% satisfaction with the local area).

2.10 Satisfaction with the way the Council runs things compares favourably to the LGA benchmarking. There are large variations in opinion by ward cluster with as many as 87% of residents in South Mitcham and Morden saying they are satisfied with the way the council runs things (and just 3% are dissatisfied), whilst satisfaction is 57% in North East Merton.

2.11 DJS has conducted a key driver analysis to show which views or services have the greatest impact on overall satisfaction with the Council. The three most important drivers of satisfaction were value for money, advocacy (those who would speak positively about the council) and street cleaning.

2.12 More than half (56%) agree that the Council provides value for money, 12% more than the LGA benchmark, whilst 19% disagree. This represents a 9%-point decrease since 2017 (from 65%). Agreement varies considerably by area with residents living in the most deprived areas of the borough more likely to be positive. Opinions regarding value for money are strongly related to how informed residents feel the council keeps them. Among the minority of residents who do not feel well informed by the council, just 33% believe the council provides value for money. Likewise, just 32% among the minority of residents who feel the refuse collection service is poor feel value for money is provided.

2.13 Close to two thirds (63%) of residents believe the council acts on their concerns. The Merton result compares well to the LGA benchmark (56%). This is a decrease since 2017 of 12% points (from 75%), although the LGA benchmark has also fallen. The proportion who feel the council does not act on their concerns has also increased in the last two years (by 11% points to 28%).

2.14 Seventy percent feel either very well or fairly well informed, although this is lower than in 2017 (81%). This compares well to the LGA benchmark (58%), which also experienced a fall.

2.15 Most residents living in the borough feel safe in their local area, both during the day (98%) and at night (84%). This is similar to 2017 and compares well against the national figures collected by the LGA when 76% of residents felt safe after dark and 93% felt secure during the day.

Image of the council

2.16 A number of questions about the image of the council have been continued from the former survey. The results from these questions and a comparison with the results from 2017 are set out below.

Your council….	% Strongly agree/ agree 2019	% Strongly agree/ agree 2017	Change since 2017
Is doing a good job	70%	82%	-12%*
Is efficient and well run	64%	76%	-12%*
Involves residents in making decisions	44%	62%	-18%*
Is difficult to get through to on the phone^	36%	50%	-14%*
Responds quickly when asked for help	56%	65%	-9%*
Has friendly and polite staff	73%	78%	-5%*
Is doing a better job than one year ago	43%	48%	-5%*
Is making the local area a better place	69%	76%	-7%*

^Negative polarity – disagreement is desirable
* Statistically significant change

2.17 Levels of support have fallen since 2017 when there were record levels of agreement with doing a good job; efficient and well run; responds quickly when asked for help and involves residents. The number of residents agreeing that the council is difficult to get through to on the phone has improved by 14%-points.

2.18 Residents were also asked whether they would speak positively or negatively about the Council. Just over half (51%) would speak positively, nearly four times the number who would speak negatively (14%). This compares to 64% who said they would speak positively in 2017 and 9% who would speak negatively. As with overall satisfaction and value for money residents in the East of the borough were more likely to be positive than those in the West.

2.19 Residents were asked to rate each service from a given list on a scale from very good to very poor, even if they do not have direct experience of the service, as well as being asked whether they or their family used those services. The table below sets out the percentage giving a positive rating from all respondents.

Service	% Very good/good 2019	% Very good/good 2017	Change since 2017
Parks, playgrounds, open spaces	77%	75%	+2%
Recycling facilities	56%	71%	-15%*
Street Lighting	78%	70%	+8%*
Refuse collection	48%	69%	-21%*
Libraries	68%	68%	0%
Leisure and sports	59%	63%	-4%
Street cleaning	44%	53%	-9%*
Primary education	49%	51%	-2%
Parking	45%	51%	-6%*
Repair of roads	43%	48%	-5%
Nursery education	40%	47%	-7%*
Secondary education	42%	42%	0%

Satisfaction with services
*Significant change

2.20 The decrease in the ratings for refuse collection and recycling services are consistent with the impact seen following major service changes in other boroughs. For example, in LB Sutton their December 2017 resident survey saw waste collection decrease by 22%-points compared to 2015 and recycling services by 15%-points.

2.21 Respondents were asked to identify which services they used from this list. The table below sets out the scores from service users compared to the 2017 scores.

Service	% Very good/good 2019	% Very good/good 2017	Change since 2017
Parks, playgrounds & open spaces	81%	79%	+2%
Primary education	86%	80%	+6%*
Street lighting	78%	70%	+8%*
Libraries	82%	74%	+8%*
Nursery education	79%	79%	0%
Secondary education	79%	62%	+17%*
Leisure & sport facilities	75%	68%	+7%*
Recycling	55%	77%	-22%*
Parking	45%	50%	-5%
Refuse collection	48%	69%	-21%*
Street cleaning	44%	53%	-9%*
Repair of roads and pavements	44%	48%	-4%

*Significant change

2.22 Respondents were also asked to consider how the Council deals with specific environmental issues:

Service	Satisfaction 2019	Satisfaction 2017	Satisfaction 2014
Graffiti	75%	74%	63%
Dog fouling	54%	63%	49%
Litter	47%	60%	61%
Fly-tipping	57%	59%	54%

Local area, and community cohesion

2.23 All residents were asked to choose up to three things from a list that they value the most in Merton. By far the most valued aspect of the borough is its public transport, with 56% choosing this. This is of greater importance to younger residents (61% aged 18-24 and 57% aged 25-44). Parks and open spaces are valued by around half of residents (51%) and safety/low levels of crime is valued by 48% of residents.

2.24 Following on from this, all residents were presented with another list and asked to specify which three they felt needed most improvement in the borough. The top answers were affordable housing, which is chosen by 46% of residents, cleanliness of streets (45%), things for young people to do (30%) and traffic (27%).

2.25 Respondents were presented with a list of local information sources and were asked which they currently use to keep them informed about what's happening in Merton. As in 2017, the three most frequently mentioned sources of information are the Merton Council website (51% in 2019, 39% in 2017), information leaflets provided by the council (39% in 2019, 33% in 2017) and the My Merton publication (35% in 2019, 43% in 2017).

2.26 Respondents were read a list of neighbourhood issues and asked to rate the extent to which these are problems in their local area. Of the issues discussed, residents feel that burglary is the biggest problem with 23% citing this as a very big or fairly big problem. In comparison to 2017, there has been an increase in residents feeling that people using or dealing drugs is a problem (11% in 2017 to 20% in 2019), but a decrease in people being drunk or rowdy in public places (17% in 2017 to 13% in 2019).

2.27 Just over one in ten residents (12%) have offered their time to undertake unpaid or voluntary work within their local community over the last 12 months. This is a drop of 8% points since 2017 however (from 20%). On the whole, the desire to contribute to the local community becomes stronger both with the length of time that the resident has lived in the neighbourhood and with age. Residents who do not get involved in community activities cite a lack of available time due to other commitments as the main reason for non-participation (69%).

2.28 94% of respondents feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together, with 0% disagreeing with this statement. This is similar to the 93% agreeing in 2017.

2.29 Almost nine in ten (88%) residents feel that there are people in their local area who they can rely on in an emergency, with relationships commonly forged based on age and the length of time that the resident has lived in the borough.

2.30 Overall, three in five (59%) residents believe the air quality is good, with just 8% saying it is very good. Only 7% deem the air quality to be poor, although this increases to 20% in North East Merton. There is a difference in views between the East and West of the borough, with 65% in the West feeling the air quality is good compared to 54% in the East.

2.31 Standard questions used by the Office of National Statistics to measure wellbeing were added to the 2017 survey. The wellbeing scores for 2019 compare very favourably to 2017, particularly in terms of residents feeling like the things they do in their life are worthwhile. They also compare well to the UK and London benchmarks. Older residents (aged 65+) and those with a disability are significantly less happy with their life nowadays. Residents with a disability are also less likely to feel the things they do are worthwhile and less likely to feel happy.

Young People's Survey

2.32 As with the adults the vast majority of young people in Merton are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (95%). 11-15 year olds are more likely to be satisfied than 16-17 year olds. These results are similar to 2017.

2.33 Most (70%) are satisfied with how Merton Council runs things, with just 3% dissatisfied. This is the same level of satisfaction as the survey of adults, but a significant drop from 2017 (84%).

2.34 Respondents were then asked to rate the Council on a series of more specific measures relating to services and communications:

Statement	**% agree 2019**	**% agree 2017**
Provides services which young people need	50%	48%
Does enough to protect young people	49%	57%
Listens to the concerns of young people	41%	47%
Keeps young people informed about what they are doing	34%	38%
Involves young people in decision making	23%	40%

2.35 Respondents were asked to rate a series of local services in their area.

Service	**% Very good / good 2019**	**% Very good / good 2017**
Parks, playgrounds and open spaces	86%	56%
Public transport	83%	63%
Libraries	77%	65%
Leisure and sports facilities	64%	59%
Support / guidance on future jobs/careers	64%	50%
The police	54%	56%
Local health services	54%	58%
Services for children with disabilities	52%	NA
Arts and culture	44%	35%
Street cleaning	43%	42%
Activities for young people	43%	47%
Social services for children/families	41%	37%
Primary schools	83%	64%
Secondary schools	84%	60%
Sixth form/ Further Education college	71%	47%
Nurseries	58%	NA
Children's centres	43%	NA

2.36 Young residents were asked to say what they value the most about living in Merton. Their open comments were studied and the top themes were the education provision within the Borough (47%), and parks and open spaces (41%).

2.37 Young residents were shown a list of 16 issues relating to their local area that could cause them to worry. One in five (20%) are not worried about anything, selecting the option None of these, whilst the top concerns were the amount of litter on the streets (28%) and not enough being done for young people in Merton (28%).

2.38 Young people were then asked to think of the concerns they have for themselves personally, main concerns of young people living in Merton focus on their personal safety, with 28% worried about bullying, 27% anxious about crime, 25% nervous of gangs and 21% wary of online security. None of these was also selected by 26% of respondents.

2.39 Young residents who expressed concerns either at a local or at a personal level were then asked to explain why they were worried about the issues that they selected. A wide range of reasons lie behind the concerns of young residents with no clear main cause, however the most consistent theme relates to hate crime and knife attacks (11%).

2.40 Young residents were asked to select from a given list which sources they would turn to if they needed help, with the most common responses being a family member (83%), a teacher (42%) and a friend (38%).

2.41 Of a list of possible ways to get involved in their community, current or previous engagement is highest in terms of doing voluntary work (20%) and being a member of a school council (10%). In addition to this, for each activity at least one in three (37%) state that they will do this in the future.

2.42 Respondents were asked if they attend any of a list of activities out of school hours. The most popular activities, are parks and playgrounds (63%), libraries (40%) and sports and gym (33%).

2.43 Respondents were also shown a list of activities and facilities and asked which, if any, they would like to attend out of school hours. Up to two responses were allowed. The most popular activities were sports activities (30%) and parks and playgrounds (24%).

Reporting the results

2.44 It is planned to report the results to Cabinet on 3 June with results published with Cabinet papers on 24 May. The Communications Team will support sharing the results both externally and internally, although this will be subject to the pre-election period.

2.45 A briefing on the results will be provided to opposition group leaders.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 None.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1 The survey was conducted with a sample of 1,000 people based on the key components of the local population. 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 271 11-17 year-olds.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1 The survey fieldwork was conducted in February and March 2019 for adults, with additional surveys with young people taking place throughout March and into early April.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The 2019 Residents Survey has cost £24,250. The Children, Schools and Families Department have met £3000 of this for the Young People's Survey.

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 2019-20.

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 Appendix I: Resident Survey 2019 Report.

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 Resident Survey cross-tabulations and charts.
12.2 LGA Polling on resident satisfaction with councils October 2018

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