

## Cabinet

**Date:** 20 January 2014

**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:

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A. That Cabinet note the results of the Annual Residents' Survey 2013

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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This paper reports the results of the Annual Residents' Survey 2013, highlighting key messages and findings. The results are displayed graphically in a presentation available 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 200-300 young people aged 11 – 17 is carried out.

2.3 The quota sample for the 2013 survey has been changed from previous years to reflect the population changes identified in the 2011 Census. This means that a higher proportion of respondents are from BME backgrounds, 37% instead of 25% and 14% were 'white other'.

2.4 The survey was conducted in September and October 2013. This closely reflects the timetable for the results for the London wide survey and the timetable in previous years, which is useful for comparison.

- 2.5 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 2013 results

- 2.6 The most notable changes in the 2013 Annual Residents' Survey results, compared to last year's results, are:
- Residents remain generally positive with the image of the council. 79% agreeing that Merton is doing a good job, more than in the pan-London survey.
  - The council has scored its highest ever Value for Money score (56%) since the survey began and its lowest score for concern about council tax (24%) since the survey became annual.
  - There have been some strong positive uplifts in residents' opinions of several services, namely public transport, policing, primary and secondary education, and street lighting). Ten services areas either achieved or equalled their highest ever rating. There are much fewer negative changes; however opinion on recycling facilities has gone down by 5%, having last year gone up by 7%.
  - The number of people citing crime or council tax as one of their biggest 3 concerns has continued the recent downward trend. However, the number citing litter and dirt on the streets has risen accordingly by 6% to 30%, making it the joint top concern, alongside crime.

### Top concerns

- 2.7 Respondents are asked to select their three top concerns from a preselected list. The order in which the top concerns appear has altered since last year: crime remains one of the top concerns of local residents but has continued the downward trend of recent years. Council tax was the second biggest concern in 2012 but has also continued a downward trend and is now at the lowest level since 1995. Given the structure of the question with these large issues reducing as a concern it is inevitable that other areas of concern will increase. Concern about litter and dirt on the streets has seen a sharp rise of 6% and is now the top concern, slightly above crime. Concern about traffic congestion follows, coming above council tax. Concern about lack of jobs, having gone up by 3% last year has gone down by 3% this year.
- 2.8 Concern about council tax remains above the pan-London score, but is no longer significantly higher, for the first time in more than a decade; however, concern about traffic (+7%), litter on the streets (+4%) and poor public transport (+3%) is significantly higher in Merton than across the rest of London. Concern about crime, not enough being done for young people, not enough being done for elderly people and concern about the number of homeless people is significantly below the pan-London scores (-7%, -6%, -4% and -3% respectively).

## Overall image of the council

- 2.9 Whilst there are some slight changes in the overall image of the council from 2012, none of these are significant, suggesting a consistent level of approval. As shown below, residents are generally positive about Merton Council, with 79% agreeing that Merton is doing a good job.
- 2.10 Generally Merton has also performed well against the London-wide benchmark, significantly so on doing a good job:

Your council....	% In agreement	Change since 2012	Merton v. Pan-London
Is doing a good job	79	0	+4
Is efficient and well run	70	+1	+2
Involves residents in making decisions	52	-2	-1
Listens to concerns of local residents	60	0	+4
Is difficult to get through to on the phone*	40	+2	-3
Responds quickly when asked for help	56	+2	+4
Keeps people informed	76	+2	+1
Has friendly and polite staff	77	+1	+3
Doesn't do enough for people like me*	43	-2	-3
Provides good value for money	56	+2	+4
Is doing a better job than one year ago	43	-2	-2
Is making the local area a better place	74	+2	+1

\*Negative polarity – disagreement is desirable.

- 2.11 It is noticeable that residents who consider themselves to have a disability rate the Council significantly lower than those without a disability on the council doing a good job. Disabled respondents are also less likely to agree that the Council is making the area a better place to live to a significant degree.

## Satisfaction with services

- 2.12 The percentage of respondents satisfied with local services is set out below:

<b>Service</b>	<b>% Good</b>	<b>Change since 2012</b>	<b>Merton v. Pan-London</b>
Refuse collection	72	+1	0
Street cleaning	54	-3	-2
Street Lighting	72	+5	+1
Repair of roads	39	-2	+1
Parks, playgrounds, open spaces	70	-2	-1
Nursery education	32	+1	0
Primary education	43	+5	+1
Secondary education	33	+5	-5
Adult education	30	+1	0
Leisure and sports	51	+3	+3
Libraries	66	+2	+5
Social services for adults	24	+4	+6
Recycling facilities	69	-5	-2
Local health facilities	65	-1	+1
Public transport	79	+6	+3
Policing	62	+6	+9
Housing benefit	18	+2	-3
Council tax collection	67	+1	+6
Activities for young people	27	+2	+9
Fly tip removal	43	0	N/A
Social services for families and children	25	+2	+4
Parking	34	+1	0
Planning	28	+2	N/A
Childcare across the borough*	24	+3	N/A

- 2.13 There have been some strong uplifts in residents' opinions on several services, namely public transport, policing (which has risen by 6% after falling by the same amount last year), primary and secondary education, and street lighting.
- 2.14 There are fewer negative changes than last year; however opinion on recycling facilities has gone down by 5%, having last year gone up by 7%. This takes it back below the pan-London score. There was some variation in scores by area with Colliers Wood/Graveney/Longthornton scoring only 60% positive responses and Cannon Hill/Merton Park/West Barnes/Lower Morden scoring 79%. However these variations were not statistically significant.
- 2.15 A number of service areas achieved a highest ever rating from respondents. Primary education, secondary education, street lighting, refuse collection, leisure and sports facilities, collection of council tax, public transport, parking, social services for adults, and social services for children and families all achieved or equalled their highest ever rating. In addition 80% of those who said they use the library service rated the service as good to excellent, the highest proportion ever recorded.

- 2.16 Views on policing and adult social services in Merton have not only improved significantly since last year, they are significantly above the London averages. Merton also scored significantly higher than the London averages in the collection of council tax, libraries, and social services for children and families; however the borough's secondary education score, despite increasing on last year, is significantly lower than the pan-London score.

### **The Council and the local area**

- 2.17 New questions were added / reintroduced into the ARS this year upon the request of various partners and departments in the council. These additional questions focused around waste services and Public Health.
- 2.18 With regard to waste, the majority of respondents are satisfied with the way the council deals with graffiti (65%), litter (60%), fly tipping (55%) and dog fouling (50%).
- 2.19 Around 40% of residents feel that there are too many fast-food outlets in the local area. There are some notable differences between areas, with residents in Dundonald, Trinity, Abbey, Ravensbury, St Helier and Cricket Green wards significantly more likely to say there are too many fast-food outlets.
- 2.20 Whilst overall the majority of residents feel that there is an adequate amount of payday loan outlets in the local area (58%), significantly more residents in Ravensbury, St Helier and Cricket Green wards feel there are too many.
- 2.21 The most-used method of keeping up-to-date with what is going on in Merton are information leaflets (a significant increase on last year), followed by My Merton and the Wimbledon Guardian. These were also the top three methods for keeping informed last year but in a different order, with the Guardian being top of the list. Significantly more people (+4%) are also using the Merton website in 2013 than in 2012.

### **Crime**

- 2.22 Overall the results are positive with concerns over crime, anti-social behaviour and people being drunk and rowdy continuing to fall, and concern with drug users falling slightly following a slight rise in 2012.
- 2.23 Despite a positive overall performance there are some geographical differences: residents in Colliers Wood, Graveney and Longthornton are significantly more worried about crime and drug users compared to the Merton average, whilst residents of Ravensbury, St Helier and Cricket Green are more worried about anti-social behaviour.
- 2.24 There is also a positive story in regards to the number of residents who feel informed about measures to combat anti-social behaviour, with a strong rise (+6%) reversing the negative trend seen since 2009.

## **Community Cohesion**

- 2.25 The number of respondents who agreed that they are treated with respect and consideration in their local area has seen a slight decrease this year of 1% to 91%, although agreement is significantly higher amongst higher social grade respondents (AB – 96%) compared to lower social grade respondents (DE - 88%).
- 2.26 The proportion agreeing that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, at 90%, has increased by 3% since 2012. On average, 7% of respondents disagreed with this statement; however, amongst Black respondents, only 3% disagreed – a marked change on 2012 when 14% of Black respondents disagreed.
- 2.27 The percentage of residents agreeing that the council treats people in a fair and non-discriminatory way was 63%, up from 60% in 2012.
- 2.28 Only 14% of respondents feel that the council does not tackle racism, with 47% unsure; however, as per the 2012 results, disagreement is higher among Black and Asian respondents (16% and 21% respectively). Disagreement amongst Black respondents has fallen 7% however.

## **Young People's Survey**

- 2.29 Young people's concerns are similar to those of adults, with crime the biggest concern. Bullying also remains a key concern but the level of concern over standard of education and bad behaviour has fallen significantly this year.
- 2.30 Merton Council continues to be viewed fairly positively by young residents, with 74% feeling they get the services they need (up 2% points from 2012). 85% of young people surveyed also agree that Merton is a good place to live, whilst significantly more young residents in Merton (+13%) feel that the council listens to their concerns when compared to the London-wide average.
- 2.31 The level of concern about pollution is significantly higher than the London average. The same is true of concerns over litter and health services.
- 2.32 Political involvement amongst young people appears to have increased, with significantly more young residents saying they have been a member of a school council and taken part in campaigning than in 2012.
- 2.33 Young people are more likely to want to be involved in sports activities, places to meet friends/others and parks & playgrounds than in 2012, with these local facilities being well regarded.

## **Next steps**

- 2.34 It is planned to present the results of the survey to Cabinet on 20 January 2014. They will therefore be in the public domain when the papers are published on 10 January. A press briefing will take place on 10 January and as in previous years the other group leaders will be briefed. The results will be shared both externally and internally through a range of presentations and communications.

## **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 Results are due to be presented to Cabinet on 20 January 2014 and the data will be available to the public from 10 January.

## **6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The 2013 ARS has cost £43,000. The Children, Schools and Families Department have met £5,900 of this for the Young People's Survey. In addition, Public Health has contributed £4,850 for questions in both the Residents' Survey and the Young People's Survey; and £1,450 will be contributed by Environment and Regeneration for questions on waste services. The remaining cost, of £30,800 will be met by the Corporate Services' Departmental budget.

## **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 2014-15.

## **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: [www.merton.gov.uk/residentssurvey](http://www.merton.gov.uk/residentssurvey)

12.2 Annual Resident Survey cross-tabulations and charts.