

**Report for: Cabinet**

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Date of Meeting:	2 April 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Mid Devon Residents' Survey 2023</b>
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Luke Taylor, Leader of the Council
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Jarrett, Deputy Chief Executive/Section 151
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	The survey was sent to all residents in Mid Devon
Enclosures:	App 1 – what are we doing to address the issues

**Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

To provide Cabinet with an update of the results of the Mid Devon residents' survey which was undertaken in November/December 2023 and included questions in relation to statutory consultation on the budget.

**Recommendation(s):**

**That Cabinet note the survey results.**

**Section 2 – Report**

**1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council conducted a combined residents' and budget setting survey in November/December 2023. 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
- Council 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 13,000+ e-bulletin subscribers
- Posters at Phoenix House, Tiverton Pannier Market and the three Mid Devon Leisure centres

1.4 There were 810 respondents to this year's survey - compared to last year; 1,423 people clicked on the survey link, with 1,015 answering the questions (71% completion rate).

1.5 This year the Council ran the survey through its new engagement platform, [Let's Talk Mid Devon](#). This new system no longer records people who clicked the survey link, only recording the number of survey responses.

1.6 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.

1.7 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 2023.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Polling-on-resident-satisfaction-with-councils-Round-35-Research-Report-June-2023-AA.pdf>

1.8 A comparison to the previous residents' survey results (2022) is also shown in brackets.

1.9. Many of our responses, and those for the LG Inform survey, have seen a deterioration in their scores/feedback, which may have some bearing on the national challenges being faced currently.

## 2.0 Summary responses

2.1 Percentage of residents that are very or fairly satisfied with their local area as a place to live:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
74%	78%	73%

2.2 Percentage of residents that are very or fairly satisfied with the way the Council runs things:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
41%	49%	60%

Percentage of residents that are fairly or very dissatisfied:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022
31%	25%

2.3 Percentage of residents that strongly agree or tend to agree the Council provides value for money:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
36%	46%	42%

27% neither agree nor disagree, while 35% tend to or strongly disagree.

NB – Mid Devon households pay on average £225.40 in Council Tax per year (£4.32 per week) in 2023/24.

2.4 Percentage of residents that feel the Council acts on their concerns:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
32%	39%	52%

While those that think the Council does not:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022
56%	48%

2.5 Percentage of residents that feel very or fairly well informed:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
53%	62%	55%

While 35% 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 13,000+ 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. In 2023, the Council issued 78 news items, and in 2022, issued 72.

2.6 40% trust the Council a fair amount or a great deal, 36% indicate not much trust, while 17% don't trust the Council at all, and 7% don't know.

2.7 43% trusted their local council to make decisions about local services, compared to 2% trust for the Government.

2.8 49% trusted their local councillor to make decisions for their local area, but 46% didn't trust any of their councillors, MPs or government ministers.

2.9 Percentage of residents that think the media has viewed local councils positively in the last few months:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
4%	5%	22%

45% think it's neither positive nor negative.

### 3.0 Specific services

3.1 Percentage of residents that felt it fairly or very important for the Council to tackle climate change:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022
80%	84%

3.2 Percentage of residents that were fairly or very satisfied with the Council's waste collection service:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
74%	71%	79%

3.3 Percentage of residents that were fairly or very satisfied with the Council's street cleaning service:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
41%	41%	64%

3.4 Percentage of residents that were fairly or very satisfied with council leisure services:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
36%	35%	55%

Percentage of residents that were fairly or very satisfied with council provision of parks and green spaces:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
52%	54%	80%

3.5 Percentage of residents that felt fairly or very safe after dark:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
60%	61%	71%

3.6 Percentage of residents that felt fairly or very safe in the day:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022	LG Inform 2023
87%	89%	90%

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: '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
Delivering housing for local people	470 (58.02%)	242 (29.87%)	52 (6.41%)	25 (3.08%)	10 (1.23%)
Support local businesses and high streets	540 (66.66%)	214 (26.41%)	28 (3.45%)	10 (1.23%)	5 (0.61%)
Introduce measures to encourage more walking and cycling	236 (29.13%)	315 (38.88%)	173 (21.35%)	72 (8.88%)	9 (1.11%)
Support people	275 (33.95%)	348 (42.96%)	126 (15.55%)	40 (4.93%)	15 (1.85%)

who lose their jobs					
Support parks and open spaces	399 (49.25%)	355 (43.82%)	43 (5.30%)	6 (0.74%)	3 (0.37%)

	Very important	Fairly Important	Not Very Important	Not Important At All	Don't Know
Promote activities that improve the public's health	323 (39.87%)	310 (38.27%)	123 (15.18%)	42 (5.18%)	7 (0.86%)
Provide off-street parking	367 (45.30%)	286 (35.30%)	109 (13.45%)	30 (3.70%)	15 (1.85%)

## 5.0 Spending and budget setting

5.1 When asked about what was the most important priority when making spending decisions, residents said:

	Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022
Providing basic statutory services	45%	42%
Seeking to support and development the economy	17%	16%
Delivering affordable housing	17%	14%
Tackling climate change	11%	15%

5.2 Percentage of residents that 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':

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022
42%	50%

Percentage of residents that said 'the Council should share services with other organisations':

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022
31%	20%

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 Percentage of residents that think the Council should seek to generate additional income from planning and building control:

Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022
58%	63%

42% said from licensing.

- 5.4 Of the discretionary services provided by the Council there was an even balance about which services should be protected:

	Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022
Public toilets	57%	52%
Parks and open spaces	55%	51%
Town centre regeneration	52%	46%

- 5.5 Of our statutory services, residents felt that the most important services were:

	Residents' Survey 2023	Residents' Survey 2022
Waste and recycling service	92%	92%
Food and water sampling	66%	69%
Street cleaning	58%	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.

- 6.2 670 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 and families.
- Consider a swimming pool in Cullompton.
- More cycle paths.

#### 6.3.2 Housing:

- More affordable housing for local people.

#### 6.3.3 Climate:

- Improve air quality.
- Plant more trees.

#### 6.3.4 Street Scene and Recycling:

- Change the way recycling is stored and collected.
- More frequent recycling and waste collections.
- Enforcements for dogs.
- Tackle ASB.
- Maintain overgrown footpaths, verges, etc.
- Re-open all public toilet facilities.
- Collection of soft plastics
- Reduce parking fees.

#### 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.
- Protect and provide green spaces.
- Enhance town centres. Empty shops.
- Improve planning enforcement.

#### 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.
- Spend less on corporate services.
- Support for businesses.

#### 6.3.8 Corporate; customer services and communication:

- Better responses to emails.
- Serve rural areas better.
- Cut management.

#### 6.3.9 Non-Council Remit:

- Mend roads (potholes) and maintain signage and drainage.
- 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.
- Social care, more buses, more police.
- Community resources for youth. Youth clubs, community centres, etc. Improve youth services, reduce ASB.

#### 6.3.10 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.

#### 6.4 429 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 focussed on leisure and waste and recycling services as well as affordable housing and support for the vulnerable (incl. elderly and homeless) but also many answers focussed on suggesting road repairs and social care expenditure should not be cut, which are county council functions.

#### 6.6 275 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 – support for those who are vulnerable, affordable housing, climate change, council value for money/efficiency and again a focus on a function provided by Devon County Council, road repairs.

6.8 154 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 repairs, council value for money/efficiency, and how Council meetings/processes could be more inclusive (BSL).

## **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 2024/25 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 Having updated resident feedback at a time when the new Council is producing an updated corporate plan is essential and we can ensure that this helps us match our available resources to the priorities and expectations of our residents and service users.

## **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.

## **Impact on Climate Change**

Residents' comments on climate change are included in the report.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

No equality issues identified from this report.

## **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.

## **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

**Date:** 19 March 2024

**Statutory Officer:** Maria De Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 19 March 2024

**Chief Officer:** Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive

**Date:** 19 March 2024

**Performance and risk:** Stephen Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** 19 March 2024

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Andrew Jarrett, Deputy Chief Executive/151

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**Background papers:**