

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
6 September 2022

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: 2022 District Wide Survey

REPORT OF: Service Director, Place

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Leader of the Council, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST and A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To advise the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the key findings and action points arising from the 2022 District Wide Survey.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on and note the key findings and observations from the District Wide Survey.
- 2.2 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note that the results will be considered by the Leadership Team in conjunction with Executive Members and an action plan produced.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is aware of the results and any trends from previous surveys and how the results will be used to inform future service delivery.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The biennial District Wide Survey is one of the Council's key mechanisms for seeking the views and opinions of North Herts residents on a range of services and issues. The Executive Member for Community Engagement, Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and Political Liaison Board members have been consulted on the findings of the 2022 District Wide Survey. The results will also be shared at a staff briefing.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 25 April 2022.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The 2022 District Wide Survey was carried out in line with the Council's agreed Consultation Strategy 2015-2022. The survey is carried out every two years in order to capture residents' views and perceptions of services and facilities provided by the Council.
- 7.2 Opinion Research Services, an independent research agency, were commissioned by the Council to carry out the research on our behalf. They conducted 800 telephone interviews of North Herts residents between 25 January and 30 June 2022. Quota controls were used to ensure a representative sample. The returned sample was subsequently weighted by tenure, working status, ethnic group, age and gender to achieve results which are broadly representative of the North Herts population.
- 7.3 The question set remains largely consistent from one survey exercise to the next (with some minor variations) to allow benchmarking from year to year. Comparisons with previous results are made at appropriate points in the survey. Prior to 2011 the survey was carried out face to face rather than on the telephone and therefore those results are not directly comparable. Comparisons with national figures are taken from the February 2022 Local Government Association (LGA) National survey.
- 7.4 The results of the survey will be considered by the Leadership Team in conjunction with Executive Members and an action plan produced.
- 7.5 The figures and tables in the report are extracted directly from the full research report prepared by Opinion Research Services. As only a selection of the figures and tables appear in this report, the numbering is not always in sequential order.

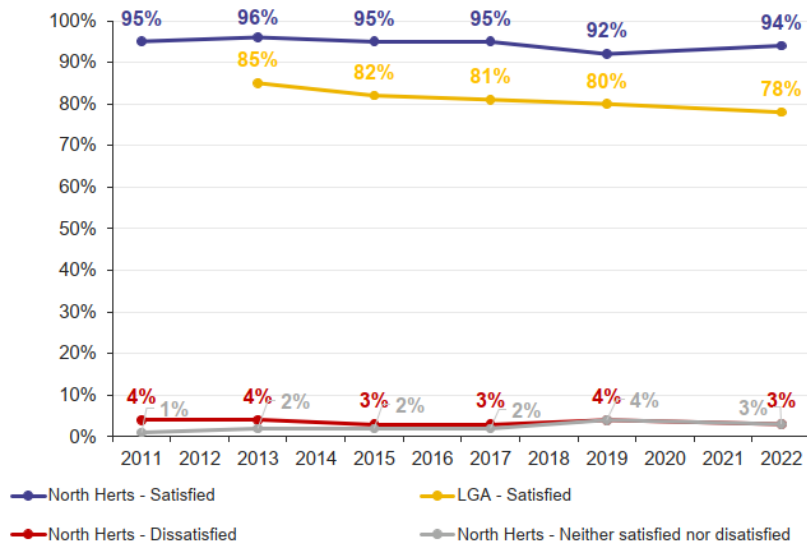
8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Key findings

8.1 The Local Area and Overall satisfaction

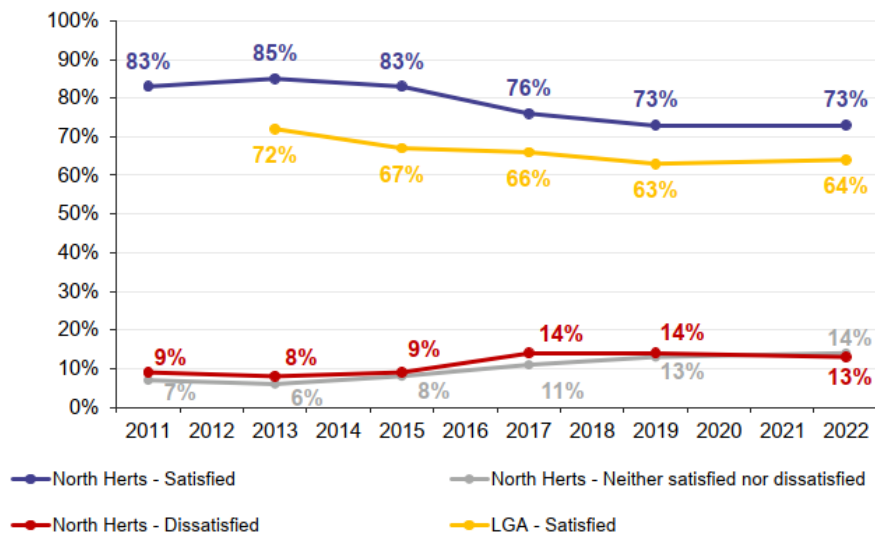
- 8.1.1 The vast majority of residents (94%) were satisfied with their local area as a place to live. This compares favourably to the latest LGA benchmark satisfaction rate of 78% and has increased by 2% since 2019.

Figure 2: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with this area as a place to live? North Herts Council and National Results - trends over time.



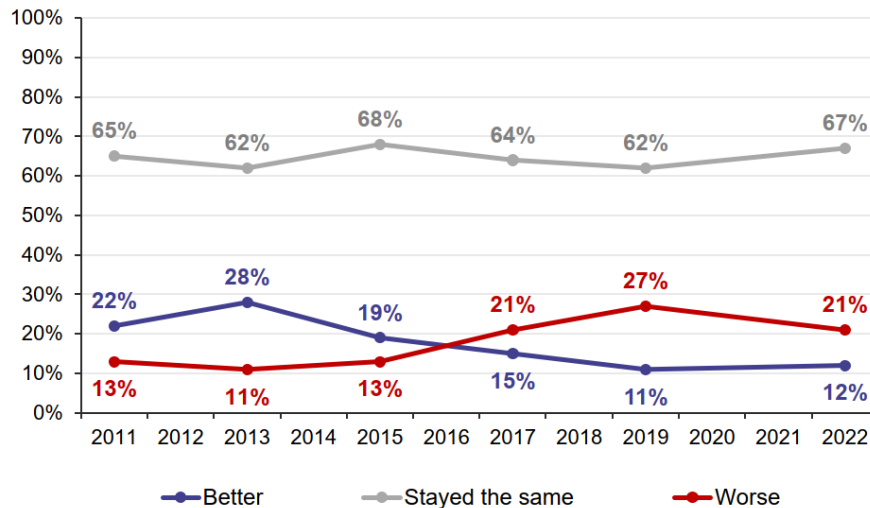
- 8.1.2 Overall satisfaction with the way the Council runs things has remained at the same level as 2019 (73%), following six years of decline between 2013 and 2019. It is still well above the LGA benchmark satisfaction rate of 64%.

Figure 7: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way North Herts Council runs things? North Herts Council and National Results - trends over time.



8.1.3 The percentage of residents who feel 'the way North Herts Council runs things has got worse', has declined from 27% in 2019 to 21% in 2022, this is still considerably higher than those who feel 'the way North Herts Council runs things has got better' which has improved by just 1% from 2019 to 12%. Those residents who feel things have stayed the same has improved by 5% on the 2019 score.

Figure 13: Thinking about the way North Herts Council runs things, do you think it has got better, stayed the same or got worse over the last two years? Trends over time.



8.1.4 Those residents who expressed dissatisfaction with the way the Council runs things, were invited to comment on how they feel the Council could improve things. Their comments were coded into themes and the top themes are below. It is worth noting that some of the themes relate to services provided by Hertfordshire County Council rather than North Herts Council:

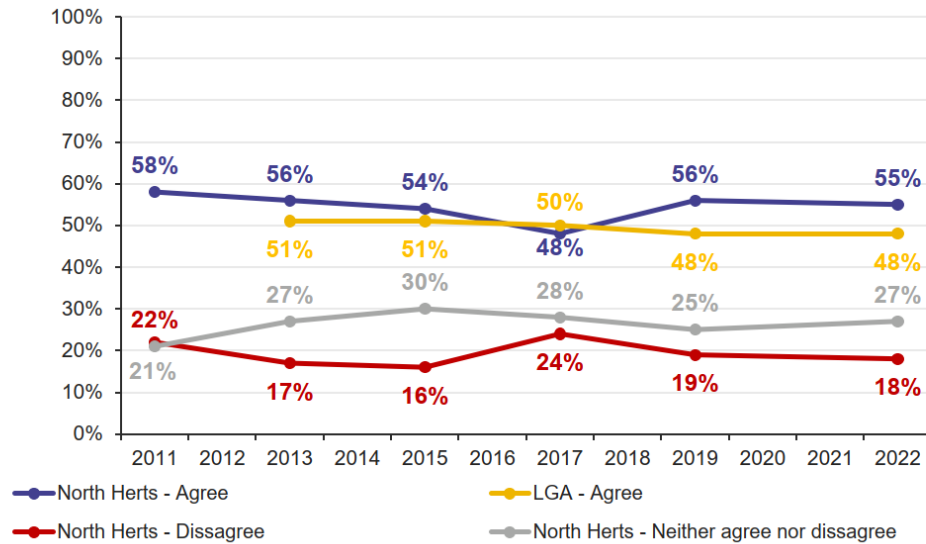
- Improving the look of the local area (36%) with examples given as fixing potholes, tackling fly tipping and improving footpaths.
- Improving refuse/recycling collection (32%) in particular, street cleaning.
- Improved communications (23%) with comments given such as 'clear and transparent' and 'find out what people want and act on it'.

8.2 Value for money

8.2.1 Over half (55%) of residents agree that North Herts Council provides value for money, whilst just over a quarter (27%) neither agree nor disagree, and just under a fifth (18%) disagree. These results have remained in-line with 2019.

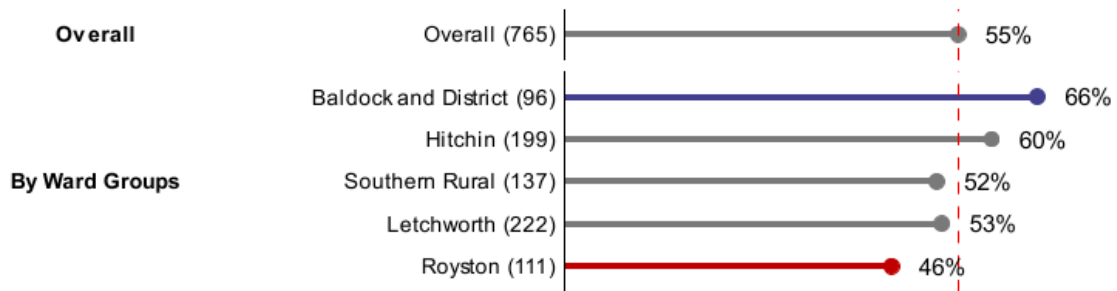
8.2.2 Agreement that the Council provides value for money is significantly higher in North Herts than at a national level. The LGA February 2022 National survey found less than half (48%) of residents agreed their council was providing value for money, 7% lower than in North Herts.

Figure 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree that North Herts Council provides value for money?
North Herts Council and National Results - trends over time.



8.2.3 There is noticeable variation in the level of agreement that the Council provides value for money by the 111 Royston residents surveyed with only 46% agreeing Vs the overall agreement level of 55%.

Figure 11: To what extent do you agree or disagree that North Herts Council provides value for money?
Agreement by subgroup



8.3 Attitudes towards the Council

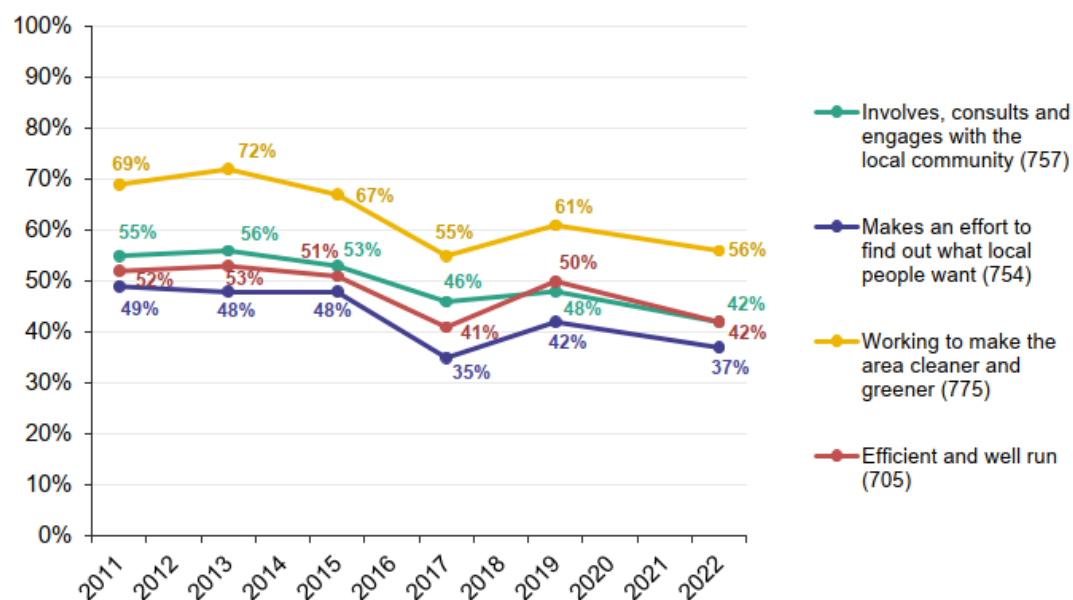
8.3.1 Residents were asked about a number of statements regarding the Council and their agreement levels with those statements were recorded. 56% agree that North Herts Council are 'working to make the area cleaner and greener' (a 5% decline since 2019); 42% agree 'North Herts Council is efficient and well run' (a decline of 8% since 2019); and 37% of residents agree North Herts Council 'makes an effort to find out what local people want' (a decline of 5% since 2019).

Figure 15: Do you agree, disagree or neither agree nor disagree with the following...?



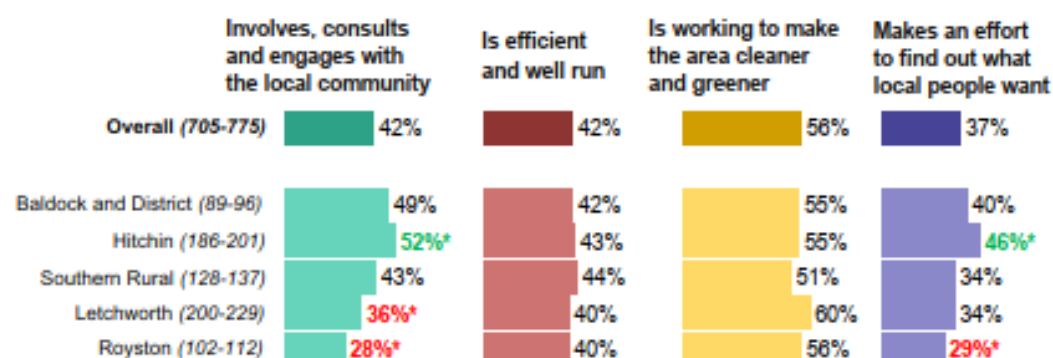
8.3.2 Although the percentage of residents who agree with each statement has declined since 2019, it is also important to note that the percentage of residents who disagree has also declined since 2019, alongside an increase in residents who tend not to agree or disagree.

Figure 16: Do you agree, disagree or neither with the following statements about North Herts Council? % of residents who agree. Trends over time.



8.3.3 It is also important to note that only 28% of the 111 Royston residents surveyed agreed that North Herts Council 'involves, consults and engages with the local community', vs the overall survey percentage of 42%.

Figure 17: Do you agree, disagree or neither with the following statements about North Herts Council?
Percentage of residents who agree by subgroup



8.4 Involvement in decision making

- 8.4.1 When asked whether they felt they were able to influence decisions affecting their local area, levels of agreement and disagreement were in line with the results from the 2019 survey.
- 8.4.2 Three in ten residents (30%) would like to be more involved in the decisions that affect their area. This has dropped considerably since the 2019 survey and interestingly a much higher proportion of residents surveyed in 2022 (49% Vs 19% in 2019) now say 'it depends on the issue' and whether it is 'local to me'.

Figure 4: Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?

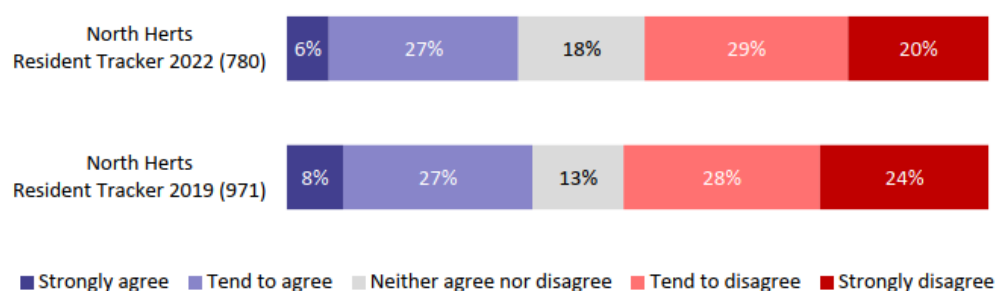
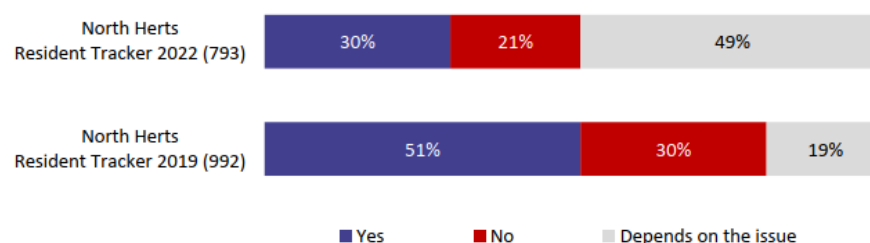


Figure 5: Generally speaking, would you like to be more involved in the decisions that affect your local area?



8.5 Council Services

- 8.5.1 Almost four fifths (79%) of residents are satisfied with general waste and recycling collection. This has significantly increased (by 12%) compared to 2019 scores and is now in line with the national average (82%).
- 8.5.2 Almost two thirds (65%) are satisfied with the Council's street cleaning, which is in line with the national average (68%) but has declined by 6% since 2019 and those residents who are dissatisfied have increased by 7% since 2019.

Figure 18: How satisfied, dissatisfied or neither are you with the following services provided by North Herts Council...?

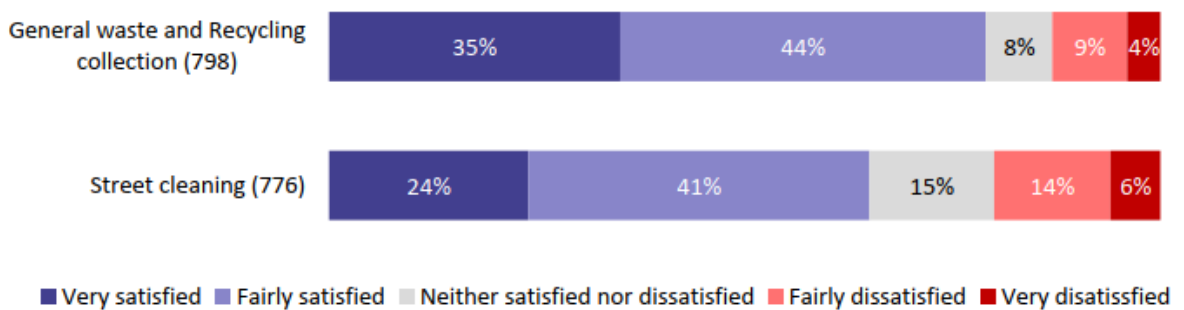
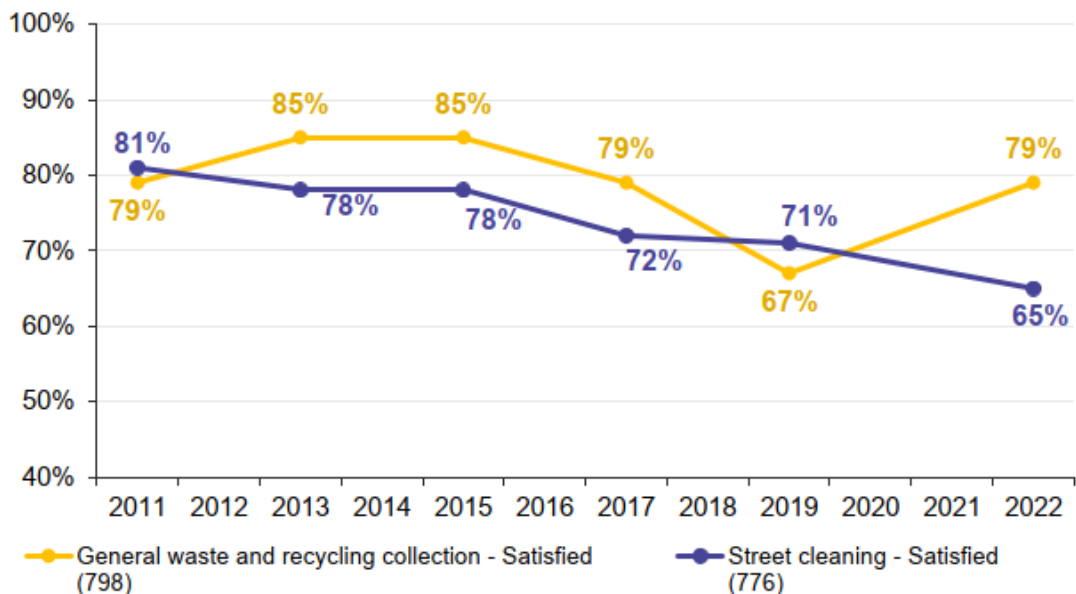


Figure 19: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the following...? Percentage of residents who are satisfied. Trends over time.



- 8.5.3 Residents were asked if they had used a number of Council services in the last year. The most-used services by residents, by a huge majority were 1) our parks and open spaces (82%) and 2) Public car parks (72%). Use of children's play areas/grounds and Council run leisure facilities were 38% and 34% respectively.
- 8.5.4 Use of public car parks and Council run leisure centres declined in the past year, which will be in part, due to pandemic measures put in place.

Table 8: Have you used any of the following within the past year? (Council service use from 2011 – 2022 * indicates a significant change)

Service/facility	% Users 2011	% Users 2013	% Users 2015	% Users 2017	% Users 2019	% Users 2022	% change 2019 to 2022
Parks and open spaces (799)	78%	79%	75%	73%	75%	82%	+7%*
Public car parks run by North Herts Council (793)	77%	78%	78%	78%	78%	72%	-6%*
Children's play areas / multi-use games areas (794)	41%	46%	41%	40%	40%	38%	-2%
Council run leisure facilities (795)	55%	48%	46%	44%	44%	34%	-10%*
Any benefits administered by the Council (792)	-	13%	15%	15%	15%	19%	+4%*
North Hertfordshire Museum (799)	-	-	-	-	15%	14%	-1%
Housing Services (789)	6%	4%	5%	7%	11%	10%	-1%
Council's Careline Community Alarms Service (790)	-	2%	3%	3%	4%	5%	+1%

8.5.5 Residents who had used Council services were subsequently asked about their satisfaction with those services. Satisfaction with services such as North Herts Museum and Careline were over 90% (albeit based on small percentage of residents surveyed). There is a long-term decline in satisfaction with housing services over the last 10 years, however, it is important to note that the 2022 satisfaction score is based on a very small sample size of 62 (compared to 102 in 2019).

Table 9: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied or neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the following:
(satisfaction of services 2011 – 2022 * indicates a significant change)

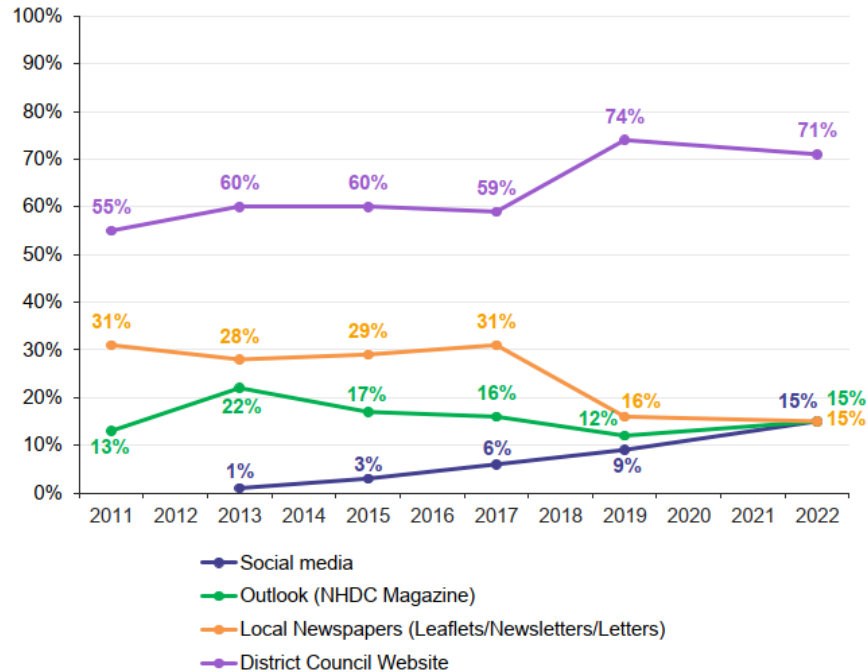
Service/facility	Satisfied % 2011	Satisfied % 2013	Satisfied % 2015	Satisfied % 2017	Satisfied % 2019	Satisfied % 2022	% Change 2019 to 2022
North Hertfordshire Museum (125)	-	-	-	-	87%	97%	+10%*
Council's Careline Community Alarms Service (53)	-	100%	100%	92%	86%	95%	+9%
Parks and open spaces (608)	89%	93%	93%	92%	89%	91%	+2%
Children's play areas / multi-use games areas (257)	87%	90%	90%	88%	83%	86%	+3%
Council run leisure facilities (216)	92%	90%	91%	91%	85%	85%	-
Any benefits administered by the Council (175)	-	91%	89%	86%	77%	76%	-1%
Public car parks run by North Herts Council (537)	75%	76%	77%	77%	71%	68%	-3%
Housing Services (62)	79%	76%	77%	79%	73%	61%	-12%

8.6 Information and Communication

8.6.1 Residents were asked where they normally obtain information about the Council. 71% said the Council's website, followed by local newspapers, social media and Outlook magazine all at 15%.

8.6.2 As you can see below, social media as an information channel for residents has increased by 6% since 2019, with Outlook Magazine increasing by 3%.

Figure 23: Where do you normally obtain information about North Herts Council if you need it? (Trends over time for the four most frequently given responses 2011-2022)⁴



Outlook magazine:

8.6.3 Around seven in ten (71%) residents have seen or had a copy of 'Outlook' delivered to their door in the last 12 months. This is a 1% increase on the 2019 survey but a 9% decrease on 2010 survey results.

8.6.4 Nearly four fifths of those surveyed (79%) like the way the magazine looks and is presented, just over seven in ten (72%) like the way it is written, and around two thirds (66%) find it interesting

8.6.5 Age is the factor that best tallies with how much of Outlook is read by a resident. Table 10 shows that residents who are under the age of 45 are significantly less likely to have read all or nearly all of Outlook, whereas residents aged 65 or over are significantly more likely to have read all or nearly all of the magazine.

Table 10: Interaction with 'Outlook' among different age demographics (seen or received 'Outlook').

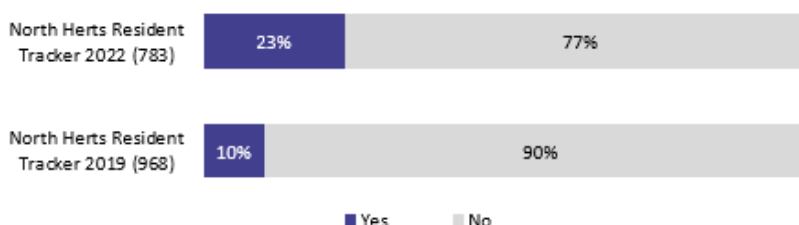
* indicates a significant difference.

Level of interaction with 'Outlook'	Total	16 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75 or over
Read all or nearly all of it	31%	12%*	14%*	33%	37%	42%*	60%*
Read a few articles	32%	28%	35%	29%	33%	34%	31%
Just glanced at it	31%	48%	46%*	27%	25%	24%*	8%
Didn't look at it at all	5%	12%	5%	11%	5%	1%*	1%*

E-newsletters:

8.6.6 The percentage of residents surveyed who have signed up to receive our e-newsletters has more than doubled since the 2019 survey.

Figure 28: Have you signed up to receive email bulletins from North Herts District Council?



8.6.7 Over seven in ten (72%) residents like the way the e-bulletins are written, whilst around two thirds (66%) of residents find the information in the e-bulletins useful to them and a similar proportion (64%) agree that North Herts Council's email newsletters/e-bulletin service topics are of interest to them.

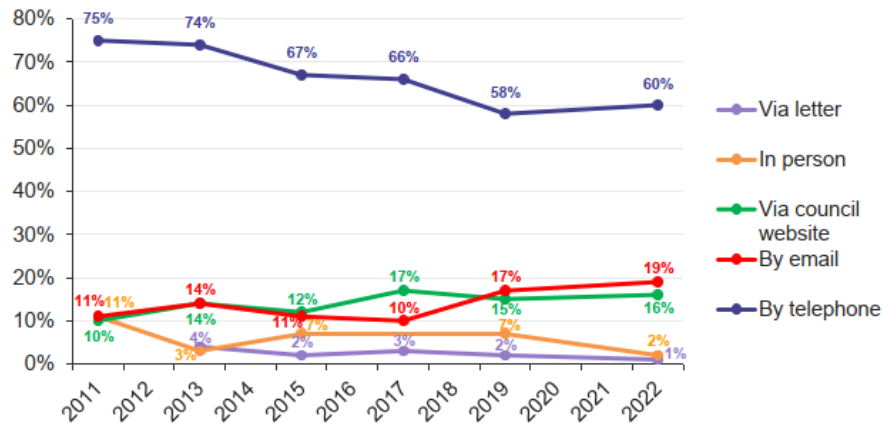
8.7 Contact with the Council

8.7.1 54% of residents said they have contacted the Council in the last year and this has remained relatively consistent in the last ten years. Of those, the top four reasons for contact were:

- To report an issue or problem – 36% (an increase of 2% Vs 2019)
- To ask for advice/information – 23% (an increase of 6% Vs 2019)
- To apply to use a service – 10% (a decrease of 2% Vs 2019)
- To make a complaint – 9% (a decrease of 3% Vs 2019)

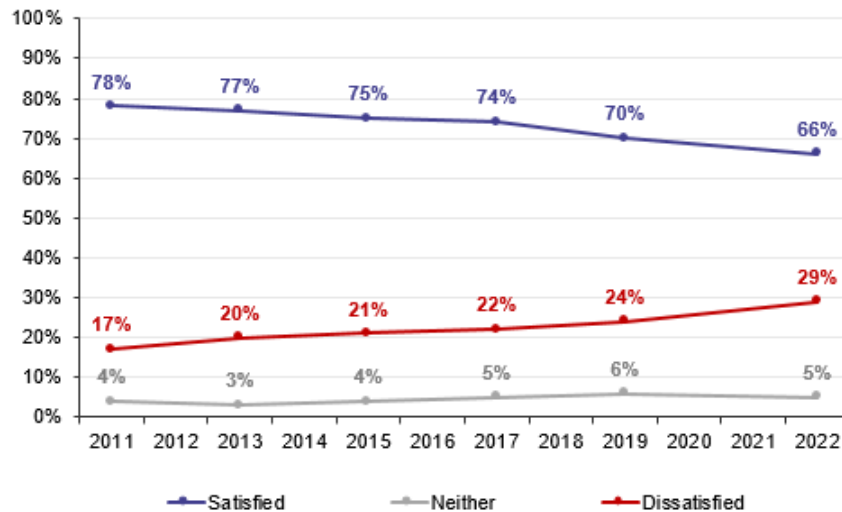
8.7.2 Despite the long-term decline in the proportion of residents contacting the Council by phone, it remains the most popular method of contacting the Council, with 60% of residents choosing this method. Contact by email has increased by 2% and contact through the website by 1%.

Figure 32: How did you contact the Council? ⁵ Trends over time



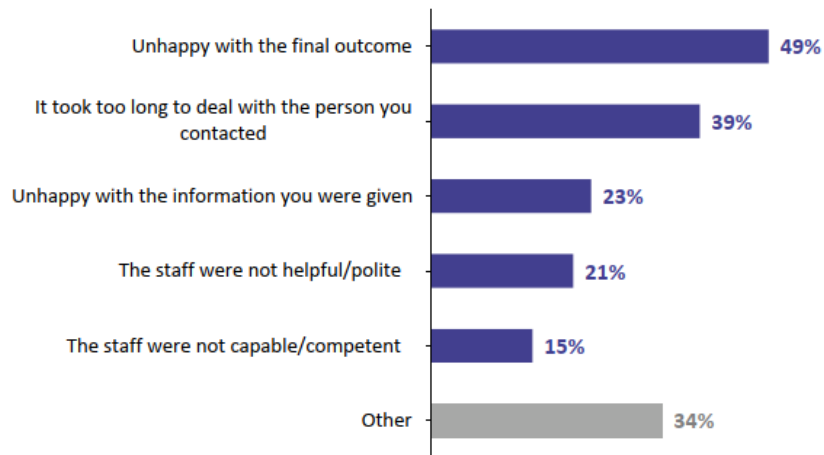
8.7.3 Satisfaction levels in those residents who contacted the Council dropped by 4% vs 2019 levels and dissatisfaction levels increased by 5% vs 2019.

Figure 34: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service you received the last time you contacted the Council? Trends over time.



8.7.4 Of the residents who had contacted the Council and were dissatisfied with the service, around half (49%) said that they were dissatisfied because they were unhappy with the final outcome. Those who had originally contacted the Council to make a complaint or report an issue were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied because of the final outcome.

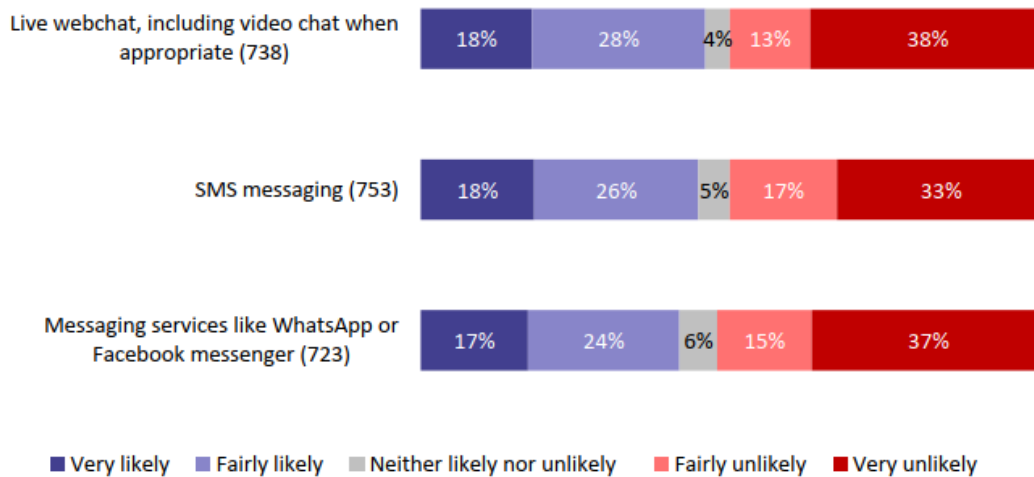
Figure 35: Why were you dissatisfied with the service you received the last time you were in contact with the council?



New methods of contact:

8.7.5 Looking ahead to other potential forms of contact with the Council, residents were asked how likely or unlikely they would be to use three potential methods of contact. The method that the largest proportion of residents say they are likely to use is a live webchat, with just under half (46%) of residents saying they would be likely to use the service.

Figure 36: If the council were to start using the following methods of contact, how likely or unlikely would you be to use them to contact the council?



8.8 Observations on overall Council performance

8.8.1 Strengths

- Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live has consistently been very high even when the national trend has been downward.
- Overall satisfaction with the Council remains significantly above the national level and has stabilised from the downward trend observed between 2013 and 2019.
- Agreement for 'the Council provides value for money' is significantly higher than the national level for the second consecutive survey after previously dipping below the national level in 2017.
- Satisfaction with general waste and recycling collection has seen a significant increase from a decrease in 2019, bringing it back in-line with the 2017 result and the national average (for general waste collection).

8.8.2 Areas of focus:

- For the third consecutive survey the percentage of residents that think the running of the Council is getting worse is larger than the percentage who think it is getting better.
- Satisfaction with street cleaning, benefits administered by the Council, and housing services have all continued a long-term declining trend falling to their lowest recorded levels.
- For those residents who contacted the Council in the last year, satisfaction with the service they received has fallen to its lowest level on record and dissatisfaction has risen to its highest level.

8.8.3 To explore further:

- Satisfaction with 'consults and engages with the community' has declined since 2019 and we are looking to address this through our 2022-27 Community Consultation Strategy.
- Royston residents are less likely to agree that the Council offer value for money and also scored lower than other areas of the district on 'North Herts Council involves, consults and engages residents'. Although this is based on the feedback from circa 100 residents this coincides with feedback at recent cross-district focus groups on a future Place Narrative where Royston residents mentioned not feeling 'part of the district' so worth keeping an eye on.
- Potential new forms of customer contact ie a proportion of residents indicated interest in a 'live chat' option on our website.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Cabinet has under 5.6.1 of its terms of reference, the function to prepare and agree to implement policies and strategies other than those reserved to Council.
- 9.2 The Cabinet under 5.6.15 of its terms of reference oversees the provision of all the Council's services other than those functions reserved to the Council, therefore can consider the outcome of the District Wide Survey report.
- 9.3 There are no legal implications arising from this report. If any actions are identified as a result of the findings of the District Wide Survey 2022, the legal implications of those will be considered at the time.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report. The cost of the research undertaken was funded from the existing budget provision for corporate consultation.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Conducting the District Wide Survey is an important tool for shaping the Council's Objectives. If the results of the survey are not acted upon, there is a risk that public satisfaction with the Council will reduce, leading to a negative impact on the Council's reputation. In order to mitigate this risk, Service Directors and service managers use the results as part of the service action planning process, enabling the Council to address any areas of concern.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. The returned sample of those surveyed was checked against comparative data for age, gender, working status, ethnic group, tenure and disability then subsequently weighted by age, gender and tenure. This ensured that the results are broadly representative of the population of North Hertfordshire.
- 12.3. The report highlights areas where satisfaction levels could be improved. Any mitigating actions may be incorporated into the formulation of the relevant Service Plans to improve service provision, where appropriate. These will be proportionate and reflect the authority's duty under the public Sector Duty. Any identified service improvements may require an analysis of equality impact prior to implementation.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to the 2022 District Wide Survey.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 Where actions are agreed to be followed up, those will form part of the relevant department's service action plan and any employee resources and training will be considered as part of that planning.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 None

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 Christine Crofts, Communications Manager, christine.crofts@north-herts.gov.uk, 01462 474544
- 17.2 Sarah Kingsley, Service Director: Place, sarah.kingsley@north-herts.gov.uk, 01462 474552
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- 17.7 Rizwan Sarwar, Procurement Officer, rizwan.sarwar@north-herts.gov.uk, 01462 474392

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1.1 The full research report from Opinion Research Services can be found at www.north-herts.gov.uk/districtwidesurvey