

Item No	Referred from:	OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
6f	Date:	9 JANUARY 2024
	Title of item:	COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS (MARCH – June 2023)
To be considered alongside agenda item:		Agenda item 9

The report considered by O&S Committee at the meeting held on 9 January 2024 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 9th January, 2024, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:** That Cabinet comment on and note the key findings and observations from round one of the Community Survey and comment on the approach to future surveys (as detailed in section 8.5).

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:** To ensure that Cabinet is aware of the results of the Community Survey (our first digital residents' survey) and how they compare to the Local Government Association (LGA) June 23 Resident Satisfaction phone survey results.

*Audio Recording 1 hour 20 seconds*

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, presented the report entitled 'Community Survey Results (March – June 2023)' and highlighted that:

- District Wide surveys had previously been completed every other year by telephone.
- This was the first digital survey conducted for the Council by Zencity and would be conducted every 6 months.
- The use of a digital survey allowed more frequent feedback from residents and saved costs.
- It was important to note that there would be a difference between the data produced from a digital only survey compared to the results from a phone survey. Residents were unable to converse with the interviewer during a digital survey, compared to a phone-based alternative, and evidence suggested that results would be lower due to this.
- There was an 183% increase in response from the 16-34 age bracket.
- Overall, residents were satisfied with North Herts as a place to live and would recommend it to others.
- Trust in the Council was at 40%, however this was 5% higher than the results from the survey conducted in June 2023.
- There was some confusion amongst residents regarding what services North Herts provided and what Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) provided.
- Challenges with Waste and Street Cleanliness were identified and feedback had been given to those teams with work ongoing to address issues raised.
- 84% of those surveyed said that the Council could listen more and work was now ongoing regarding 'you said, we did' communication, to highlight how feedback was turned into actions.
- The services covered by North Herts need to be clearly communicated to residents.
- Residents of Royston had a feeling of disconnection and work was planned to make them feel part of North Herts, which included an extension to the leisure facility.

- It was recommended at 8.5.4 of the report that future results are not brought to Cabinet but published on the Council website. However, Cabinet would monitor and review outside of a formal meeting and address any issues raised.
- There were known data differences on this survey compared to the previous telephone surveys, and the results and feedback had been considered accordingly.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Dominic Griffiths
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Ralph Muncer

In response to questions Councillor Dennis advised:

- The surveys were conducted by Zencity so did not incur any Officer time. Officer time was still required to analyse and report the data.
- The survey was promoted by the Council through its mailing list.
- There was some weighting on questions regarding use of the service.
- This first digital survey would be used to benchmark future surveys. The Marketing and Communications Strategy, as well as other policies being developed, should improve results and especially have an impact on the views of residents as to whether the Council involves, consults and engages with the local community.

In response to questions, the Communications Manager advised that:

- For two surveys a year the cost was £6K, the telephone surveys previously cost £17.9K and occurred every other year.
- Zencity used software through Google and Facebook ads to reach a representative sample of North Herts residents.
- Some residents answered questions regarding services they had not used. For future surveys residents would not be able to score services which they did not use.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Daniel Wright Mason
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Nigel Mason

Points raised in debate included:

- That the survey results should be reported to Cabinet on a regular basis, as they are a measure of the performance of the Council and the effectiveness of the policies of the Council, as perceived by our residents and a formal annual review should be undertaken.
- Some of the questions were the same as in previous surveys, particularly the 2019 survey, which could be used for benchmarking.
- Survey results were generally more generous when completed by telephone.
- Comparison with results from other local authorities would be useful.
- Responders commented on road improvements, however, these are provided by Hertfordshire County Council and not the remit of North Herts.

- Residents are satisfied with the District and environment they live in but not by the provisions and services provided.
- Findings should be compared but the comparison should be of the same thing and in the same way.
- Funding for local authorities had decreased by 33% over the last few years, which could explain concerns with services. .

During the debate Councillor David Levett advised that he felt he had been unable to raise points he wanted to make; the role of the Committee was to act as a critical friend, and he considered that he had been prevented from raising pertinent questions and would take no further part in the debate. He would raise this issue formally.

Councillor Daniel Allen proposed, and Councillor Dominic Griffiths seconded and, following a vote, it was:

***RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:*** That Cabinet comment on and note the key findings and observations from round one of the Community Survey and comment on the approach to future surveys (as detailed in section 8.5).

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