

**TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**  
**1 July 2013**

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**RESIDENTS SURVEY 2012: ACTION PLAN**  
**Director of Corporate Services**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To engage the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in the development of the Resident's Survey 2012 Action Plan.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **Note the draft Residents Survey 2012 Action Plan at Annex One**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to contribute to the draft Resident's Survey 2012 Action Plan.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Not applicable.

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

**Introduction**

The draft Resident's Survey 2012 Action Plan attached at Annex One has been designed to address areas of improvement highlighted in the survey results, in five cross-cutting areas:

1. Involvement and Influence over local decisions
2. Residents' attitudes towards their local area
3. Use of and satisfaction with specific council services
4. Perceptions of the Council overall
5. Communication with the Council

The action plan has been developed through consultation and meetings with the Council's Corporate Management Team and Departmental Management Teams.

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission considered the results of the 2012 Residents Survey at their meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> March. As a reminder, the headline results and key findings from the Residents Survey 2012 were as follows:

<b>Summarised responses</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2008 or 2009</b>
Can influence decisions in their locality	30%	28%
Participate in regular volunteering (monthly)	28%	21%
Satisfied with local area as place to live	85%	83%
Like best - parks and open spaces	58%	61%
Like best - access to nature	50%	63%
Like best - low level of crime	34%	19%
Believe people from different backgrounds get on well together	87%	82%
People in the area not treating one another with respect and consideration is a problem	14%	30%
Satisfied with the way the Council runs things	60%	50%
Council offers value for money	55%	35%
Very well or fairly well informed by the Council	64%	39%

The single most important area residents wanted the Council to focus on was the regeneration of the town centre (20%).

#### Demographic Profile

- 5.1 The respondent profile was skewed toward older female respondents and black and minority ethnic (BME) respondents are underrepresented in the responses. This needs to be borne in mind when interpreting the results and preparing for the Council's next residents survey in 2014, and will need to try to increase participation levels through the Action Plan. This skew towards older female respondents is typical for this type of household survey, with the female in the home completing the survey for the household.

#### Involvement and Influence over local decisions

- 5.2 Residents were asked a question about whether they felt they could influence decisions in their local area. 30% of respondents agreed they could influence decisions in their local area, compared with 28% who agreed with this statement in the Place Survey in 2008. Males were more likely to disagree that they could influence decision as were white respondents compared to BME respondents. BME respondents were more likely to respond that they 'don't know' suggesting a lack of awareness amongst this group about how they can influence decisions. Older residents were significantly more likely to feel that they could influence decisions with younger people also significantly more likely to state that they 'don't know' how to influence decisions. Follow up work to raise awareness of how to get involved in decision making could be needed with young people and those from BME groups.
- 5.3 Residents were asked to state if they regularly participated in 'formal' volunteering; 28% indicated that they give unpaid help at least once a month, this compares to 21% in the 2008 Place Survey. This shows an increase in volunteering over the last 4-5 years; however older people are more likely to volunteer and so the high proportion of older respondents may be influencing responses.

Residents' attitudes towards their local area

- 5.9 The majority of residents 85% indicated they were satisfied with the local area as a place to live, with just 7% indicating they were dissatisfied. There was a large level of association between those who felt they were able to influence decisions and those who were satisfied with their area as a place to live.
- 5.10 There were some differences in satisfaction between different age groups with people under 35 and those approaching retirement age (55-64) being most likely to demonstrate the highest levels of dissatisfaction. Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live was highest among residents in Crowthorne, Central Sandhurst and Ascot. It was lowest in Great Hollands North, Wildridings and Central and Bullbrook.
- 5.11 Respondents were asked to state the things they liked best about living in the borough; the top answers were 'parks and open spaces', 'access to nature' and the 'low level of crime'. These responses are similar to those in the 2009 Neighbourhood Survey when 'parks and open spaces' and 'access to nature' were also ranked most highly. However the biggest change since 2009 relates to the 'low level of crime' which was ranked at 6 in 2009 with 19% of respondents rating this as one of the best elements of living in the borough, that has increased to 34% in 2012 and a ranking of 3.
- 5.12 The survey demonstrates that levels of community cohesion remain high in the borough. In 2008 82% of respondents to the Place Survey felt that people from different backgrounds got on well together in the borough. In 2012, once the answers are recalculated to make them comparable with 2008, this has increased to 87%. BME respondents were more likely than white respondents to agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well with one another (69% to 61%). The majority of residents (78%) felt that there was little problem with people not treating each other with respect within their local area; a minority of residents (14%) considering this to be a problem. This is a significant improvement on the 2008 Place Survey where 30% considered this to be a problem and the 2006 Best Value Survey where 48% found it to be a problem.

Use of and satisfaction with specific council services

- 5.13 The most frequently used Council services by respondents were 'refuse collection/recycling' followed by 'parks and open spaces' and 'local tips/household waste recycling centres'. Age, and linked to this, life stage were important determinants of the services in use by respondents.
- 5.14 Respondents were asked to give their satisfaction levels with the services provided by the Council. Satisfaction levels were highest for 'parks and open spaces' and 'local tips'. There were a high number of 'don't knows' for a number of these services. The high proportions of 'don't knows' relate to services with a low usage figures such as 'youth services' 78% and 'childcare services' 76%; these results being influenced by the profile of the survey respondents.
- 5.15 Once the above 'don't knows' were excluded, the highest rated services remain similar but services such as 'planning' and 'road maintenance' appear lower down the chart; 40% of respondents expressing a rating for 'road maintenance' stated they were 'dissatisfied' with the service; with 30% dissatisfied with the 'planning service'. Similar proportions 26% were dissatisfied with the Council's efforts at 'keeping public land clear of litter and refuse'. There appears to be low satisfaction levels with some

services the respondents either don't use or have little experience of and we need to do more work to understand this further. This will be followed up in the Action Plan.

#### Perceptions of the Council overall

- 5.16 The satisfaction of residents with the Council was measured by a number of questions including overall satisfaction with the Council, perceptions of value for money offered by the Council and improvements the Council could make with the services it provides. Three out of every five respondents (60%) are satisfied with the way in which the Council is running things, of the 60% a tenth (10%) indicating they were 'very satisfied'; those that are dissatisfied are in the minority (14%), although just under a quarter (24%) were neither satisfied or dissatisfied.
- 5.17 Overall satisfaction was significantly linked to satisfaction with each of the specific services. As the number of individual services with which respondents express dissatisfaction increases, so does the likelihood that respondents express dissatisfaction with the Council overall. There is a marked increase in the level of dissatisfaction between those dissatisfied with 2 and 3 services.
- 5.18 With regard to the value for money offered by the Council; 52% of residents indicated that they thought the Council offers value for money, 16% disagree and 27% around a quarter neither agreed nor disagreed. When this figure is recalculated to reflect the methodology used in the 2008 Place Survey, the comparable perception of the Council providing value for money goes up to 55%, an even greater increase over the past 4 years. Those who felt that they could influence decisions within their local area were also significantly more likely to agree that the Council provides value for money than those disagreeing (73% compared to 39%).
- 5.19 Residents were asked what if anything the Council could do differently which would have a positive impact within Bracknell Forest. Unsurprisingly, the single issue mentioned most frequently by respondents was the need to focus on the regeneration of the town centre, mentioned by a fifth (20%). Improving the maintenance of public areas (14%), improve/change road maintenance/infrastructure (13%), improve/change communication with residents/act on residents concerns (10%) and return to weekly refuse collections (9%) were the next most popular answers. When similar categories of answers are grouped together to aid interpretation the top two areas for the Council doing things differently are 'regeneration and maintenance of public space/the town centre' and 'transport improvement'.

#### Communication with the Council

- 5.20 Residents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt informed about the Council and the services and benefits it provides. Just under two thirds (64%) of respondents felt at least 'fairly well informed' by the Council, with just under a third (29%) indicating they felt 'not very well informed' and 6% 'not well informed at all'.
- 5.21 Although the wording of the question and question ordering has changed, clearly there has been an improvement in residents feeling informed. Informed residents were significantly more likely to feel they could influence decisions in the local area. Informed residents were also more likely to be satisfied with the way the Council is running things (74% to 33%) and feel it provides value for money (66% to 28%). Younger residents under 35 years of age were significantly more likely to feel 'not very well informed' or 'not informed at all' than respondents age 35+ (38% to 27%).

- 5.22 The most commonly used method for accessing information about the Council and its partners were the Town and Country newspaper (68%), leaflets and partnership publications through the post (64%) and local newspapers and radio (60%). Online was the fourth most common method for receiving information (29%); however it was the fourth most popular method for receiving information (41%). Social media's popularity as a method of communication with the Council also outstrips its current usage. As respondents age decreases so does their preference increase for accessing information online and via social media; around a quarter (23%) of those aged 16-24 indicated a preference for using social media compared to just 1% of respondents age 65+. Those in the 65+ age range are disproportionately reliant on Town and Country for their information 75%, compared to 42% for those under 35.
- 5.23 Residents were asked if they had had contact with their Town and Parish Council during the past year and if they were aware of the services provided by their Town and Parish Council. Over half of respondents (56%) were not aware of the services provided by their Parish and Town Council although the number of people contacting their Parish or Town Council has increased since the 2009 Neighbourhood Survey (23% to 30%). There was an association between overall dissatisfaction with the Borough Council and increased contact with the Parish or Town Council. Residents unaware of the services provided by their Town and Parish Councils may be more likely to attribute service failings in these areas to the Borough Council and vice versa; although further research would be needed to confirm this is the case.

### **Conclusions**

- 5.24 Some care needs to be taken in interpreting the results of the survey and comparing them to those of previous surveys due to the differences in the survey methodology and question order. However, overall the surveys results demonstrate there have been a number of significant positive changes:
- Improved perception of the Council in terms of overall satisfaction with the way the Council runs things, perceptions of the Council providing value for money, feelings of being informed about Council services and being able to influence decisions in the local area.
  - The vast majority of residents (85%) are satisfied with Bracknell Forest as a place to live and the things that people like best are parks and open spaces, access to nature and the low rate of crime. Life stage and individual need has a significant effect on what residents think are the best features of the borough.
  - There has been a decrease in the number of people who feel that people not treating each other with respect and consideration was a problem and levels of community cohesion remain high with the majority of residents believing that people from different backgrounds get on well together. This is positive given there has been a significant increase in the number of people from black and minority ethnic groups living in the borough over the past 10 years.
  - There were strong feelings that the key priority for the Council to focus on is the town centre regeneration.
  - There was a strong correlation between residents' feelings of being informed and able to influence decisions and satisfaction with Council services. Effective community engagement, ensuring residents are able to influence decisions and feel informed about services drives up satisfaction. Further improvements could be made here.
  - The Council information sources used by residents do tend to match their preferences however demand for online information and social media outstrips current usage particularly amongst younger people. The Council needs to

increase its use of online information to satisfy this demand while continuing to provide hard copy information sources like Town and Country for older people.

- Unsurprisingly respondents who were dissatisfied with a greater number of individual services were more likely to be dissatisfied with the Council overall. Dissatisfaction with the Council overall spiked if residents were dissatisfied with more than 2 specific services.
- Future consultations need to explore mechanisms for encouraging increased participation from black and minority ethnic residents. As the proportion of respondents participating in the survey has remained relatively static over the past three resident surveys despite the numbers of people from a BME background increasing in the borough.
- Residents unaware of the services provided by their Town and Parish Councils may be more likely to attribute service failings in these areas to the Borough Council and vice versa; although further research would be needed to confirm this is the case.

5.25 The action plan has been developed to address areas of improvement highlighted above.

#### Background Papers

Annex One: Bracknell Forest Residents Survey 2012 Action Plan

#### Contact for further information

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