

TO: EXECUTIVE
20TH OCTOBER 2020

RESIDENTS' COVID-19 IMPACT SURVEY 2020
Chief Executive

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To brief the Executive on the Covid-19 Impact Survey 2020 results and seek endorsement of the communications plan.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 **Note the Covid-19 Impact Survey 2020 results report at Annex A**
- 2.2 **Endorse the communications plan at Annex B**
- 2.3 **That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission are asked to review the survey and identify actions that need to be taken to prepare the Council for the second wave of Covid-19.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide the Executive with the results of the Covid-19 Impact Survey 2020 which took place in late July; to ensure that these are communicated effectively and that the council considers residents' views in recovery planning.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Not applicable

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 5.1 The council has produced a Community Impact Assessment to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted on the borough's communities and residents' behaviours. The residents' survey results will inform an updated version of the Community Impact Assessment as well as recovery and renewal strategy and decision making through understanding what may need to be sustained or done differently. The aims of the survey were:
- To obtain the views of residents on the impact of COVID -19 to them, their family and the community including the social, economic and environmental impact;
 - To provide insight into the support the borough will need to recover from the community impact of COVID -19; and
 - To identify opportunities and behaviour change to sustain through recovery as well as how to respond to adverse impacts.

Survey Methodology

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- 5.3 The survey was a sample-based telephone survey which profiled a representative sample of 1,826 respondents across the borough including 100 interviews per ward to enable ward level analysis. This ensures the response rates and findings are representative of the views of residents of the local area, the delivery is cost-effective and provides robust data. A sample size of 1,826 means the sample error or accuracy of the survey results is +/- 2.4% at a 95% confidence level.
- 5.4 The survey was carried out by the council's consultation contractor Public Perspectives Ltd. Calls were made by their contact centre and interviewers objectively guided respondents through the survey and provided clarification if required. Survey data was inputted and analysed by Public Perspectives.
- 5.5 The survey questions were developed and informed by several other surveys on Covid-19 impact undertaken by the LGA and other councils with input from the Executive, council officers and Public Perspectives.
- 5.6 Public Perspectives set demographic quotas based on the ONS 2019 mid-year population estimates (published April 2020) and the ethnicity data is in line with Bracknell Forest Council school census data from January 2020. This achieved a representative sample by age, gender, ethnicity and location. They use advanced telephone contact lists, including demographic information and mobile phone details. This allowed them to target any groups, including ethnic minorities and younger adults as these groups can sometimes be under-represented especially in telephone surveys.

Key Findings

- 5.7 The full results report from Public Perspectives is attached at Appendix A and includes a copy of the survey questions.

Each relevant question has been analysed against a set of key demographic and variables to identify any relevant patterns, trends, similarities or differences by different types of respondents. The variables include:

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Location
- Housing type

A summary of the key findings is included below including any significant differences between demographic groups. A separate report with data tables per ward will be circulated to ward members in due course.

5.8 The council

Questions were asked relating to perceptions about the council and its support to the local community during the pandemic.

- A fifth of residents have contacted the council since the pandemic began, with residents aged 55+ more likely to do so than other residents.

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- 40% of residents who contacted the council wanted to request a service and the majority have high satisfaction levels with the contact.
- 73% of residents who contacted the council during the pandemic rated contact as good or excellent.
- More than half of residents (56%) are satisfied with the way Bracknell Forest Council is supporting the local community during the pandemic. This is broadly similar to the Local Government Association's national result.

The data showed some demographic differences in terms of contact with the council. Those with caring responsibilities, disabled residents and those in social housing are more likely to contact the council. Residents with disabilities along with BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic Groups) residents are more likely to request a service when contacting the council. Data also showed residents ages 55 and above are more likely to have contacted the council since the pandemic began.

5.9 Community and Volunteering

In this section residents were asked if and how they volunteered in the local community during the pandemic. Questions also covered reasons for volunteering and their intentions around continuing to volunteer.

- The majority of residents (80%) have not volunteered in the community during the pandemic
- Of those that did volunteer 70% wanted to do good for others in the community.
- 83% of residents that had volunteered were intending to keep volunteering in the community.
- 14% stating they are not intending to carry on volunteering.

Of the 20% who did volunteer during the pandemic, middle aged residents tended to volunteer more (24% of 35-54 year olds) compared with 19% of 18-34 year olds and 17% of residents aged 55 or over.

Disabled residents stated they were more likely to keep volunteering compared to residents in general. Younger (18-34) residents were less likely to carry on volunteering.

5.10 Digital activity

Residents were asked questions about access to the internet and various devices as well as frequency of online activities and confidence in accessing services online.

- 96% of residents have access to the internet at home with 91% having access to a smart phone.
- 96% of residents have used the internet and half of them have used it more often since the lockdown began.
- The majority of residents said they communicated using digital technology such as Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp or Facetime, accessed services on-

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line, such as shopping, ordering takeaway or online banking and engaged on social media.

- Confidence in accessing services online is related to age with younger residents more confident (99% of residents aged 18-34 are confident compared with 75% of residents aged 55 and over).

The data showed that residents who may be more vulnerable residents are less likely to have access to digital technology. Residents in social housing, disabled residents and those with caring responsibilities are less likely to have access to digital devices with residents aged 55 and above less likely to have a smart phone. The same applied to residents from BAME background and older residents. Frequency of online activities and confidence accessing information online was also lower among these groups.

5.11 Environment

In this section residents were asked about travel and the environment as a result of the pandemic.

- 75% of residents believe that Covid-19 is a chance for people to be more environmentally friendly and that this is an opportunity for Bracknell Forest to accelerate its plans to become Carbon Neutral by 2050.
- Most residents have made changes to reduce their carbon footprint during the pandemic.
- Just over 40% of residents said they drive less and 24% said they walk or cycle more with younger residents are more likely than older residents to walk or cycle more.

Differences in demographic groups shows older residents (35-54, 55 and above) are less likely to agree that Covid-19 is a chance for people to be more environmentally friendly with approximately 70% agreeing compared to 87% of those aged 18-34. BAME residents are more likely to use public transport than white residents – 22% compared to 10%. Residents with disabilities are less likely to walk or cycle with 52% compared to 71% of residents without a disability.

5.12 Employment and the economy

This section included questions relating to employment status, current working arrangement, support from the UK Government and likelihood to do activities as lockdown is eased.

- 40% of residents are still employed on the same terms and conditions, with an additional 12% furloughed at the time of the survey.
- 46% of residents who are in employment or education are now working from home with 37% going into a place of work.
- The majority of residents have not accessed or received support from the UK Government since the pandemic began.
- The majority of residents (86%) are likely to visit local shops and visit parks, open spaces or play areas as lockdown is eased with 63% likely to visit the Lexicon.
- 17% of residents said they are likely to use public transport with 75% not likely.

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The results in this section show the pandemic has negatively affected those in lower paid jobs or with caring responsibilities. Residents looking after others for more than 25 hours per week are more likely to remain unemployed (40% compared to 8% of residents overall) and are also less likely to have received support.

Residents in social housing are less likely to say they are working from home with only 18% declaring this compared to 46% of residents. BAME residents (42%) are slightly more likely to say they are going into a place of work than White British/Irish residents (36%) and residents without a disability (38%) are also slightly more likely to say they are going into a place of work than disabled residents (31%).

With regard to seeking support BAME residents are less likely to have accessed or received support (78%) compared to 70% of residents overall. Results also showed younger residents (18-34) were more likely to have been furloughed (27%).

5.13 Life, health and wellbeing

This section also included questions about the frequency of doing activities since the lockdown began, health and care support during the pandemic and confidence in accessing health and care services that are not Covid-19 related.

- 83% of residents believe the pandemic had a positive impact on their appreciation of the local wildlife and environment
- 70% felt the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.
- 68% felt the pandemic had a positive impact on their caring responsibilities.
- However there are notable negative impacts on work, finances, education and also physical and mental wellbeing. The most significant being that 58% felt the pandemic had a negative impact on their or their children's education with 42% citing a negative impact on their work.
- Most residents (59%) spend more time in nature and visiting open spaces since lockdown in March and 48% tried a new form of exercise or exercised more.
- 48% reported the pandemic had a positive impact on their physical health (although 22% cited a negative impact), 36% of residents said the pandemic had a positive impact on their mental health with 25% citing a negative impact.
- Since lockdown 48% of residents have tried a new form of exercise or exercised more with 34% stating they are eating more or more unhealthily (with 21% doing this less).
- Regarding drinking alcohol similar proportions cite they are drinking more (24%) as those that are drinking less (22%).
- The same applied to smoking with similar proportions smoking more (6%) compared to smoking less (8%).
- Overall, 64% of residents said their health and care needs have been supported during the pandemic and 82% of residents were confident about accessing health and care services that are not Covid-19 related.

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- The majority of residents (91%) are aware of Test and Trace system and will comply with it and 4% are aware but will not comply.

Demographic differences showed that those more negatively affected tended to be residents with disabilities, caring responsibilities or from lower socio economic groups.

For residents in social housing the pandemic had a less positive impact on their physical health than residents overall with only 27% citing this compared to 48% of residents. The same was true for residents with disabilities with only 23% stating a positive impact compared to 48% of residents.

Disabled residents were less likely to have spent more time in nature and visiting open spaces. They were also less confident accessing non Covid 19 related health and care services.

These groups of residents were also more likely to mention they needed support due to their experience of Covid-19.

With regard to Covid-19 Test and Trace system it was notable that only 84% of residents in social housing would comply compared with 91% of residents generally.

5.14 Recovery

Questions regarding the future recovery of the borough and the council's priorities to help the borough recover.

- 67% of residents had concerns over moving out of lockdown.
- 20% mentioned fear of a second spike, people not following social distancing/hygiene measures and moving too quickly out of lockdown.
- Just over a fifth of residents (21%) said supporting vulnerable residents to recover should be the council's top priority
- (21%) also said helping the local economy and businesses to recover with the same amount also mentioning prioritising health protection and promotion.
- Communicating government guidelines was mentioned as a council priority by 17% of residents.

Residents with caring responsibilities were more likely to fear coming out of lockdown too quickly (68%) compared with residents overall (20%). Residents with disabilities were more concerned about access to medical support compared to residents without disabilities. (13% compared to 2%).

5.15 Conclusions

These results highlight positive perceptions of the council during the pandemic and suggest that there is an increase in volunteering and community engagement. The increase in digital use and high levels of confidence, suggest opportunities for increased digital engagement and service delivery. It should be noted that confidence is lowest amongst older residents who may also be some of the most vulnerable.

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In terms of recovery, results highlight that residents want the council to support the local economy to recover, while supporting vulnerable people to recover, keeping residents safe and promoting and enforcing public health messages and guidelines. Supporting more vulnerable residents to recover reflects the work being done as part of the council's community response to the pandemic.

However the responses also highlight the negative impact of the pandemic on more vulnerable residents. Certain population groups including those living in social housing, disabled, older residents, those living in social housing and more deprived areas of the borough have been more adversely impacted and may require more support than others to recover from the experience of the pandemic.

These findings provide an insight into the priorities set in the council plan, the coronavirus renewal approach and the financial principles. The results suggest that reaching some of these goals may be accelerated, for example the results of this survey support the council plan priority to invest in digital technology as most residents reported confidence in using the online services. Where there is less confidence using digital channels, this survey provides awareness for which groups may need further support.

Renewal priorities such as increasing the work with community and voluntary sector groups is also supported by these findings as many of those who started volunteering during the pandemic intend to continue this. Both the renewal principles and the council plan emphasise the need for taking action against climate change. The results align with these objectives and show that three quarters of residents believe now is a good chance to be more environmentally friendly; many have already actively made changes to reduce their carbon footprint.

However, the results also highlight where reaching some of the council's priorities may now be more challenging. Some residents have experienced negative impacts on their mental health (25%) and physical health (22%) which will make it more difficult to achieve several of the objectives in the 'caring for you and your family' council plan theme. Although this also emphasises the priority of the need and aligns with the renewal approach principles.

Residents top priorities for the borough's recovery also aligned with three of the key areas of focus for current recovery and renewal work to: support vulnerable residents' recovery; help the local economy and businesses recovery; and prioritise health protection and promotion. This indicates general support for the actions the council is currently taking.

However, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission could be asked to review the survey and identify actions that need to be taken now to prepare the Council for the second wave of Covid-19.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

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- 6.1 There is not a statutory requirement to undertake this survey, although it reflects good practice to engage with the community in this way. The Local Authority has discretion to utilise what it assesses to be the best tool to produce the most cost effective, representative sample of the views of the community that it serves.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 A one-off sum of £20k has been included in the 2020/21 budget for the cost of the normal triennial residents' survey, which will be used to meet the costs of the survey.

- 6.3 Other Consultation Responses
N/A

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Telephone survey methodologies enable a more representative cross section of the community to respond to the survey. The survey results report includes equalities analysis.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 The review of best consultation practices undertaken in 2014 is still robust as the revised methodology provides best value for the Council's resources when compared to replicating the previous large-scale postal survey.

Background Papers

Appendix A – Bracknell Forest Council: Covid-19 Residents' Survey Report: August 2020

Appendix B - Communications Plan - Residents' Covid-19 Impact Survey Results

Appendix B

Communications Plan - Residents' Covid-19 Impact Survey Results

| Date | Action | Target audience | Further information |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------|--|
| Oct 2020 | PR | Residents | Highlights of results to local media |
| | Holding statements | Residents | To offer explanations of results – (if required) |
| | Social media mentions | Residents | Highlights of results |

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| | Departmental Management Teams | Managers | To review the results and use to inform renewal planning. |
| | Democracy snapshot | Members | Results |
| Nov 2020 | Intranet/Forest Views | Staff | Highlight of results |
| | Town & Country Extra | Residents | Highlights |
| | Overview and Scrutiny Commission | Members | To review results |
| Dec 2020 | Town & Country | Residents | Highlights of results |
| Spring 2021 | Town & Country | Residents | Further report of results if necessary |

Contact for further information

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