

**TO: EXECUTIVE
21 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**RESIDENTS' COVID-19 IMPACT SURVEY 2021
Assistant Director: Chief Executive's Office**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To brief the Executive on the Covid-19 Impact Survey 2021 results and seek endorsement of the communications plan.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 Note the Covid-19 Impact Survey 2021 results report at Annex A**
- 2.2 Endorse the communications plan at Annex B.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide the Executive with the results of the second Covid-19 Impact Survey which took place in April and May 2021; 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 conducted an initial Residents Covid 19 Impact Survey in July 2020. The results informed the development of the Covid 19 community impact assessment evidence base which was shared widely with partners and informed recovery and renewal planning. Since the results were shared with the Executive in September the borough has experienced a second lockdown in November, tier 4 restrictions in December and a third national lockdown from early January 2021. This second survey which took place in April and May 2021 was run as a tracker survey providing updated information about the impact of the pandemic on Bracknell Forest residents and the results have been compared to those from the first survey to identify trends.
- 5.2 The survey will inform the ongoing recovery and renewal strategy and decision making through understanding what may need to be sustained or done differently. The aims of the survey were the same as the July 2020 survey, namely:

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- 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

- 5.3 The survey methodology replicated the Residents Covid 19 Impact Survey in July 2020 - a sample-based telephone survey which profiled a representative sample of 1,860 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 1,860 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 mirrored those used in July 2020 for comparison over time. Some new questions around testing and vaccinations were added and developed 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 2021. 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

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

Data is available on the views and experiences of residents from different ethnic backgrounds. However, analysis is not conducted by the individual groups in this report because of the relatively small number of respondents or sample size for each group. This makes it difficult to conduct statistically reliable analysis and identify meaningful differences. However, further investigation and analysis has been conducted where the analysis identified differences that exist at the headline level between White British-Irish residents and Black, Asian or residents of other ethnic backgrounds to assess whether the issues are notably experienced more or less by specific groups of residents.

5.8 The council

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

- A third of residents (33%) contacted the council since start of November 2020 compared to 20% in the previous survey. This could perhaps reflect pent up demand with residents less likely to want to contact the council during the first lockdown.
- Two thirds of residents (67%) are satisfied with the way Bracknell Forest Council is supporting the local community during the pandemic. This is higher than the 56% seen in July 2020. The results are also higher than the latest Local Government Association survey (February 2021) which showed 53% of those surveyed were satisfied with the contact they had with their local council.

Whilst data about contact with the council is broadly consistent across different groups, the data did show some demographic differences.

- White British/Irish residents are more likely to contact the council (35%) compared with 23% of those from Black, Asian or other ethnic backgrounds.
- Those in social housing are more likely to contact the council – 45% compared with 33% overall.
- 40% of residents who have shielded since November 2020 contacted the council compared to 33% of residents overall.
- Residents who have shielded at any point since the start of November 2020 are more likely than other residents to be satisfied about the way the council is supporting the community with 77% are at least fairly satisfied with the council support (compared with 67% overall).

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.

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- Similar to the previous survey the majority of residents (80%) have not volunteered in the community during the pandemic
- 63% of residents that volunteered in the community said they wanted to do good for others and the community (70% in July 2020 survey), while 15% said they wanted to feel more of a connection with their local community (7% in August 2020).
- Half of residents (51%) who volunteered in the community said they volunteered between March and October 2020 as well as from November 2020. Women and people with disabilities were more likely to volunteer during both time periods as were 35-54 year olds compared to younger or older residents.
- The majority of residents who volunteered (86%) intend to keep on volunteering in the local community – very similar to 83% who said this in July 2020. The main reason for not continuing was cited as lack of time including going back to work.
- 62% of residents who did not volunteer said they would consider volunteering in the future. Older residents (55+ age group), those with disabilities and those that have shielded were less likely to consider volunteering but those from Black, Asian or other ethnic backgrounds were more likely to say they would consider volunteering (73% said so).

5.10 Digital activity

In this section residents were asked about doing activities on-line during the pandemic including questions about access to the internet and various devices as well as frequency of online activities and confidence in accessing services online.

- Results are very similar to the previous survey with almost all residents using the internet and half of them using it more since the start of the second lockdown in November. However the proportion of residents using voice activated devices (Alexa or similar) has increased.
- The majority of residents said they communicated using digital technology such as Zoom, Teams, WhatsApp or Facetime, accessed services on-line, such as shopping, ordering takeaway or online banking and engaged on social media.
- As previously confidence in accessing services online is related to age with younger residents more confident than those in the older age groups.
- Again data showed that residents who may be more vulnerable 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 Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds 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.

- Results from this survey are in line with those seen in August 2020, although the proportion of those more likely to use local parks and open spaces have increased by 14% and residents less likely to drive has increased by 5%.
- Food recycling was introduced in the borough in March/April 2021 (although currently not available to those in shared residences) and 82% of residents said they have started to or are more likely to recycle food waste.
- Most residents have made changes to reduce their carbon footprint during the pandemic – the proportion saying they have not made any changes has gone down from 28% to 20% since August 2020.

Findings in this area were broadly consistent among different groups.

5.12 Employment and the economy

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

- 50% of residents are still employed on the same terms and conditions, an increase from 42% in August 2020 with an additional 4% furloughed at the time of the survey.
- The majority of residents have not accessed or received support from the UK Government since November 2020.
- The majority of residents (92%) are likely to visit local shops and visit parks, open spaces or play areas as lockdown is eased with an increase over time in the proportion likely to do these activities
- There was a general increased desire and confidence for participating in activities after two lockdowns. The largest increase was the likelihood of visiting the Lexicon (75% in 2021 compared to 63% in 2020) and visiting local pubs, restaurants, cinemas or theatres (74% in 2021 compared to 48% in 2020). 58% said they are likely to visit leisure facilities.

Findings are relatively consistent across demographic groups, however there are some differences. Half of residents (50%) are still employed on the same terms and conditions as before the pandemic. This compared to 23% of residents with disabilities, 37% of those in social housing and 38% for residents who have shielded since November 2020.

Similarly, residents with disabilities, those who care for others and residents in social housing were more likely to have accessed or received support from the UK Government.

5.13 Life, health and wellbeing

This section presents findings about residents' life, health and wellbeing during the pandemic. These include frequency of participating in health-related activities since the 2nd lockdown began, as well as health and care

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support during the pandemic. Plus confidence in accessing non Covid-19 health and care services and other related issues.

- Overall, 83% of residents said that the pandemic had a positive impact on their appreciation of the local wildlife and environment, the same as the proportion seen in July 2020. 67% mentioned the pandemic had a positive impact on their feeling that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together (70% in July 2020) and 59% said it had a positive impact on their caring responsibilities (68% in July 2020).
- 54% said the pandemic had a negative impact on their or their children's education (e.g. school/college/university), while only 14% believed it had a positive impact.
- The 2021 survey results show an increase in spending more time in nature and visiting open spaces with 64% of residents spending more time in nature, visiting open spaces since the 2nd lockdown began in November 2020 (compared to 59% previously). 43% tried a new form of exercise or exercised more – slightly lower than 48% in previous survey.
- 62% of residents said their health and care needs have been supported during the pandemic, with 24% disagreeing (the rest said 'don't know/not applicable).
- 25% of residents said they had avoided going to the GP / hospital because they did not want to overburden them (40% in July 2020).
- 44% of residents said they had not changed the way they access primary healthcare as a result of the pandemic. 37% said they had received telephone GP appointments and 17% said they had received on-line/video GP appointments.
- The majority of residents (86%) do not need any help or support due to their experience of Covid-19, similar to that seen in July 2020.

The findings on the whole are consistent across demographic groups although there are some key differences.

Residents with a disability are less likely to say the pandemic had a positive impact on their physical health – 19% said this compared to 35% of residents overall. Women are less likely to say that the pandemic had a positive impact on their physical health: 30% of women compared to 35% of residents overall. Women were also more likely to have eaten more or more unhealthily since the second lockdown began – 44% compared to 25% of men.

5.14 Testing and vaccinations

This new section in the 2021 survey included questions about rapid Covid-19 testing access, compliance with self-isolation as well as taking (and reasons for not taking) the Covid-19 vaccine.

- The majority of residents (61%) said that they have taken or will access regular rapid Covid-19 testing however 36% mentioned they have not taken and will not access it.
- Almost all residents (99%) said they would comply with requirement to self-isolate at home for 10 days if they or someone they are close to

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tested positive. Those that said they would not comply mainly mentioned work or financial issues or did not support the policy.

- Most residents (93%) have taken or are going to take the Covid-19 vaccine with 5% saying they have not/are not going to take it.
- Reasons for not taking the vaccine included concerns about the long and short-term effects, the effectiveness of the vaccine to protect them and others from the virus and fear of injections.

Findings are generally consistent across different groups however women and residents from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds are more likely to say they have taken or will access testing (in both groups 71% compared to 61% of residents overall).

With regard to taking up the Covid vaccine, residents from a Black, Asian or other ethnic backgrounds were less likely to - 84 % compared to 93% of all residents.

5.15 Recovery

Questions were asked regarding the future recovery of the borough and the council's priorities to help the borough recover as well as working at home in the future.

- 46% of residents had concerns over moving out of lockdown compared to 67% in July 2020.
- Top priorities for the council as mentioned by residents were the same as in July 2020 – helping local economy and businesses recover (20%) and supporting the most vulnerable and affected people to recover (16%) as well as focusing on reopening facilities and services (15%).
- 10% of residents also mentioned ensuring schools remain open and pupils supported to catch up should be a priority for the council.
- More than half residents (56%) said that work from home is not applicable or their job does not allow them to work from home. 17% said they intend to work from home more in the future.

For those residents who have shielded at any point since November 2020; 23% fear coming out of lockdown too quickly compared to 16% of residents overall. Younger residents (18-34) were less concerned about coming out of lockdown than older residents – 61% compared to 50% overall.

Residents with disabilities are more likely than non-disabled residents to say that work from home is not applicable – 70% compared to 53%.

5.16 Conclusions

In terms of recovery from the pandemic, the results highlight the same resident priorities as in the July 2020 survey. Residents want the council to support the local economy and businesses to recover, while supporting vulnerable people. In addition residents also mentioned in other comments priority should also be to ensure schools remain open and pupils supported to 'catch-up' with their education.

The responses also still highlighted the negative impact of the pandemic on more vulnerable residents. Certain population groups including those living in

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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. The pandemic has widened existing inequalities.

These results highlight positive perceptions of the council during the pandemic and suggest that there is an increase in volunteering and community engagement. The proportion of those more likely to use local parks and open spaces have increased by 14% and residents less likely to drive has increased by 5%. 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.

The results of the previous survey in July 2020 helped to inform the 2021/22 budget package, which included a range of support including funding to help support recovery from Covid-19. This includes the COVID welfare grant for those financially affected by the pandemic and economic recovery fund to assist local businesses.

A one-off Community Recovery Grant Scheme has also been set up to improve mental health and wellbeing of residents administered by Involve. Multiple sources of evidence were used to prioritise the allocation of the grant, including the residents' survey and the Community Impact Assessment, which showed increasing levels of isolation, shielding, digital exclusion and a change in employment and/or financial circumstances have affected residents' wellbeing. The grant will also improve sustainability of the community and voluntary sector which will help the community in the long term.

The results of this second survey informed the latest version of the [Community Impact Assessment](#) which was updated in July to capture how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on the borough's communities and residents' behaviours during the second and third national lockdowns. Both surveys will inform the ongoing recovery and renewal strategy and the need to prioritise new objectives and the [council's recovery and renewal principles](#).

Further analysis of the survey findings has been undertaken to identify the key issues highlighted and the extent to which the council is on track to address these issues through existing work or where there are genuinely new issues identified that the council needs to focus on. A summary table is attached at Appendix C.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 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

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6.2 There are no immediate financial implications arising from the contents of the report. The costs of undertaking the survey have been met within existing resources.

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 detailed equalities analysis by demographic groups.

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 2021

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

Appendix C – Issues highlighted being addressed or are new

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Appendix B

Communications Plan - Residents' Covid-19 Impact Survey 2021 Results

Date	Action	Target audience	Further information
Late September 2021	PR	Residents	
	Holding statements	Residents	Prepare reactive statement in case of specific queries
	Social media mentions	Residents	Highlights of results
	Departmental Management Teams/council forums	Managers	To review the results and use to inform renewal planning.
	Democracy snapshot	Councillors	Results
	Intranet/Forest Views/Forest Views Extra	Staff	Highlight of results
October 2021	Town & Country Extra	Residents	Highlights
November 2021	Town & Country	Residents	Further info on results and how used to plan for recovery.

Appendix C

The table below highlights how the council is already addressing the issues raised by the survey and any new issues to focus our attention on.

2. Council contact	
On Track	On-going work
<p>67% of residents are at least fairly satisfied with the way Bracknell Forest Council is supporting the local community during the pandemic</p> <p>This figure is higher than the latest available Local Government Association's representative national survey.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive approach adopted over the pandemic in providing information and supporting vulnerable residents and those shielding (leaflet drop, customer service calls during lockdown, increased comms).
3. Community	
On Track	On-going work
Community volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with partners including The Ark Trust, involve Community Services to provide local opportunities to volunteer and sustain volunteering by those that have come forward during the pandemic. Community Recovery Grant Scheme launched to improve sustainability of the community and voluntary sector to help the community longer term.
4. Digital activity	
On track	On-going work
Almost all residents have used the internet and half of them have used it more often since the start of November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved Council website accessibility Community Recovery Grant Scheme to address digital exclusion for specific groups Berkshire Digital Infrastructure Group – LEP/ reps from Berkshire LAs to address digital poverty across Berkshire.
New issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents with a disability were also less likely to use the internet.
5. Environment	
On track	On-going work
Most residents have made changes to reduce their carbon footprint during the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food waste collections started Improvements to the cycle networks Climate Change Strategy Promoting that forest makes up almost 40% of the borough's landscape

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving facilities at parks e.g., Horseshoe lake.
New issues	Just 16% said they are more likely to use public transport, whereas 65% disagreed. The implications of this need to be considered in our climate change strategy.
6) Employment & Economy	
On track	On-going work
Supporting the economy and businesses to recover.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Award of business grants Economy Recovery Fund More people going to shops/ Lexicon a focus on promotional marketing Economic and Skills Development partnership activities DEFRA funding, CAB Debt support advisor New Local Welfare Scheme to support those in financial hardship Council Financial Hardship Group and new projects officer.
7) Life health wellbeing	
On track	On-going work
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> O&S report social isolation and loneliness, this is included as a JSNA theme Community Recovery Grant – mental health wellbeing, early action /intervention for wellbeing & sustaining positive wellbeing changes NJS Charities/PH funded Reaching out Communities project Integrated Care System boundaries – have been confirmed will stay the same providing more stability Joint working and integration with partners increased through the pandemic.
8) Testing and vaccinations	
On track	On-going work
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted on going comms including translated/ alternative format communications Outreach work with specific communities Surge testing/ pop up testing.

9) Recovery	
On track	On-going work
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery and renewal principles developed last year – broadly in line with survey responses • On-going targeted support for vulnerable groups affected more – could be increased pressure on Public Health/ASC/CSC • Covid priorities listed in service plans and contribution to recovery • Community Impact Assessment production/recovery principles – more context on topics.
New issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for returning to school with some anxiety from families about this and more people home schooling.

Contact for further information

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