

**TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
29 JANUARY 2015**

**RESIDENTS SURVEY 2014 RESULTS
Director of Corporate Services**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To brief the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on the Residents Survey 2014 results and note the communications plan.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Note the Resident Survey 2014 results report at Annex One, the statistical comparison table at Annex Two and the communications plan at Annex Three**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide the Overview and Scrutiny Commission with the results of the Residents Survey 2014, to ensure that these are communicated effectively and that the Council acts on residents' views to continually improve the way it operates.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Introduction

- 5.1 As an outcome of the 2011 Neighbourhood Engagement Review the Executive agreed that the Council would conduct a biennial residents' survey of all households to ensure that adult residents' views continue to shape the Council's strategy and that the Council remains informed of residents' perceptions of its services. Surveys of younger residents are undertaken separately by Children, Young People and Learning with the latest research having been conducted by The Children's Society in 2013. The results can be found at: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/bracknellforestchildrenandyoungpeoplespartnership>. This report outlines the findings of the 2014 Residents Survey conducted by QA Research, the Council's provider of independent consultation and engagement services. The aim of the survey was to gather the views of a representative number of Bracknell Forest residents on a variety of issues relating to the Council as well as attitudes towards Bracknell Forest as a place to live and work.
- 5.2 The Council has previously conducted a number of residents' surveys. These include neighbourhood surveys undertaken in 2007, 2008 and 2009 in partnership with Thames Valley Police to inform the work of the Neighbourhood Action Groups. The Place Survey was also conducted in 2008, with a central Government designed methodology and set of questions. The Council's 2014 Survey was based upon the

2012 Residents Survey which incorporated some questions from both the Place Survey and the Council's neighbourhood surveys so comparisons could be made and trends tracked over time.

Methodology

- 5.3 Previously in 2012, QA Research undertook a large scale postal survey, distributed to approximately 48,000 households. Although the survey achieved a high participation rate the method offered no guarantee of a representative sample as self-completion surveys are self-selecting. In 2012 respondents aged over 55 were over-represented whilst those aged 16-24 were underrepresented.
- 5.4 In 2014 QA Research undertook a sample survey of 1,800 residents carried out as a telephone survey using a CATI (Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing) approach. The interviewing period ran from 24 September to 4 November 2014, and CATI calls were made from QA's in-house contact centre in York. QA purchased a database of random telephone numbers in Bracknell Forest with which to make the calls, as well as a targeted database of younger and BME respondents in order to boost the response from these demographic groups. Quotas were set on ward, age, gender, and ethnicity to ensure the final sample was representative and reflected the demographic profile of the borough.
- 5.5 As the CATI calls progressed it became clear that BME groups were underrepresented in the sample and in order to ensure a better response rate from this demographic group, several days of face-to-face interviewing took place on-street at various locations through the borough to boost the number of completions from BME respondents.
- 5.6 At end of the fieldwork period a total of 1,811 surveys had been completed, of which 1,699 were CATI interviews and 112 face-to-face interviews. Telephone and face-to-face surveys were combined into a single data set for analysis and all are included in QA's report at Annex One. QA Research have analysed the differences in responses between residents from different demographic groups and wards, as well as understanding the changes in residents' perceptions over time where relevant.

Key findings

- 5.7 A copy of the QA Research results report is attached at Annex One and it includes a copy of the survey as an appendix. Attached at Annex Two is a statistical comparisons table which compares the 2014 Residents Survey results for key Council performance indicators to those of 2012. Due to differences in question ordering and overall questions content comparisons between surveys should be taken as indicative only.

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The headline results are as follows:

Summarised responses	2008 or 2009	2012	2014
Can influence decisions in their locality	28%	30%	49%
Participate in regular volunteering (monthly)	21%	28%	20%
Satisfied with local area as place to live	83%	85%	87%
Like best – parks and open spaces	61%	58%	42%
Like best – access to nature	63%	50%	30%
Like best – sports and leisure facilities		23%	16%
Believe people from different backgrounds get on well together	82%	87%	94%
People in the area not treating one another with respect and consideration is a problem	30%	14%	13%
Satisfied with the way the Council runs things	50%	60%	65%
Council offers value for money	35%	55%	59%
Very well or fairly well informed by the Council	39%	64%	64%

Due to differences in question ordering and overall questions content comparisons between surveys should be taken as indicative only.

Demographic Profile of respondents

- 5.8 The report at Annex One provides a full breakdown of the respondents by demographic profile and ward area in section 5.1. In comparison to the 2011 Census data the respondent profile more representative of the profile of Bracknell Forest than previous surveys – one of the key aims for the change in methodology.

Involvement and Influence over local decisions

- 5.9 Residents were asked a question about whether they felt they could influence decisions in their local area. 49% of respondents agreed they could influence decisions in their local area, compared with 30% in 2012 and 28% who agreed with this statement in the Place Survey in 2008. White respondents were more likely to disagree that they could influence decision compared to BME respondents. BME respondents were more likely to respond that they 'don't know' suggesting a continued lack of awareness amongst this group about how they can influence decisions that affect their local area. Respondents aged 35 and over were significantly more likely to disagree that they could influence decisions which stands in contrast to 2012. A lower proportion of respondents indicated that they 'don't know' how to influence decisions since 2012 (10% vs. 17%) but of these the highest proportion were aged under 34. 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.
- 5.10 Residents were asked to state if they regularly participated in 'formal' volunteering; 20% indicated that they give unpaid help at least once a month, this compares to 28% in the 2012 Residents' Survey. The Community of Life Survey found that 29% of respondents undertook formal volunteering in 2012-13 and 27% in 2013-14 suggesting that the rate of formal volunteering is declining nationally. This data shows a significant decrease in volunteering since 2012 in Bracknell Forest.

However older people were overrepresented in the 2012 survey respondents which may have overinflated the volunteering figure as older age groups are significantly more likely to volunteer at least once a month than younger age groups. The proportion of respondents volunteering has decreased across all age groups.

Residents' attitudes towards their local area

- 5.11 The majority of residents 87% indicated they were satisfied with the local area as a place to live, with just 5% indicating they were dissatisfied. This is a slight increase on the 2012 Residents' Survey result where 85% of residents indicated that they were satisfied with the local area as a place to live. There was a large level of association between satisfaction with the local area as a place to live and with agreement by respondents that:
- they were able to influence decisions
 - their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
 - the Council provided value for money
 - they were satisfied with the way that the Council runs things.
- 5.12 Satisfaction was slightly higher amongst those aged 35 – 44 when compared to other age groups. Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live was highest among residents in Winkfield and Cranbourne, Ascot, Central Sandhurst, Warfield Harvest Ride and Crowthorne. It was lowest in Wildridings and Central and Great Hollands South.
- 5.13 Respondents were asked to state the three things they liked best about living in the borough; the top answers were 'parks and open spaces' (42%), 'access to nature' (30%) and the 'sports and leisure facilities' (16%). These responses are similar to those in the 2012 Residents' Survey when 'parks and open spaces' (58%), 'access to nature' (50%), 'low level of crime' (34%) were also ranked most highly. Respondents in 2012 were prompted by a list of possible answers whereas the 2014 telephone interview including no prompting. There were a wide range of aspects mentioned by just over one-in-ten residents to this unprompted question indicating there are many aspects of living in the borough that residents are pleased with including local infrastructure and environmental factors. The full list can be seen at section 5.3.2 of Annex One.
- 5.14 The survey demonstrates that levels of community cohesion remain high in the borough. In 2012 87% of respondents to the Residents' Survey felt that people from different backgrounds got on well together in the borough. In 2014 this has increased to 94%. One difference in the profile of 2014 and 2012 respondents is that the age profile of the 2014 sample is more representative of the borough, while the 2012 age profile was skewed towards older residents, reflecting the methodology. Consequently, differences in agreement for this measure by age and specifically a greater level of agreement amongst younger respondents might explain the higher level of agreement recorded in 2014. No such pattern is evident, confirming that this year-on-year increase in agreement is likely to be a true increase and not reflective of the change in methodology.
- 5.15 BME respondents were more likely than White British respondents to disagree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well with one another (9% vs. 4%). This is in contrast to the findings in 2012, where they were more likely to agree. Further analysis was undertaken and agreement that 'people

from different backgrounds get on well together' was consistent regardless of the proportion of White British and BME residents in the ward.

- 5.16 The majority of residents (85%) felt that there was little problem with people not treating each other with respect within their local area; a minority of residents (13%) considering this to be a problem. This is a slight improvement on the 2012 Residents' Survey where 14% found it to be a problem.

Use of and satisfaction with specific council services

- 5.17 The most frequently used Council services by respondents were 'recycling facilities' (86%) followed by 'parks and open spaces' (79%) and 'sport/leisure facilities' (50%). Age, and linked to this, life stage were important determinants of the services used by respondents. There were a number of differences in the services used by gender and age. There were minor variations between wards although the top three services used at least monthly for all wards came from just four service areas including those listed above and 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre'; see section 5.4.1 of Annex One.
- 5.18 Respondents were asked to give their satisfaction levels with the services provided by the Council. Satisfaction levels were highest for 'parks and open spaces' (86%), 'kerbside recycling' (74%), 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (73%) and 'Refuse collection' (73%). There were a high number of 'don't knows' for a number of these services. The high proportions of 'don't knows' relate to targeted services with relatively low usage figures such as 'childcare services' (82%), 'housing advice' (79%) and 'youth services' (78%).
- 5.19 Figure 23 in section 5.4.2 of Annex One illustrates the satisfaction levels with services once the 'don't knows' are excluded. The highest rated services remain similar but services such as 'planning' and 'road maintenance' appear lower down the chart. 32% of respondents expressing a rating for 'road maintenance' stated they were 'dissatisfied' with the service, 24% were dissatisfied with 'housing advice' and 19% were dissatisfied with the 'planning service'. Positively the level of satisfaction (excluding 'don't know') for the majority of services has significantly increased since 2012. Section 5.4.2 shows interesting variations in satisfaction levels by gender, age, ethnicity, religion and ward. The most frequently used services are also those that report the highest levels of satisfaction.

Perceptions of the Council overall

- 5.20 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. Two thirds of respondents (65%) are satisfied with the way in which the Council is running things, with 15% indicating they were 'very satisfied'. Those that are dissatisfied are in the minority (11%), although more than a fifth (22%) were neither satisfied or dissatisfied. This is a significant increase since 2012 when 60% of residents indicated they were satisfied with the way the Council runs things and shows a reduction in the proportion of respondents that are dissatisfied with the way the Council runs things from 14% in 2012.
- 5.21 Overall satisfaction was significantly linked to belief that the Council offers good value for money therefore demonstrating value is crucial to continuing the improvement in satisfaction levels. Levels of satisfaction with the Council were also linked with other

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key indicators such as satisfaction with local area as a place to live, how the Council runs things and their ability to influence decisions.

- 5.22 With regard to the value for money offered by the Council; 59% of residents indicated that they thought the Council offers value for money, 10% disagree and a quarter (25%) neither agreed nor disagreed. This is a significant increase in the proportion that agreed that the Council offers value for money since 2012 when 52% agreed and more specifically the proportion indicating they 'strongly agree' also increased significantly from 8% in 2012 to 12% in 2014. 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 (74% compared to 48%).
- 5.23 Residents were asked what if anything the Council could do differently that would have a positive impact within Bracknell Forest. The single issue mentioned most frequently by respondents was the need to focus on improving or changing road maintenance or infrastructure, mentioned by just under a fifth (19%). Improving or changing mechanisms for communicating with residents and acting on residents concerns (15%) and the need to focus on the regeneration of the town centre (14%) and return to weekly refuse collections (8%) were the next most popular answers as figure 32 in section 5.5.3 illustrates.
- 5.24 The most important areas residents wanted the Council to focus on was the need to improve or change road maintenance or infrastructure (19%), improve communication with residents and acting on residents' concerns (15%) and to focus on the regeneration of the town centre (14%).

Communication with the Council

- 5.25 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 (31%) indicating they felt 'not very well informed' and one-in-ten respondents (9%) indicated they felt 'not well informed at all'. There has been no significant change since 2012 when 64% also felt at least 'fairly well informed' and 29% felt they were 'not informed' about local public services. There appears to be a polarisation of respondents with a significantly greater proportion feeling 'very well informed' in 2014 (16%) compared to 2012 (10%) but also a higher proportion feeling 'not well informed at all' (2014: 9%, 2012: 6%). Male respondents were more likely to feel well informed (67%) than female (62%) but unlike in 2012 there were no significant differences between demographic groups.
- 5.26 The most commonly used method for accessing information about the Council and its partners were leaflets and partnership publications through the post (56%), the Town and Country newsletter (47%) and local newspapers and radio (45%). Online was the fourth most common method for receiving information (35%); however it was the second most popular method for receiving information (37%). Social media's popularity as a method of communication with the Council also outstrips its current usage. Unsurprisingly these responses demonstrate a shift from traditional communication methods to an increased popularity of 'online' and 'social media' channels. This could also be linked to a greater proportion of younger respondents in the 2014 sample compared to 2012.
- 5.27 Both usage and preference for 'Town and Country newsletter' increased with age with the inverse the case for 'social media'. The youngest age group were almost

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five times more likely to use social media compared to the oldest age group (24% vs. 5%). The youngest age groups' preference for social media was eleven times the level of preference amongst the oldest age group (33% vs. 3%). Those in the 65+ age range continue to be reliant on hard copy forms of information such as 'Town and Country the Council newsletter' (65%) and 'leaflets/partnership newsletters by post' (64%) compared to accessing information via digital means such as 'online' 28% and 'social media' 5%. The data suggests that online methods currently do not engage with the 16-24 age group as they had the greatest difference in levels of preference over usage.

- 5.28 White British respondents were shown to access significantly more sources of information on average than BME respondents. BME respondents also showed a significantly greater preference for 'local newspapers/radio' and 'face-to-face' compared to White British respondents but there was no significant difference in levels of usage by ethnicity. This indicates that there may be barriers to BMEs accessing information using these methods.
- 5.29 Residents were asked to indicate whether they had access to broadband internet at their home. The vast majority (94%) indicated that they did and only one-in-seventeen (6%) did not. This has increased since 2012 when 83% had broadband connection. This increase may be due to a more representative sample in 2014 as those aged 65 and over were significantly less likely to have broadband access so may have artificially decreased the 2012 figure. Access analysed by Ward mirrors the findings in 2012 with Priestwood and Garth having the lowest proportion of respondents with home broadband access (72%) and Warfield Harvest Ride remaining the highest (93%).

Contact with and awareness of Parish and Town Councils

- 5.30 Residents were asked if they had contacted their Town and Parish Council during the past year and if they were aware of the services provided by their Town and Parish Council. Only 18% of respondents had contacted their Parish or Town Council in the last year which is a significant decrease from 2012 when almost a third (30%) reported contact. Some of this decrease could be accounted for by the lower proportion of older respondents in the 2014 sample as respondents aged 35 and over are more likely to have contacted their Parish or Town Council. However a decline was recorded in comparison to 2012 amongst all age groups.
- 5.31 A wide range of differing reasons were offered for contacting a Town or Parish Council with no single over-riding issue driving contact. Two thirds (63%) of respondents indicated that their enquiry had been dealt with adequately. However one-in-three (33%) enquires had not been dealt with adequately with the respondent considering that the Parish or Town Council did not act to deal with the cause of the enquiry, either due to being 'unable to act' (16%) or 'refusing to act' (10%).
- 5.32 Nearly two thirds of respondents (62%) were not aware of the services provided by their Parish and Town Council which is a significant increase since 2012 where it was just over half (56%). The proportion of people who have contacted their Parish or Town Council has decreased and awareness of the services they provide has also decreased.
- 5.33 Of those that were aware of the services provided by Parish or Town Councils the majority (84%) were satisfied with a negligible proportion (3%) being dissatisfied.

- 5.34 Of those that were aware of the services provided by Parish and Town Councils, when asked about satisfaction with those services 'parks and open spaces' (33%), 'environmental maintenance' (14%) and 'leisure and sports facilities' (9%) were particularly good or valued services. There continues to be confusion amongst respondents about who is providing services as responses included services that were the responsibility of the borough whether in terms of satisfaction or areas for improvement. When asked over half of respondents (55%) did not name any Parish or Town Council services that required improvement. The list of suggestions can be found at Figure 47 in section 5.7.2 of Annex One.
- 5.35 Respondents were asked about their interest in contributing to a Neighbourhood Plan and if so, what they felt they could offer. Only a minority of respondents (27%) indicated they would be interested in participating. Respondents from Winkfield and Cranbourne (35%), Binfield with Warfield (34%), Crown Wood (34%) and Ascot (33%) had the highest level of interest in this activity. The wards where interest was lowest were Central Sandhurst (18%) and Old Bracknell (18%). The most common means of contributing was a 'keenness to share views and opinions' (32%).

Conclusions

- 5.36 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. However, overall the survey's results demonstrate there have been a number of significant positive changes since the last survey in 2012:
- **The change in methodology has provided a more representative sample and findings that are more reflective of the views of the borough.** The change from a postal survey, whereby respondents are entirely self-selecting, to a telephone survey designed to ensure a sample of respondents that better reflects the views of all demographic groups in the borough has been achieved.
 - **Residents continue to feel that Bracknell Forest is a good place to live and is getting better.** The majority of respondents 87% were satisfied with their local area as a place to live and there was a slight increase since 2012. Access to nature and green spaces were once again cited as the most valued features of living in Bracknell Forest and usage levels and satisfaction levels for parks and open spaces in particular remain comparatively high.
 - Residents agreed that there was strong community cohesion in their local area, and the proportion agreeing that people from different backgrounds get on well together where they live has increased significantly since 2012 (87% to 94%). There was also a low level of disagreement that people in the respondents' local area treated each other with respect and consideration, a slight decrease from 2012 (14% to 13%). These two measures were positively correlated with satisfaction with the local area, and these metrics are clearly linked.
 - **Around two-thirds expressed satisfaction with Bracknell Forest Council and the majority consider it provides value for money, with improvement in both measures recorded since 2012.** There was a strong correlation between residents' feelings of being informed and able to influence decisions and satisfaction with Council services. There has been little overall change since 2012. Effective community engagement, ensuring residents are able to influence decisions and feel informed about services drives up satisfaction.
 - **The services provided or supported by Bracknell Forest Council generate high levels of satisfaction overall, although there is the potential to improve some areas of service.** Positively the level of satisfaction (excluding 'don't know') for the majority of services has significantly increased since 2012. The most frequently used

services are also those that report the highest levels of satisfaction. The top options remain largely the same, with 'parks and open spaces' (86%) at the top and 'kerbside recycling' (74%), 'Longshot Lane household waste recycling centre' (73%) and 'Refuse collection' (73%) still highly rated.

- **The majority of residents continue to feel they at least fairly well informed about Council services, although there has been no improvement since 2012.**

The most common methods of receiving information from the Council continue to be leaflets or partnership publications by post, the Town and County newsletter, and local newspapers or radio; however, the proportion using these has decreased significantly since 2012. In contrast, the proportion using and receiving information online and via social media has increased, and although preference for online communication continues to outstrip usage (suggesting improvements could be made) this gap has narrowed since 2012.

- **Contact with Parish or Town Councils has fallen since 2012 (30% to 18%).**
- **Although those who were aware of the services provided by Parish and Town Councils were satisfied with them, awareness remains low and is possibly decreasing.** Only one third of all respondents indicating that they were aware of what these services actually were.
- Interest in being involved in a formal Neighbourhood Plan was low, suggesting that residents may not want the level of involvement that helping to shape a Neighbourhood Plan would require.

5.37 A communications plan has been developed at Annex Three to feed back the results of the survey to residents, partners and the Council's elected members and staff. Feeding back to residents using the strap line 'you said: we did' will help demonstrate the Council's commitment to acting on the results of the survey and increase the likelihood of maintaining a high response rate when the next survey is conducted in 2016.

5.38 The survey results data will be summarised at ward level and circulated to Elected Members.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

6.1 Nothing to add to the report.

Borough Treasurer

6.2 There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.3 The change in methodology from a self-selecting postal survey to a sample survey of 1,800 representative respondents conducted over the telephone and face to face has provided a more representative sample and findings that are more reflective of all the views of the borough's residents.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Conducting a biennial resident survey enables the Council to manage risk 9.6 in the Council's Strategic Risk Register 'Pressure from stakeholders /residents to have local power/involvement'.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 The Corporate Management Team.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Meeting on 17th December 2014.

Representations Received

- 7.3 Incorporated into this paper.

Background Papers

Bracknell Forest Residents Survey 2014 – QA Research Results Report

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