

Information

for County Councillors

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To:	All County Councillors

Somerset County Council Tracker Survey 2016

In October 2016, 900 residents from across the County were consulted about their perceptions of Somerset County Council and a range of other relevant issues. This is a short face-to-face survey undertaken in the main towns across the county. The key findings are summarised below and the full results are available from nsharma@somerset.gov.uk

Introduction

This Autumn, the Somerset Consultation Tracking Study was used partly to continue to provide tracking data for key reputation, performance & communication criteria but also to give more weight to the consultation with residents on the issues of Investment in Services, Smoking/Vaping, Healthy Eating and Physical Activity.

How we do it

An on-street survey was the methodology used previously to obtain as wide a spread of the public as possible and to allow for the maximum level of comparative tracking, prompting and probing. This method is repeated in this survey. Members of the public were randomly approached to take part. No quotas were set but respondents had to be Somerset residents aged 16 years or over. Re-weighting of the sample took place to correspond with the latest available age profile for Somerset.

See Methodology on page 3.

Summary of findings: Main highlights

1. Satisfaction with the County Council

Of those who expressed either a positive or negative view about their satisfaction with the council, 70% were satisfied and 30% were dissatisfied.

When including those not expressing a view, there is a small but steady improvement in overall levels of satisfaction with 47% satisfied, 33% no views and 20% dissatisfied (note dissatisfaction is down from 25% in 2015).

2. Positive perception

There has been an increase in the percentage of people with a positive view about the County Council since 2015, with 48% either saying they would 'Speak highly of the Council' (5%) or that Somerset County Council are doing a 'Fairly good job' (43%). This is the highest score for an October Survey since 2012.

3. Informed residents

The overall percentage saying that they are 'very' or 'quite well informed' about what the County Council does has fallen to 42%, the second year in a row it has declined. It should also be noted that 34% say they feel uninformed, slightly down on last October, leaving 24% have no views either way.

4. Investment in Services

To close the funding gap, the top service areas where people (over 40% of respondents) would **not** be willing to see a reduction in expenditure are: 'Support for elderly persons unable to live without assistance', 'Support for vulnerable groups e.g. victims of domestic violence or children in need of educational support', 'Children's Social Care', 'Road maintenance/road surfacing' and, 'Public Transport Subsidies'.

5. Internet & Social Media

73% of respondents now use the internet on a daily basis, and those never using the internet has fallen to 16%. The levels of use 'once a day or more often' has remained broadly steady, except by those aged over 65 years, where it has increased to 44% . However, of those aged over 65 years old, 38% still never use the internet but this is down from 52% last year.

6. Council Information Services

57% of the total sample said that they were satisfied with the information and advice on services in their local area, up from 53% last October. 23% of disabled respondents were dissatisfied as opposed to 19% for all respondents. Both figures show a slight improvement on 2015.

7. Concern about their Home Area/Quality of Life

There was a significant decrease in the percentage claiming not to be worried by any of the issues, down from 42% to 29%. The issues that did cause most concern to the public in their local area were speeding traffic at 38% and anti-social behaviour in the street at 36%, up from 26% in 2015. Illegal waste tipping came next at 30%, again up on last year. This issue is followed by drunkenness and/or drug abuse at 23%. Theft from property (17%) and violence on the street (12%) are the issues of least concern.

8. Smoking

22% claimed to smoke either exclusively or in combination with vaping. On the other hand, 9% vape exclusively or in combination with smoking. Levels of smoking and/or vaping declines gradually the older the person gets. It is of concern that 36% of those aged 16 – 34 years still smoke.

9. Healthy Eating

It would appear that only 43% achieve or come close to the recommended number of portions of salad, fruit or vegetables on a typical day. Women are more likely to eat 'healthily' than men at 47% versus 36% eating 4 or more portions.

10. Physical Activity

26% participate in Strenuous Activity as defined. 54% in Moderate Activity and 70% in Mild Activity. At all levels and especially as regards Mild Activity, women participate more than men. This bias also applies to it being a routine performed on 5 or more days a week with the overall levels of participation being – Strenuous 10%, Moderate 27% and Mild 44%.

11. Community Involvement

Only 11% of the sample said that they felt that they definitely had the skills, time or capacity to do more in their local community. Another 29% said that perhaps they had and 20% felt they were already fully involved. However, this does mean that only 40% said No, they hadn't or Didn't know. Certainly if the skills, time and capacity of the 11% could be harnessed the number of people involved in the community would rise by around 50%!

Methodology:

- The total unweighted sample of 900 was achieved at a rate of 25 interviews per day per interviewer
- Interviewing took place in the following locations –
 - Taunton Deane – 200 in Taunton including 50 on Saturday
 - South Somerset – 150 in Yeovil including 25 on Saturday
50 in Chard
 - Sedgemoor – 150 in Bridgwater including 25 on Saturday
50 in Burnham/Highbridge
 - Mendip – 100 in Frome/Shepton including 25 on Saturday
100 in Wells/Street including 25 on Saturday
 - West Somerset – 100 in Minehead

Total of 150 on Saturdays and 750 on a spread of weekdays.

Please note that :

- 1. Since April 2010 the data has been weighted by age to be representative of the Somerset population.**

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