

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF THE POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE ON 9 DECEMBER 2021

SUBJECT: Residents Satisfaction Survey 2021

REPORT AUTHOR: Jackie Follis – Group Head of Policy
DATE: 15 November 2021
EXTN: 01903 737580
AREA: Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Each year the Council undertakes a Residents Satisfaction Survey as part of the Council's performance framework.

The Residents Satisfaction Survey for 2020/21 was undertaken between 28 June 2021 and 25 July 2021. The Council instructed BMG Research to undertake the survey.

This report sets out the main findings of the survey for review by Members.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Review and note the contents of the survey.

1. BACKGROUND:

1.1 As part of the Councils performance framework, an annual Residents' Satisfaction Survey is undertaken each year. BMG Research Ltd carried out the survey on our behalf, so that residents can be assured that their responses will be anonymised. A copy of the BMG report is attached. *(please note that where charts or tables from the BMG report are included in the body of this report they retain their number from the BMG report)*

1.2 Section 1.2 of the survey explains the methodology. BMG sent the survey to 3000 randomly selected residents, ensuring that this selection was geographically representative of the whole district. This was an increase from 1800 in the previous year in an attempt to increase the number of respondents. Overall, 849 questionnaires were completed, a total response rate of 28%, against a response rate of 34% in the previous year (611 completed questionnaires).

The survey results are directly comparable to previous years because the same questions have been asked. It is also worth noting that the results are based on 'perceptions' of the district and how people 'feel' about the things we are asking.

- 1.3 Additionally we opened the survey to all residents by placing a web link to the survey on Arun's website and this was advertised through social media, parish councils and local press. This resulted in an additional 528 residents completing the survey. The results from the closed (targeted) and open surveys have been analysed separately and a comparison and gap analysis of the differences in perceptions between the two samples is set out in section 4 of the BMG report and comment on this is made later in this report.
- 1.4 The report outlines the findings from the research into the experiences of living in Arun and perceptions of the Council. It is not statistically valid to provide a breakdown to parish level. To provide a more local picture, wards have therefore been grouped into Western, Eastern and Downland areas for some outcomes. Table 1 in section 1.3 gives this breakdown.
- 1.5 The data in the report is benchmarked against questions in the Local Government Association's (LGA) national public polls on resident satisfaction with local councils. The national survey is carried out by telephone and consists of data from 1,006 adults. The cost of carrying out our telephone surveys for Arun would have been prohibitive and it is possible that self-completion surveys are less inhibited. The impact of this on comparative findings, if any, cannot be quantified, but should be considered when comparing data sets. Section 1.3 describes this in more detail.
- 1.6 It is also worth noting that where tables and graphics do not match exactly to the text in the report, this is due to the figures being rounded either up or down when responses are combined.
- 1.7 Questions 2 and 10 in the survey also relate to the Council's corporate plan performance indicators as follows:-
- CP1 – the level of public satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of the Council's services
 - CP4 – The level of customer satisfaction with the cleanliness of the district
- 1.8 As the survey was issued during the Coronavirus pandemic lockdown period, responders were encouraged to consider their responses in relation to the services provided all year round. Section 1.4 comments on the broader context of the survey and sets out some thoughts on the impact of Covid-19. It is inevitable that the national context, whether it is Covid-19 or other issues, will impact on perceptions of local government.
- 1.9 In 2020 it was notable that the national survey carried out by the Local Government Association (LGA) showed that the role of local authorities during covid had been viewed positively and that the unique circumstances of the pandemic did not appear to have impacted on perceptions and indeed may have improved perceptions. A number of our indicators have performed slightly less well in 2021 than in 2020, although still to a high standard, particularly the cleanliness of the District.
- 1.10 It is disappointing that the improvement in 2020 has not been sustained, but during 2020 the Council was operating in very different circumstances to normal which will certainly have influenced public perceptions.

1.11 There are two sections to the BMG Report and whilst this Committee report sets out some of the headlines, further detail can be found in the full report, in particular comparisons between different parts of the District and different demographic groups shown in tables throughout the report.

Living in Arun District

1.12 Overall satisfaction (section 2.1)

Overall satisfaction levels are high, with 81% of residents saying they are either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their local area (15-20 minutes walking distance of their home). This is very similar to the LGA benchmark which is 82% but is lower than the 2020 figure of 87%, and more in line with the 2019 figure of 80%. Data suggests that those who are satisfied with the cleanliness of the District are significantly more likely to be satisfied with the area as a place to live. Satisfaction levels tend to be higher than the LGA benchmark figures for those who are aged 65+ and for those who own their homes outright.

1.13 Community cohesion (section 2.3)

55% of respondents agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, 16% disagree, and a high proportion of people (29%) are neutral. Whilst this potentially identifies an area for the Council to consider in terms of future action it is possible that the high 'neutral' figure is because people do not consider that they have significant contact with people from different backgrounds.

1.14 Cleanliness of Arun District (section 2.4)

In section 2.4, 63% of respondents are satisfied overall with the cleanliness of the District. This is lower overall than for 2020 when it was 78%. The detailed analysis gives more detail on different kinds of places in the District. Parks & open spaces, beaches & promenades and town/village shopping centres have a high level of satisfaction, with public toilets at the bottom of the list. Table 2 shows how these have changed over time with 5 of the seven places either at the same level as or higher than in 2020. It is a point to note that the satisfaction level for public toilets has increased from 36% in 2019 to 35% in 2020 to 43% in 2021. Table 3 shows variations in perceptions by age and area.

Table 2: Satisfaction with cleanliness over time (All valid responses: Sample bases in parenthesis)

Cleanliness of...	Proportion satisfied								2021 (Figure 4)
	2013 (510)	2014 (515)	2015 (399)	2016 (574)	2017 (473)	2018 (585)	2019 (579)	2020 (611)	
Parks and open spaces	75%	72%	76%	79%	73%	70%	74%	79%	79%
Beaches and promenades	69%	70%	71%	68%	74%	67%	77%	78%	72%
Town/village centre shopping areas	66%	63%	67%	68%	69%	62%	65%	69%	70%
Out of town shopping areas	62%	62%	61%	65%	62%	62%	62%	59%	67%
Car parks	58%	63%	62%	64%	60%	55%	58%	60%	63%
Residential roads	54%	59%	57%	56%	54%	50%	57%	66%	59%
Public toilets	34%	36%	34%	34%	29%	25%	36%	35%	43%

The table above, shows the satisfaction with cleanliness over time, green indicates a significant growth, and red indicates a significant decrease.

Table 3: Satisfaction with cleanliness by age and location (All valid responses: based sizes vary)

Green indicates a figure significantly higher than the total average for the sample, while red indicates a figure significantly lower.

	Total	18-44	Age 45-64	65+	Downland	Area Western	Eastern
Parks and open spaces	79%	76%	71%	89%	76%	77%	82%
Beaches and promenades	72%	74%	68%	78%	67%	73%	73%
Town/village centre shopping areas	70%	65%	62%	82%	69%	67%	74%
Out of town shopping areas	67%	59%	66%	76%	63%	64%	75%
Car parks	63%	54%	60%	75%	55%	58%	73%
Residential roads	59%	59%	59%	66%	61%	51%	69%
Public toilets	43%	26%	45%	60%	46%	35%	52%

1.15 Problem behaviours in Arun (section 2.5)

It is worth noting that, compared to the 2020 survey, perceptions around the prevalence of all the issues have increased significantly. This may be due to the circumstances faced with being in lock-down for a large part of the last year.

Customer Satisfaction with the Council and its Services

1.16 Satisfaction with the quality of service (section 3.1)

68% of residents are satisfied with the quality of service provided by the Council. This is a significant decrease down from 77% in 2020. This is in line with the LGA benchmark figure of 68%. There is an association between their local area and Arun District Council in resident's minds, with those who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live are more likely to be satisfied with the Council.

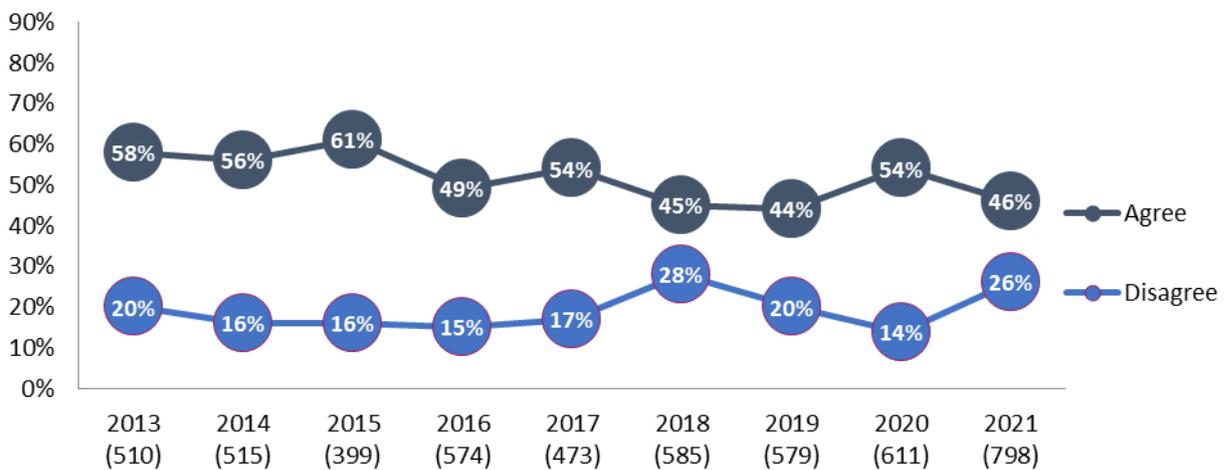
1.17 Satisfaction with specific Council services (section 3.2)

Satisfaction across services remains relatively high despite a drop from last year's figures. Waste collection and recycling has a figure of 84% satisfaction, down from 91% in 2020, and is more in line with the pre-pandemic figure of 85% in 2019. The LGA figure is 80%. Satisfaction with parks, open spaces and play areas have remained at a very similar level since 2019.

1.18 Value for money (section 3.3)

46% of respondents agree that the Council provides value for money compared to 54% in 2020, and 44% for 2019. This is slightly below the LGA benchmark of 48%. Figure 10 shows how this has changed over time, with 2021 figures being close to those from 2019.

Figure 1: Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Arun District Council provides value for money? - Over time (Sample bases in parenthesis)



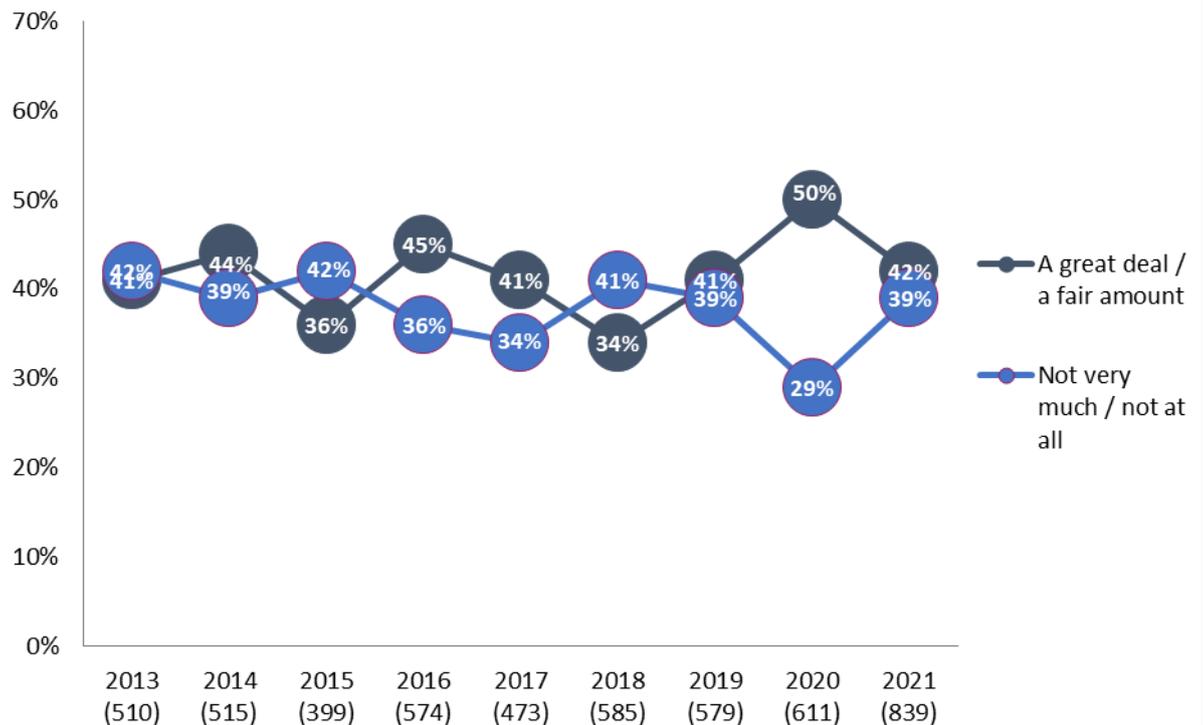
1.19 Trust in the Council to make the right decision (section 3.4)

This has decreased to 59% from 63% in 2020 and is below the LGA benchmark of 64%.

1.20 Acting on concerns (section 3.5)

42% of residents believe that the Council acts on residents' concerns, only 4% answering 'A great deal', and 37% 'A fair amount'. 39% of residents who answered disagreed that the Council acts on their concerns (29% 'Not very much' and 10% answering 'Not at all'). Figure 13 shows the change over time, with a return to the levels seen in 2019.

Figure 13: Q. To what extent do you think Arun District Council acts on the concerns of local residents? - Over time (Sample bases in parenthesis)



1.21 Residents preferred channels to be kept informed (section 3.6)

How we communicate with our Residents is a key component of building a trusted relationship. Figure 14 shows the responses to this question, indicating that the website is the preferred channel, down to word of mouth as the lowest. This shows the importance of maintaining a number of different channels, whilst continuing to develop those which are potentially most convenient and cost effective for residents and the Council. There are not unexpected variations in which channels are preferred, primarily by age. An example of this is that 45% of respondents over the age of 65 prefer to receive a hard copy of the Council’s newsletter.

The Council has already identified the importance of digital communications, both in its Digital Strategy and the Customer Services Strategy.

Comparison of key indicators between open and closed survey

1.22 Figures 15,16,17 and 18 in section 4 of the BMG report show the difference in perceptions between the open and closed surveys. In all instances residents in the closed survey report more positive perceptions than the open survey, suggesting that residents have engaged with the open survey because they are unhappy with a certain issue or service. The biggest differences are for the overall quality of the Council’s services with 32 points difference, the way the Council acts on concerns of local residents with 29 points difference and trust in Arun District Council to make the right decision with 27 points of difference between the two surveys.

Summary

1.23 The information gathered through this survey is about perceptions of the Arun District as a place to live and how we deliver services. The background to the 2021 survey has been a very challenging period of a prolonged pandemic and moving to new ways of delivering some services partly because of the pandemic, but also because some of our processes and channels of communication have been improved anyway. How these have impacted on individual residents and their perceptions of Arun will vary greatly. What is clear from the report is that a number of the responses indicate a lower level of satisfaction than 2020, although some have improved, and some remain very similar to last year. In general, the charts showing progress over time tend to indicate that 2020 was something of an anomaly and that the results for 2021 are close to those for 2019. The Corporate Management Team is looking carefully at this feedback and considering what action needs to be taken at this stage.

1.24 Looking to the future, the Council is currently working on the Council Vision for 2022 – 2026, with the high level aims currently out for public consultation during November and December 2021. The areas of focus are: improving the wellbeing of Arun; delivering the right homes in the right places; supporting our environment to support us and fulfilling Arun's economic potential. Following public feedback, the final 'Vision' will go to Full Council in March 2022 for approval. We are working hard to ensure that we will have clear and regularly monitored performance indicators that will show what progress we are making towards our high level aims for the next four years and the results of this survey will feed into that.

We would also like to express our thanks to all our residents who took the time to complete the survey.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

To note the survey, members may wish to comment on the views of residents

3. OPTIONS:

N/A

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		x
Relevant District Ward Councillors		x
Other groups/persons (please specify) Consultation with 3000 targeted residents and 528 residents in the open survey	x	

5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)

	YES	NO
Financial		x
Legal		x

Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		X
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		X
Sustainability		X
Asset Management/Property/Land		X
Technology		X
Other (please explain)		X

6. IMPLICATIONS:

To bring to the attention of Members the views of residents.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To make Members aware of resident's views on the wider District and Council services

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None