

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 6 MARCH 2012

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

THE 2011 RESIDENTS SURVEY RESULTS AND ACTION PLAN

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- The purpose of this report is to provide the Executive with the results of the 2011 Residents Survey. The Executive are asked to identify any issues arising from the survey which officers can investigate further to produce an action plan.

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE DECISION: that</b>	
<b>(A)</b>	<b>the ORS Residents Survey Report be noted;</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>a small number (possibly 4 or 5) priority areas for further investigation / action by Officers be identified; and</b>
<b>(C)</b>	<b>Officers be requested to develop an action plan in response to the priorities identified by the Executive.</b>

1.0 Background

1.1 A biennial Residents' Survey has been undertaken by East Herts Council since 1993. Previously this has been conducted by Ipsos Mori. This is the second residents' survey conducted by Opinion Research Services. The survey has traditionally been used to track customer satisfaction with the Council and individual service areas, and also as a vehicle for more service specific questions relevant at the time.

1.2 Appropriate comparisons with previous residents' surveys, BVPI general surveys and with the 2008 Place Survey are presented where possible in this report.

1.3 The survey was designed to produce results that are representative of the population of East Herts. A random sample of 4,085 questionnaires were distributed to residents of East Hertfordshire on 26 August 2011, of which 19 were returned as failed mail. 1,317 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 32%. This is an increase in response rate of 8% since 2009.

1.4 The returned sample was checked against comparative data and subsequently weighted by gender, age and ethnicity. Other than returns being by self selection from within the random group the results are generally representative.

## 2.0 Report

2.1 **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** is the full Opinion Research Services (ORS) report on the 2011 Residents' Survey.

2.2 At the outset it is important to stress that the survey response levels are extremely pleasing. The response rate of 32% shows we are effectively engaging with our residents. In certain areas we have improved on previous scores.

## 3.0 Key Findings

3.1 The survey was broken down into a number of sections and the results are reported below to include a range of topics

- Local Area: Local facilities and services
- Local Area: Community Safety
- East Herts Council: Overall satisfaction ratings
- East Herts Council : Waste and Recycling
- East Herts Council: Leisure and Recreation
- East Herts Council: Contact

### 3.11 **Local Area: Local facilities and services**

Highlights:

3.12 Respondents were asked to identify the top five factors, which they consider are most important in making somewhere a good place to live, from a list of 22. Factors consistently identified as most important are the level of crime (65% in this survey), health services (49%), education provision (40%) and clean streets (39%).

- 3.13 Considered to be of least importance to making a place a good place to live are: cultural facilities (6%), how well people from different backgrounds get on together (6%) listed buildings and conservation areas (6%) and tackling climate change (3%).
- 3.14 Satisfaction with Parks and Open Spaces fell slightly from 75% (Place Survey) to 74%. This is not a material change and the two surveys have different approaches to collection of data. Interestingly though, only 9% were dissatisfied. 17% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied and it is possible that some of these are not parks users. Only 8% of all respondents felt that they needed improving. This can therefore be considered a very positive result for this service, reflecting the extensive improvements to many sites that have been made over the last 5 years. Details of these can be found in the report to Environment Scrutiny Committee on 13 September 2011.
- 3.15 An analysis of the results by ward suggests that Residents choose to shop in the town in the nearest vicinity to their home. However caution is needed with such indications as the smaller sample size allows lower confidence levels.
- 3.16 Residents' other main considerations when deciding where to shop are the choice and range of shops (86%), availability of parking (65%) and the cost of parking (46%). Preferring to shop online/by catalogue (9%), preferring to go to retail parks (9%) and flexible ways of parking (6%) are the least considered factors.
- 3.17 The table below illustrates the areas that residents identified in the survey as most important and most needing improvement (therefore priority areas for improvement) as well as lesser important factors that most need improving:

<b>Less Important, most needs improving</b>	<b>Most Important, most needs improving</b>
Wage levels and cost of local living	Affordable decent housing
Job Prospects	Clean Streets
Activities for teenagers	The level of crime
	The level of traffic congestion
	Public transport
	Road and pavement repairs
	Shopping facilities
	Health services

- 3.18 The areas for improvement are largely consistent with the 2009 survey. However *health services* which were rated as important but not needing improvement in 2009 are now categorised by residents as needing improvement. *Wage levels* and *job prospects*, although still rated as less important are now categorised as needing improvement. In the 2009 survey *leisure facilities* were considered to be less important but needing improvement, this has now changed to less important not needing improvement which probably reflects the significant investment made by the Council.
- 3.19 Many of the issues that residents have identified as important and/ or needing improvement are not services which East Herts Council directly provide or commission. Some are cross-cutting and any actions will require consultation with our partners through the LSP and its sub groups with whom the survey results will be shared to inform joint planning.

**Members are asked to consider which (if any) might be priority areas for improvement.**

3.20 **Local Area: Community Safety**

Highlights:

- 3.21 When asked about their feelings of safety outside in their local area, the vast majority (94%) of residents said that they feel safe during the day (an increase of 1 percentage point since 2009). 7 in 10 residents (70%) say that they feel safe outside in their local areas after dark (an increase of 2 percentage points since 2009).
- 3.22 Most residents reported abandoned or burnt out cars (98%) and noisy neighbours or loud parties (90%) as being not a very big problem/not a problem at all.
- 3.23 Residents were asked which services were most in need of improvement. Cleanliness of streets appears as a priority for most local authorities. In East Herts the percentage of people believing there was a need for improvement fell from 22% in 2009 to 17% in 2011, a 5 percent improvement. Satisfaction with 'keeping public land free of litter and refuse' increased from 59% (Place Survey) to 63%. Also the number of people who felt that rubbish lying around was a big problem fell from 33% to 29%.

These results are consistent with the trend of declining public complaints to the Council about litter and related issues. Street cleansing complaints averaged 71 a month in 2009/10 but fell to an average of 60 a month in 2010/11. For the 9 months April 11 to December 11 the average monthly complaints averaged 61, showing a significant downward improvement on 2009/10. Measured performance for street cleansing (using previous National Performance Indicators) shows that on average only 1% of roads fail to meet legislative standard upon inspection. This is exceptionally good performance when compared to most local authorities.

- 3.24 One in six residents (17%) indicated that they feel unsafe outside in their local area after dark.
- 3.25 Residents who are significantly less likely to say that they feel safe after dark are aged 75 and over, otherwise not working and have a longstanding or limiting illness/disability. This is consistent with the 2009 survey.
- 3.26 More than a quarter of residents reported that teenagers hanging around the streets (30%) and people being drunk or rowdy in public places (27%) are a big problem.

**Members are asked to consider which (if any) might be priority areas for improvement.**

3.3 East Herts Council: Overall satisfaction ratings

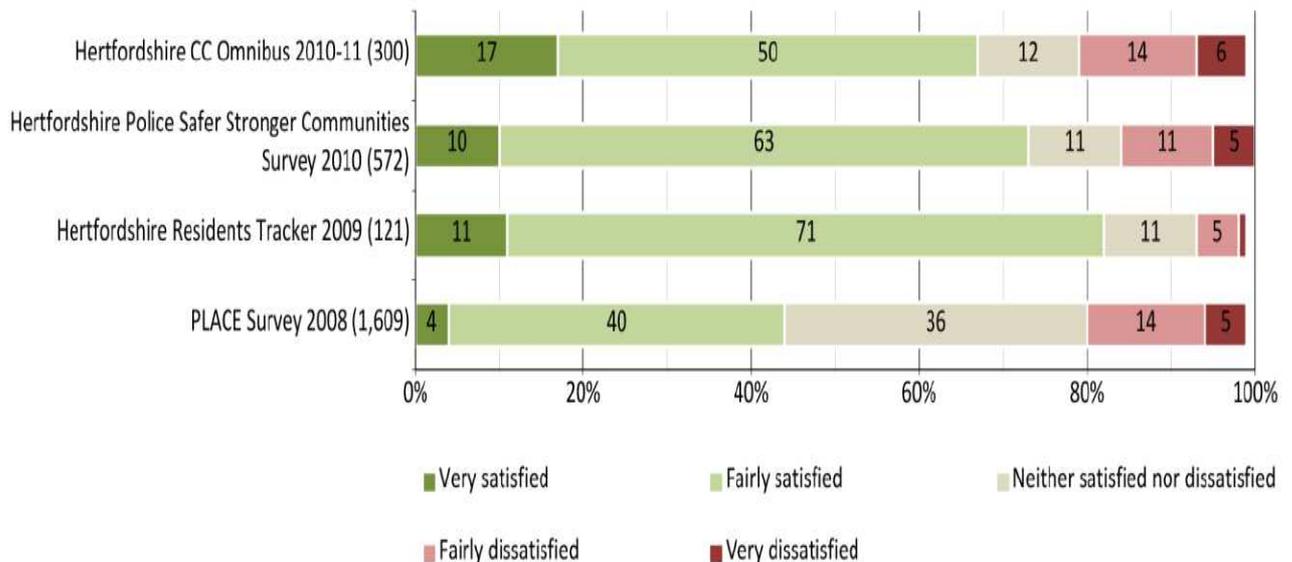
Highlights:

- 3.31 Residents aged 18 to 34 and those who are retired are significantly more likely to agree that the quality of East Herts Council is good overall.
- 3.32 Residents were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with various services provided or supported by East Herts Council. 7 in 10 residents or more are satisfied with refuse collection (75%), parks and open spaces (74%), doorstep recycling (72%) and local tips/household waste recycling centres (70%).
- 3.33 51% of respondents were satisfied with the way the Council is running East Herts. This is a drop of 10% since the 2009 survey representing a shift from “fairly satisfied” to “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied”.

3.34 A similar question relating to satisfaction with East Hertfordshire District Council (How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way East Herts District Council is running things?) was asked to East Hertfordshire respondents in the following surveys:

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way East Herts District Council is running things?

Base: By all East Herts respondents (respondent figures are shown in brackets below)



3.35 Please note that caution must be exercised when comparing results from the postal 2011 East Hertfordshire Residents Survey against the other survey results. This is due to the difference in question wording, as well as the different survey methodologies employed. Whereas results from both a telephone and face to face survey are broadly comparable, results from a postal survey cannot be reliably compared with those from either a telephone or face-to-face survey; therefore results are not directly comparable.

3.36 When asked whether the quality of East Herts services overall is good a relatively high proportion (34%) gave the neutral, 'neither agree nor disagree' response to this question and 16% disagreed with it. The proportion agreeing with this statement has fallen by one percentage point compared with the 2009 residents survey.

3.37 Significantly more likely to be dissatisfied are those aged 35-54 and those who are 'otherwise not working'.

- 3.38 Almost a third of respondents (30%) disagreed that the Council provides good value for money. This is a drop of 14% since the 2009 survey. Residents in Buntingford were statistically more likely to strongly disagree that the Council provides good value for money.

**Members are asked to consider which (if any) might be priority areas for improvement.**

#### 3.4 **East Herts Council : Waste and Recycling**

Highlights:

- 3.41 Residents were asked a number of questions relating specifically to waste and recycling. 7 in 10 or more residents are satisfied with refuse collection (75%), doorstep recycling (72%) and local tips/household waste recycling centres (70%).
- 3.42 78% of residents were satisfied with the waste collection service overall. Positive responses were also received to questions about the bin provided for the collection (87% satisfied) and how clean and tidy the streets are following collection (80% satisfied).
- 3.43 In response to questions about the recycling and composting collection, more than three quarters of residents said that they are satisfied with the information provided by the service (84%) and how clean and tidy the streets are following collections (77%).
- 3.44 Almost three quarters of residents (73%) expressed satisfaction with the service overall but 14% said that they are dissatisfied.
- 3.45 Overall satisfaction with recycling and composting services increased by 9% from 68% to 77%. This may reflect the increase in the level of service in terms of the extra materials now collected (plastics, card and food).
- 3.46 The percentage of residents who are satisfied with the types of recycling and composting materials collected has risen from 51% in 2009 to 79% in 2011.
- 3.47 Satisfaction with the information provided about recycling and collection services increased from 79% to 87%, an 8% increase. This may reflect the extensive publicity campaign and the use of 'bin hangers' which are more readily seen by residents than

leaflets. The Council is also using individually addressed leaflets for information and recycling calendars, which ensures they are delivered to every household.

- 3.48 It was noted that of those who responded a significant proportion of residents most likely to be dissatisfied were those with children or living in rented accommodation.
- 3.49 The proportion of residents satisfied with the bin provided for their household refuse fell from 91% to 85%, a 6% reduction. Overall satisfaction with general waste (refuse) collection fell by 4% from 82% to 78%. This may be the result of the introduction of ARC, which has presented bin capacity issues for those residents that do not wish to take up the Council's extensive recycling and composting services. The Council has also taken a stronger position on 'side waste' and contamination of recycling bins for environmental and financial reasons.
- 3.50 Residents expressed dissatisfaction with the collection of bulky waste (21%). The number of residents satisfied with Bulky Waste collections also fell from 47% to 45%. The apparent low level of satisfaction with this activity needs to be taken with caution as the vast majority of people have no experience of this service as it tends to be used quite rarely by individual residents. Of those responding 443 residents were fairly or very satisfied. 179 were dissatisfied. 304 had no opinion and 391 either did not answer or was said it was not applicable.

**Members are asked to consider which (if any) might be priority areas for improvement.**

3.51 **East Herts Council: Leisure and Recreation**

- 3.52 More than 1 in 10 residents reported using Hartham Leisure Centre (14%), Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre (14%) and Fanshawe Pool and Gym (11%) in the last 12 months.
- 3.53 More than three fifths of residents (62%) reported not having used any of them in the last 12 months with around a quarter or more of residents reported that this is because they use alternative facilities (29%).

- 3.54 Text responses revealed that 'other' reasons for not having used any of the leisure facilities are: physical disabilities, high costs and a lack of awareness.

**Members are asked to consider which (if any) might be priority areas for improvement.**

### 3.6 East Herts Council: Contact

Highlights:

- 3.61 Seven in ten residents (70%) expressed satisfaction with their last contact with the Council; 29% said they were very satisfied with this contact. Text responses revealed that residents who were satisfied felt this way due to: the speed and effectiveness of the response, polite/helpful staff, being put through to the right department, the issue/problem being resolved and their question/request being answered.
- 3.62 Respondents were asked to rate how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with how the Council dealt with their complaints. They expressed most satisfaction with the ease with which they were able to complain (65% satisfied; 21% dissatisfied).
- 3.63 The majority of residents reported that they find out about East Herts Council from information provided by the Council (44%), followed by the Council website/internet (26%), and direct contact with the Council (14%).
- 3.64 The majority of residents reported that they would like to find out about the council from information provided by the Council (43%), followed by the Council website/internet (40%), and direct contact with the Council (19%). It is worth noting that the proportion of residents that would like to find out about information provided by the Council, the Council website/internet and local media have increased by 9, 4 and 7 percentage points respectively. Positively, the proportion of residents who don't want information has also decreased by 15% percentage points since the 2009 survey.
- 3.65 Nearly two thirds of residents (63%) say that the Council keeps them very or fairly well informed, a 3 percentage point decrease since 2009

- 3.66 88% of residents reported that they have seen a copy of the council's publication 'Link' magazine in the last 12 months.
- 3.67 Residents aged 45 and over and the retired are significantly more likely to have seen a copy of link, while those aged 18 to 34 and those who are working are significantly less likely to have seen it. Only 4% said *they never read it*.
- 3.68 More than a fifth (21%) of residents would prefer to contact the Council by email. At present only 7% of residents contact the council via this method.
- 3.69 16% said that they are dissatisfied with their last contact. Text comments also showed that residents who were dissatisfied felt this way this for a number of reasons which included: the manner of the person the resident spoke to, the quality, speed and effectiveness of the response, the problem/issue not being resolved and a lack of response.
- 3.7 More than a quarter of residents (29%) said that they had contacted East Herts Council with a complaint. Almost a third of these (32%) had made a complaint within the last three months and 49% within the last six months. This must however be treated with caution as the different methodologies employed allows an element of confusion about the meaning of the term complaint which can be removed during phone interviews.
- 3.71 Residents who are of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) background are significantly more likely to have contacted East Herts Council with a complaint.
- 3.72 Less than half of respondents (48%) were satisfied with the time taken to deal with the complaint and 39% were dissatisfied with this aspect of the service. Lower still was satisfaction concerning the way in which the complaint was managed (40% satisfied), the way in which the complaint was handled overall (39% satisfied) and the final outcome (38% satisfied). For these three aspects, the proportion of residents who were dissatisfied outnumbered those who said they were satisfied
- 3.73 When asked how they would like to find out about East Herts Council in the future, proportionally more residents would like to use the Council website/internet (40%) compared with current usage (26%). Residents also identified that they would like to use local media (24% compared with 9%) more in the future.

- 3.74 Nearly a quarter (24%) say that they receive only a limited amount of information from the Council and a further 12% say the Council doesn't tell us much about what it does.
- 3.75 Almost a quarter (24%) of residents thought that broadband facilities in their area were poor.

**Members are asked to consider which (if any) might be priority areas for improvement.**

#### 4.0 Implications/Consultations

- 4.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

#### Background Papers

N/A

Contact Member: Councillor A Jackson, Leader

Contact Officer: Lois Prior – Head of Strategic Direction – ext 1688

Report Author: Lorna Georgiou – Performance and Improvement Coordinator

## ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives (delete as appropriate):</p>	<p><b>Promoting prosperity and well-being; providing access and opportunities</b> <i>Enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</i></p> <p><b>Fit for purpose, services fit for you</b> <i>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.</i></p> <p><b>Pride in East Herts</b> <i>Improve standards of the neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages.</i></p> <p><b>Shaping now, shaping the future</b> <i>Safeguard and enhance our unique mix of rural and urban communities, ensuring sustainable, economic and social opportunities including the continuation of effective development control and other measures.</i></p> <p><b>Leading the way, working together</b> <i>Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public.</i></p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>Heads of Service have been provided with the ORS report to add commentary to the figures.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>There are no direct financial implications with this report however the actions included in the plan may require resources. Some of these have already been reported separately and others may require further reports to be presented.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>There are no direct HR implications with this report however the actions included in the plan may require resources. Some of these have already been reported separately and others may require further reports to be presented.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>N/A</p>