

REPORT FOR INFORMATION BULLETIN

Subject:	2018 Annual Residents' Survey
Lead Officer:	Head of Organisational Development
Portfolio Holder:	Community and Corporate Development
Link to Council Priorities:	All
Exempt information:	None
Delegated status:	For Information

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Each year a survey is conducted to measure residents' perceptions of the Council's performance and the progress made towards the Council's Five-Year Vision, measurements for which are set out in the Council Plan. Usually the survey is sent to members of the Residents' Panel, although in 2018 the survey was made available to all residents. This Information Bulletin provides Members with a summary of the results of the 2018 survey.

REPORT:

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council adopted a new Five-Year Vision in 2018 to guide the Council's work until 2023, following extensive consultation with residents. The Vision is supported by Council Priorities which set out how we will meet our Vision.
- 1.2 In our Council Plan we have included a range of targets to measure our progress towards achieving our Vision. Our Priorities are also reviewed every year to ensure that they are appropriate and reflect the views of residents.
- 1.3 To evaluate our progress towards our Vision and whether residents agree with our Priorities, we include questions about these topics in our Residents' Survey.
- 1.4 In addition to measuring our long-term progress, we also use the Residents' Survey to collect residents' views on important local issues, Council communications and wider service performance.
- 1.5 An annual survey was not conducted in 2017 because we wanted to measure the 2013-18 Vision indicators at the end of 2017/18, so results were a true reflection of the 2013-18 period. A specific survey was conducted to measure this in February 2018, which is not comparable to this survey.

2. 2018 Residents' Survey

- 2.1 The 2018 annual Residents' Survey was conducted between 12 October-16 November 2018. Although previous annual surveys had only been sent to the Residents' Panel, this year's survey was available to all residents. This followed a membership refresh as a result of compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation in 2018, after which membership of the Panel decreased

from over 1000 to approximately 250. Residents could access the survey through a link on our website.

- 2.2 Online surveys were sent out via email to all members of the Residents' Panel. Of the 241 surveys sent out, there were 82 responses, giving a response rate of 34%. Through the link on the Elmbridge website there were 179 responses. The total number of responses was 261, a decrease of 274 from 2016. This was the first year that the response level to the annual survey was below the Local Government Association-recommended minimum of 500 responses for an effective survey. No demographic data about the respondents is available so it is important to consider that the results may not accurately reflect the Borough's population.

This makes the survey statistically unreliable for gauging the views of the wider population and can only be interpreted as representing the views of those responding to the survey.

Year	No. of total responses	Residents' Panel response %
2018	261	34
2016	535	35
2015	602	38
2014	645	43
2013	544	45

3. **Headline results**

- 3.1 Headline results from the survey were:

- 86% of respondents believe Elmbridge is a 'good place to live and work'.
- 67% of respondents believe Elmbridge provides value for money.
- 71% are satisfied overall with the way we run our services.
- No change in the priorities that are most important to residents.
- Decrease in satisfaction since 2016 for all services except Council Tax collection.
- Only 37% agree that the Council is a leader in the community they would turn to in a crisis.

4. **2018-2023 Vision progress**

- 4.1 The following table shows the results for targets we set for our Vision, which were included in the survey. It uses a 'RAG' scale to measure progress. Green means we have met our target, amber means we are within 10% of our target and red means we are more than 10% off our target.

Vision target	Survey result	Progress
80% of our residents see Elmbridge as a good place to live	86%	G
80% of residents and businesses feel the environment is safeguarded	58%	R
80% of residents are satisfied with the management of our parks, green spaces and common lands	82%	G
80% customer satisfaction in our services	71%	A
80% of residents and businesses believe the Council offers value for money	67%	R
80% of residents and businesses see the Council as a leader within the community and would turn to Elmbridge during a crisis	37%	R
Residents, business and community groups feel listened to and have the opportunity to influence service delivery through consultation	54%	N/A

4.2 The last of those targets is a more general aspiration and so does not have a specific target set. The corresponding question in the survey was not identical in wording and instead asked to what extent does the Council act on concerns of local residents.

5. Satisfaction with our services

5.1 Value for money

Respondents were asked to what extent did they agree that Elmbridge provides value for money for the services for which it is responsible. They were given a breakdown of their council tax bill by public body to give context to the question. 67% agreed and 27% disagreed that the Council provides value for money. This is a decrease of 6% and an increase of 8% respectively from 2016.

Value for money %	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	Difference 2016-18
Strongly agree	8	7	10	8	8	0
Tend to agree	65	66	65	65	59	-6
Tend to disagree	15	15	13	16	20	+4
Strongly disagree	3	3	2	3	7	+4
Don't know	10	9	10	8	6	+2

5.2 One reason for this change could be the cost of dealing with the high number of unauthorised encampments in 2018, which was a key concern in the literal responses. In addition, although the question provided context there is still confusion about the respective roles of boroughs/districts and the county council.

5.3 Individual service satisfaction

Respondents were asked to think about the last 12 months and rate how satisfied they were with specific Council services. The following table shows the percentage of respondents satisfied with the specific services. All services showed a decrease in satisfaction since 2016, except for Council Tax collection. Environmental Services, waste collection and Leisure and Cultural Services showed the largest decreases.

The table excludes those who answered 'not used/don't know'. The apparently low scores for certain services must be seen in this context – that due to their nature they are services which relatively few survey respondents use. The following paragraphs put the results into context and detail actions we are taking to improve resident satisfaction.

Satisfaction with services (%) (exc. don't know)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	Difference 2016-18
Environmental Services	76	85	73	76	64	-12
Waste collection	-	-	89	86	72	-14
Street cleaning	-	-	75	66	58	-8
Planning Services	39	44	41	43	35	-8
Community Support Services	31	29	32	33	30	-3
Leisure and Cultural Services	68	68	63	64	50	-14
Housing Services	17	13	18	17	15	-2
Council tax collection	75	78	77	77	77	0

5.4 Waste collection - Satisfaction with waste services has decreased since the 2016 survey. A new service provider took over the waste collection contract in June 2017, and in the first few weeks there was significant service disruption which affected many residents. Although service standards have returned to a similar level as achieved by the previous contractor, there is further work taking place to ensure the contract standards are met.

5.5 Planning Services - Literal responses to the following question suggest that dissatisfaction with Planning Services relates to specific individual applications. Applications are emotive and there are usually strongly held views on proposed developments. The common themes in comments received relate to density of development, the use of permitted development rights to build in the Borough and the impact of development on infrastructure, in particular traffic and schools.

Many of these issues will be addressed through the adoption of the new Local Plan and the supporting evidence base documents. The Council has invited local residents' groups to a preview meeting to go through the Local Plan consultation with officers prior to the start of the consultation. In the meantime, Planning Services will also be issuing a statement on density, explaining the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Council's existing policies and its approach to optimising development. Developer forums are also

planned for later in the year to allow for direct feedback on the service the Council is providing to the industry.

- 5.6 Community Support Services – A smaller number of residents are likely to use these services than more universal services such as waste collection. Furthermore, comments from the following question suggest there remains confusion around which authority is responsible for certain services – there were several comments concerning Children’s Services and Adult Social Care which are the responsibility of Surrey County Council.

Literal responses suggest that support for Citizens Advice (CA) services is a concern for some residents and this is something that the Council is committed to preserving. Currently the Council provides nearly £200,000 in core funding to CA, £36,000 for rent and a CA grant, and provides the Weybridge Older Persons Advisory service with £8,000. In addition, the Council works in partnership with Walton Charity with respect to developing a partnership fund. CABs have the opportunity to apply and CA have successfully received partnership funding.

Alternative public transport facilities were also referenced by respondents. The Council helps elderly and less mobile residents access travel through its Community Transport, Dial A Ride, Hire-a-Bus and the Community Cab service. In addition, the highly valued taxi voucher scheme supports 100 residents each year.

- 5.7 Leisure and Cultural Services - Unauthorised encampments were a key concern for residents during 2018 and the Council acted on this issue by obtaining a Final Injunction Order from the High Court in November 2018. This bans the setting up of unauthorised encampments and fly-tipping on all identified public land covering more than 150 of the Borough’s parks, open spaces and car parks.

Following a poor summer, the supply and delivery of seasonal hanging baskets and trough displays service has been awarded to a new contractor. This will be closely monitored in 2019.

- 5.8 Housing Services – This service has consistently been used by only a very small number of survey respondents so it is difficult to gauge if improvements to our services will translate into changes in satisfaction ratings in future years. It is also possible that respondents were not entirely clear about what housing services the Council provides and what are provided by other organisations, particularly housing associations.

There are several initiatives underway which are leading to improvements in performance and/or are helping address long-standing priorities and which we would anticipate will lead to increased levels of resident satisfaction.

The former includes the re-organisation of our benefits service through the Brilliant Customer Service Every Time (BCSET) initiative, which is already leading to improvements in the speed by which claims for housing benefit and council tax support are processed.

The latter includes the formation of a wholly-owned Council housing company, EBC Homes, which has been established to help increase the supply of affordable homes in the Borough and to help bring in additional income for the Council. EBC Homes has recently acquired its first properties (37 homes) and has a plan to grow significantly over the next three to five years, thereby making a contribution to meeting the need for affordable homes in the Borough.

5.9 Overall service satisfaction

Respondents were then asked how satisfied they were overall with the way Elmbridge runs the services for which it is responsible. 71% were satisfied and 26% dissatisfied. This is a decrease of 15% and an increase of 14% respectively since 2016. This is the lowest level of satisfaction since 2011.

Overall satisfaction (%)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	Difference 2016-18
Net satisfied	86	88	88	86	71	-15
Very satisfied	18	16	15	13	8	-5
Fairly satisfied	68	72	73	73	63	-10
Fairly dissatisfied	9	7	10	11	20	+9
Very dissatisfied	2	2	1	1	6	+5
Don't know	2	3	2	3	3	0
Net dissatisfied	11	9	11	12	26	+14

5.10 Respondents were asked to detail why they were dissatisfied with the way the Council provides its services. Common themes were:

- Appearance of the environment including tidiness of the streets, litter in open spaces, and grass verge and tree cutting.
- Number of planning developments and increase in density.
- Missed waste collection.
- Speed and cost of response to unauthorised encampments.
- Lack of response to residents' concerns.

Topics which were included but are the responsibility of Surrey County Council are:

- Disruption from roadworks.
- Poor condition of roads.
- Switching off street lights.

6. Council priorities

6.1 Respondents were asked to what extent do they agree with our four priorities for 2018/19. In previous surveys respondents were asked to select three issues that they believe to be the most important over the next five years. Although this means they are not directly comparable, we can see that the character of the

Borough remains the most important priority: in 2016 'protecting the character of the area from inappropriate building development' was the most popular issue and this year Character and Environment was the most popular priority.

Agree with priority (%)	Character & Environment	Quality Services	Community Wellbeing	Economic Development
Net agree	82	79	76	72
Net disagree	14	19	20	23

6.2 Respondents were then asked if there were any other Borough-wide priorities that Elmbridge should include. The most common were:

- Crime
- Street cleaning
- Education (school places)
- Children's centres
- Roads and pavements
- Parking restrictions and fees

The issues raised are similar to previous years.

7. Customer Service

7.1 The survey also included a section on the customer service residents received. Respondents were asked if they had contacted the Council in the last 12 months, with 63% answering yes. Those answering yes were then asked to indicate how they contacted the Council, selecting one option. The website (44%) is now the most popular method, overtaking the telephone (24%) which was the most popular in 2016.

Method of contact (%)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	Difference 2016-18
Website	18	18	28	28	44	+16
Email	22	23	21	20	25	+5
Telephone	49	44	57	56	24	-32
In person	7	9	9	12	5	-7
By letter	4	3	4	3	2	-1
Social media	-	-	-	1	0	-1

7.2 Respondents were then asked why they had made their most recent contact, ticking all that apply. The most common reason remains to report a problem/issue.

Reason for contact (%)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	Difference 2016-18
To report a problem/issue	42	38	37	41	33	-8
To ask for advice/information	33	28	25	33	15	-18
To request a service	24	29	27	28	14	-14
To make a complaint	9	12	13	10	11	+1
To pay a bill/make a payment	16	21	18	20	9	-11
To make a query about a service	15	15	16	19	11	-8

7.3 The respondents were asked to rate the quality of their experience when contacting the Council across a number of criteria. The following table shows the percentage of respondents who agreed with the statements presented to them.

Customer service (%)	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	Difference 2016-18
I waited an acceptable amount of time	78	80	80	82	71	-11
I was able to speak/write to an appropriate member of staff/services without difficulty	75	77	76	73	66	-7
I dealt with an acceptable number of people to get the service I required	71	74	70	73	60	-13
The number of times I had to contact the Council was acceptable	76	73	75	76	64	-12
I was treated fairly	78	77	76	81	65	-16
I felt confident that my privacy was fully protected	68	71	71	75	60	-15
Staff were competent/capable	74	71	72	75	62	-13
Staff were polite	77	77	78	84	69	-15
Staff kept me informed about progress	48	50	45	49	45	-4
The information I received was accurate and comprehensive	65	66	63	70	60	-10
The final outcome of my query/complaint was satisfactory	64	68	64	66	56	-10
Staff handled any problems or queries in a satisfactory way	68	68	62	67	51	-16

7.4 The responses show a decrease in satisfaction across all criteria since 2016. Results were the lowest or joint lowest level among all criteria in the last five years. The largest decreases were in the fairness, politeness and the protection of privacy that customers perceived in the service they received. The average level of satisfaction across all the criteria was 61%.

7.5 Benchmarking the customer service results

Customer service is a core value of the Council and we regularly monitor customer satisfaction through customer surveys. Calls are also recorded for training and quality purposes. Regular training and coaching is carried out to provide support and guidance for the customer service team.

It is helpful to put the Residents' Survey results into context by considering the regular real time customer service surveys from 2018/19. The surveys will continue in 2019/20 and if the service standard falls below current trends, action will be taken to address this. The table below presents the average results from all quarters in 2018/19. Overall customers are satisfied with the standard of customer service received.

Customer service issue	Satisfied (%) (Average across 18/19 quarters)
Time taken to answer call	87
Adviser friendliness	93
Contacting appropriate staff without difficulty	80
Only had to contact the Council once	69
Adviser efficiency	86
Overall service delivery	71

7.6 Time taken to answer call – This is monitored daily to ensure most customers receive a satisfactory call answering service. Overall call answering times are consistent, however this can be affected by service delivery issues such as waste and recycling. When such events occur, temporary staff are employed to answer unplanned call volumes.

7.7 Advisor friendliness – Performance results were consistently high across all quarters in 2018/19. Surveys will continue and if satisfaction falls, actions will be put in place to resolve this.

7.8 Contacting appropriate staff without difficulty – First contact resolution rates are consistently good, with 80% of calls resolved without transferring to another department. When an enquiry cannot be resolved, the call is transferred.

7.9 Only had to contact the Council once – Customers are surveyed about whether they contacted the Council once to deal with their issue. During 2018/19 results were inconsistent due to waste and recycling service issues.

- 7.10 Advisor efficiency – Customers asked how satisfied they were with overall service delivery satisfaction. Results were inconsistent due to service issues with waste and recycling. Results have now improved and are at good levels.
- 7.11 Staff kept me informed about progress – Most customer service processes keep people informed of progress through email notification.

8. Green Spaces

- 8.1 A section on Green Spaces was included in this year's survey. This section asked respondents about specific aspects of maintenance of the parks and green spaces in Elmbridge. Respondents were first asked to what extent do they agree that the Council safeguards the environment. 58% agreed and 33% disagreed.

Response (%)	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The Council safeguards the environment	2	56	21	12	10

- 8.2 The next question asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with certain aspects of the service delivered by the Council's contractors in parks and green spaces in general.

Satisfaction (%)	Net satisfied	Net dissatisfied
Flowerbeds planted and well maintained	77	17
Grass cut regularly	67	26
Shrub/bed maintenance	65	26
Leaves cleared in the autumn	47	46
Wildflowers areas looked after	52	19
Hanging baskets	59	15
Dog bin collection	28	12
Litter bin collection	53	28
Site litter collection	33	25
Pathways maintenance	49	44
Pond maintenance	22	6

- 8.3 The Council has recognised that residents were not satisfied with the appearance of certain aspects of our green spaces in the summer of 2018 and so the supply and delivery of the seasonal hanging baskets and troughs displays service has been awarded to a new contractor and will be closely monitored in 2019.
- 8.4 The final question of this section asked respondents to rate their overall impression of the parks and green spaces in Elmbridge:

Overall satisfaction (green spaces)	%
Net satisfied	82
Very satisfied	16
Fairly satisfied	66
Fairly dissatisfied	12
Very dissatisfied	3
Don't know	2
Net dissatisfied	15

9. Communications

9.1 This section focused on the communications residents receive from the Council. Respondents were asked how often they used certain channels to receive information about the Council.

Methods of receiving information about the Council (%)	At least once a week	Several times a month	Several times a year	Less often	Never
Local newspapers	7	10	13	18	51
Local radio	3	3	5	19	70
Council magazine (Elmbridge Review)	3	5	53	23	16
Free local magazine	1	8	39	22	29
Council noticeboards	1	8	19	29	43
Council website	7	13	56	15	8
Public meetings	0	1	11	36	52
Facebook	7	7	7	12	67
Twitter	5	7	6	11	71
By email	4	8	32	23	33
Local websites	5	9	26	24	36
Leaflets	0	5	29	37	29
E:review (Council digital newsletter)	1	4	27	15	53

9.2 The Elmbridge Review, Council website, email and e:review were the most popular methods for receiving information. The channel that most respondents never use for information about the Council is Twitter.

9.3 Planning, news and consultations are the top three topics that respondents said they would like to be kept informed about, although the results were spread out across the different topics with no single topic scoring more than 14%. Other topics identified by residents include parking, waste collection and environmental issues.

Topics of interest	%
Planning	14
News	13
Consultations	13
Events	11
Emergency information	11
Community safety	10
Budget information	8
Places to visit	7
Information about local businesses	5
Democracy	5
Jobs	2

- 9.4 Although social media is used by almost two thirds of respondents (64%), 41% of all respondents do not follow a Council social media account. The most popular account is the @Elmbridge BC Twitter account (23%).

Elmbridge account	Follow (%)
None	41
@Elmbridge BC	23
My Elmbridge Facebook page	16
Elmbridge Shout! Facebook page	5
LinkedIn	5
@Enterprise Elmbridge	4
YouTube	4
Elmbridge BC Instagram account	1

10. Your neighbourhood

- 10.1 This section asked respondents to think of their local area as within 15-20 minutes walking distance from their home. These questions do not relate solely to the work of the Council but ask residents to consider all aspects of living in Elmbridge.
- 10.2 87% of respondents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live overall, with 12% dissatisfied.
- 10.3 Respondents were then asked to rate how strongly they agreed with the statement that Elmbridge is a good place to live and work. 86% agreed and 12% disagreed.

11. Benchmarking

- 11.1 Comparing Elmbridge's results with other local authorities allows us to benchmark the Council's performance. This helps us to view the results in the context of the wider performance of local government.
- 11.2 The LGA conducts a national survey of resident satisfaction every four months. The below table compares the key questions from Elmbridge's survey with the LGA polling. Elmbridge's results compare favourably with the LGA's national average. Since 2012, LGA polling shows the steady, gradual decline of resident satisfaction with local government on a national scale. This suggests that there may be national factors affecting resident satisfaction and Elmbridge's results must be seen in this context. The full LGA polling results are available [online](#).

Question	Elmbridge	LGA
Local area as a place to live (% satisfied)	87	78
Overall satisfaction with local Council (% satisfied)	71	60
Council providing value for money (% agree)	67	44
Council responsiveness (% acts on concerns of residents)	54	56
Methodology		
	Online	Telephone
Dates	Oct-Nov 18	Oct 18
Total sample size	261	1,001

Financial Implications:

One of the measurements for the Council's Five-Year Vision is delivering value for money and another aim is to maintain an unqualified opinion on financial statements and value for money conclusion. Failure to deliver these objectives could negatively affect the Council's financial position.

Environmental/Sustainability Implications: None.

Legal Implications: None.

Equality Implications:

The Council's vision and priorities are underpinned by a commitment to delivering quality services to all. The Council's statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 requires it to have due regard to protected characteristics. In the delivery of individual outcomes and actions the Council undertakes equality impact assessments to ensure that there are no negative impacts on the protected characteristics, as well as those who may be considered vulnerable but not covered by a protected characteristic.

Risk Implications: None.

Community Safety Implications: None.

Principal Consultees:

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Background papers: None.

Enclosures/Appendices:

Appendix A – Full survey results

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