

Report to:	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	1 March 2012
Lead Officer:	Head of Business Planning and Performance
Report Author:	Corporate Improvement Officer
Title:	Denbighshire Residents Survey 2011

1. What is the report about?

A second Denbighshire Residents Survey was carried out during the summer in 2011 to gauge the satisfaction and perceptions of Denbighshire residents on a range of issues from Council services to town centres and the development of new corporate priorities.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To provide information regarding the 2011 Denbighshire Residents Survey, and to inform Members about how the Council is addressing the findings within service plans and the development of the new Corporate Plan 2012-16.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee:

- 3.1 considers the findings of the Residents Survey; and
- 3.2 determines whether any specific areas merit further scrutiny.

4. Report details.

The survey was sent out to 6,000 residents and there was a 38% (n=2,256) response rate, which is down on the 49% (n=3,071) response rate in the 2009 survey, but is still very high for a postal survey. The survey had increased in length by 9 questions, which included asking residents opinions about their local town centre and what areas they thought should become corporate priorities for the council.

The findings of the Residents Survey are currently being used by services to develop their Service Plans for 2012/13 where specific areas of need are identified. The views of residents are also being considered as part of the process for developing the new corporate priorities for the Corporate Pan 2012-16 and in the development of town plans.

The age profile of respondents has become more skewed towards the older population in the 2011 survey compared to 2009, with 41% of respondents being over 65 years old in 2011 compared to just 22% in 2009. The 2001 Census identified 21% of the population to be over 65 years old, and subsequent mid-year estimates have estimated an increase in the number of older people though only by a few percent, however more accurate and current data on Denbighshire's age profile will be provided when the 2011 Census data is released.

The survey provides satisfaction and perception information, therefore some of the service specific information may not be the result of a person's *direct experience* of a service. However, many people chose not to answer in these instances, and for those who do we should assume do so because they have an opinion based on some degree of information, and so the information provided by the survey should not be disregarded if it does not fit with what we assume. Rather, we should look at our own local data in closer detail, as well as talking to Councillors and communities to explore the issues which have been highlighted.

Residents' opinions about the Council on key issues such as whether it acts on the concern of residents, whether it is efficient and well run or provides good value for money have all improved in the 2011 survey, and by as much as 8% in the latter category.

Over two-thirds of residents felt their area had a strong sense of community except for Prestatyn (54%) and Rhyl (36%) and this pattern was repeated in the responses to whether people felt a part of their community.

There was a strong feeling of safety during the day, with Rhyl having the lowest agreement at (a still high) 93%. At night over 70% of residents across Denbighshire felt safe, this went as high as 92% in Ruthin and the Dee Valley, but dropped to 59% in Rhyl.

Perceptions of people using or dealing drugs highlighted this to be more of a problem in the Dee Valley (65%, up from 55% in 2009) than Rhyl (53%, up from 50% in 2009), and one that more people feel to be an issue in 2011 than 2009. This pattern was repeated in the responses to whether "people being drunk or rowdy" was an issue, with 62% agreeing in the Dee Valley, compared to 60% in Rhyl. These results do not necessarily mean that the Dee Valley *actually* has more of a problem than Rhyl, but they do highlight that people feel more aware of any issues, whether they are the result of a few isolated events or an increased occurrence in the number of incidents. This demonstrates how the survey flags up a 'hot spot', which with further investigation into the police and community safety statistics, will help us to identify and act on any actual issues.

Rubbish was considered to be a **small** problem by nearly half the residents across the county (40%-48%), which is consistent with the results in 2009. Dog fouling was considered to be slightly more of a problem (82%) than in 2009 (78%). Overall though, across the county virtually the same proportion of

people feel that their area had got better, stayed the same or got worse, as in 2009.

Satisfaction with services was generally improved from 2009, and areas of dissatisfaction are usually related to an issue we are already aware of, for example slightly higher levels of dissatisfaction with the manned recycling park and recycling service in the Dee Valley.

The survey asked several questions about residents' access to technology which we currently have little information about. The results indicate that an average of 78% of residents across the county have access to digital or satellite TV, 66% have access to a pc or laptop, 22% have access to a smartphone, 4% have access to a tablet device and 12% have no access to any of these technologies. This information will help us to communicate effectively with the public, as well as deciding how best to deliver some services.

An average of 10% of residents had had cause to make a complaint in the last 12 months, however over two thirds (70%) were dissatisfied with the way it was handled. People generally didn't feel very well informed in relation to specific services and local policy (i.e. LDP) but are generally happy with the information provided for carrying out day to day tasks such as how to pay a bill and registering to vote. People were generally satisfied with the friendliness of staff when contacting the council (92%) and being able to communicate in their preferred language (96%) though there was some dissatisfaction with the length of time taken to deal with an enquiry (21%), the information given (20%) and the final outcome of their enquiry (21%).

Residents considered the following to be the main priority areas for the next Corporate Plan (2012-16):

- Keeping communities clean and safe (74%)
- Support for the local economy and jobs (70%)
- Responding to the needs of an aging population whilst attracting and retaining younger people and families (69%)

Support for older people at home was felt to be the area which most needed protecting from efficiencies over the next 5 years.

At a cost of £22k it is still a very cost effective way of gathering a broad range of information about residents perceptions and satisfaction, however it has been recognised that there is a need for specialist services, e.g. Adults and Business Services, to collect service user data which would provide more reliable information about the service than that provided by the Residents Survey. The future frequency of the Survey is yet to be agreed. An action plan of activity being carried out by services to respond to issues identified in the survey is being developed. This will be used to demonstrate to the Wales Audit Office that the Council is committed to both engaging with local communities and responding to their concerns.

The Summary report is available on the councils website at www.denbighshire.gov.uk/residentsurvey. If any specific information or analysis is required, please contact Eva Walters, Corporate Improvement Officer at eva.walters@denbighshire.gov.uk or 01824 712676.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The Residents Survey contributes directly to the development of the next Corporate Priorities by asking residents which thematic areas they felt should be prioritised from a given list.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The Residents Survey was a one-off cost of £22k in 2011-12.

7. What consultations have been carried out?

The Survey is a method of engaging with residents.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

N/A

9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

N/A

10. Power to make the Decision

N/A

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