



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Transformation Committee
Subject:	Belfast Resident's Survey
Date:	28 th January 2015
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1. Purpose of report

1.1 To update Members on the key findings from the Belfast Resident Survey and to outline next steps in terms of how the data will be used and reported.

2. Background

2.1 Earlier this year, Members agreed to undertake a resident survey to help inform the development of the new Belfast corporate plan and the new community plan for Belfast. The survey helps the Council fulfil its duty to consult under the Local Government (NI) Act 2014 as it provides reliable resident perception data to inform strategic planning and performance management. The information gathered from the survey, together with other evidence and data, will be used to help set the future strategic direction of the Council and to inform community planning priorities. Information about the approach taken and some of the key findings are set out in this report.

Methodology

2.2 The survey was carried out by Social Market Research, who were appointed following a quotation process to ensure independence and to provide expert assurance regarding the statistical validity and reliability of the data. As with previous exercises, the survey was based on a representative sample of residents and carried out via face-to-face interviews conducted in the home. 1500 people over the age of sixteen were interviewed across the new Belfast district council boundary; all new DEAs and electoral wards covered with quotas set to ensure proportionality and representativeness.

The fieldwork was carried out between 20th August and 25th September 2014 and sought feedback from residents on the following matters:

- Priorities for Improving Belfast
- Living in Belfast
- Your Local Area
- Your Wellbeing
- Belfast City Council Performance (current ratepayers only)

2.3 The priority questions were also put on the council website to give everyone in Belfast an opportunity to provide their views and contribute to the development of the priorities. In total 266 responses were received on-line. Key findings from this survey are also reported below.

2.4 It should also be noted that the questions relating to council performance were adjusted so that only current Belfast ratepayers were asked their opinion, as until April 2015 those living in areas transferring to Belfast will not have received direct services from BCC and therefore would be unable to answer these questions.

Key Findings

Priorities for Improving Belfast

2.5 When asked to prioritise the following 5 themes, respondents to both the resident survey and the on-line survey put them in the following order:

1. A Strong Economy
2. Supporting People and Communities
3. Good City Leadership
4. Providing value for money services
5. A Better Environment

2.6 To help inform the development of the community plan for Belfast, respondents were asked to select, from a list, the top three things which they felt would make the most difference to improving the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Belfast. The following tables show the top priorities for each theme:

Top 3 Economic Priorities	
<i>Resident Survey</i>	<i>On-line Survey</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating jobs 2. Improving skills and employability 3. Attracting investment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating a vibrant city centre 2. Creating jobs 3. Attracting investment to Belfast
Top 3 Social Priorities	
<i>Resident Survey</i>	<i>On-line Survey</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving safety, reducing crime & ASB 2. Improving community relations 3. Improving people’s health and wellbeing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reducing poverty and social exclusion 2. Improving community relations 3. Improving safety, reducing crime and ASB
Top 3 Environmental Priorities	
<i>Resident Survey</i>	<i>On-line Survey</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cleaner city and more attractive 2. Managing waste 3. More energy efficient /invest in renewables 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving public transport 2. Improving walking and cycling routes 3. Making the city cleaner and more attractive

2.8 Generally, although there was a strong correlation between the priorities identified by the public in previous surveys (i.e. creating a safer city and making the city cleaner and greener) it is interesting to note that this year the priorities have shifted to issues such as jobs and the economy which may reflect the challenging economic climate. Good Relations issues also feature more strongly in this survey compared to four years ago.

Satisfaction with Belfast and local area

- **92%** of those surveyed were satisfied with Belfast as a place to live, whilst **86%** were also satisfied with their local area. These levels of satisfaction have remained fairly constant since 2007 and compare favourably to other cities.

- Approximately 3 out of 4 people surveyed, felt that in Belfast:
 - All people can live life to full (79%)
 - Older people are treated with respect (76%)
 - Young people can reach their full potential (74%)
- However, this falls to just over half (54%) who felt that in Belfast people get on well regardless of background or beliefs.
- Those surveyed were generally positive about their local area:
 - approximately 8 out of 10 people (81%) felt they could access all the services they needed
 - approximately 7 out of 10 people felt their area was clean and attractive – up from 56% in 2010
 - approximately 7 out of 10 people felt their area had a strong sense of community (73%), that people worked together to improve things (69%), and that the area was welcoming to others (69%)
- However, areas for improvement include:
 - access to job and training - 60% felt they could access these from their local area
 - community and race relations - half of those surveyed felt that their local area was a place where people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds got on well together (52%) or where people from different religious and political backgrounds got on well (51%).

Belfast City Council Performance

- Generally, resident opinion about Belfast City Council was positive. The majority of respondents agreed that the council worked to:
 - attract investors to the city (75%)
 - improve the environment (72%)
 - improve local communities and support local people (71%)
 - improve the local economy (70%)
- 69% agreed that the council makes Belfast a better place to live; only 10% disagreed
- 65% agreed that the council shows good leadership for the city; 7% disagreed
- 65% of respondents were satisfied with how the council runs things; 9% disagreed
- 64% agreed that the Council keeps residents either very or fairly informed about the services it provides - up from 54% in 2010 and 41% in 2007
- 60% agreed that the Council consults with and listens to the views of local residents - up from 36% in 2010 and 30% in 2007

Wellbeing

2.9 Generally, people in Belfast were positive about their lives and wellbeing. Overall satisfaction with life is scored at 8.01, as scored on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is 'not at all satisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'. However, the results for satisfaction with physical health (7.73) and financial situation (6.97) were somewhat lower.

2.10 It is also worth noting that almost half of those surveyed (48%) did not do any physical activity in a typical week i.e. a total of 30 minutes or more - a significant challenge in terms of improving people's health.

2.11 Perceptions of safety at night time have improved, but fallen slightly for daytime. In 2014, 91% of respondents felt safe in their local area during the day compared to 94% 2010; whereas 80% now feel safe at night compared to 64% in 2010. For the city centre, 77% reported feeling safe during the day compared to 85% in 2010; whilst 58% now feel safe at night compared to only 21% in 2010.

3. Next Steps

Using the findings from the surveys

3.1 The results from the resident survey will play a key part in helping to inform the development of the council's new Corporate Plan and the development of a community plan for Belfast, the "Belfast Agenda". Feedback from residents on priorities and ideas for improvement have been fed into the strategic planning process currently underway with Elected Members and will be used as part of the strategic planning process with community planning partners. Members will have an opportunity to further discuss these findings in more detail as part of the community planning engagement programme, and also through Area Working Group meetings linked to the development of local area planning.

3.2 The survey data relating to council performance and outcomes will be fed into the new performance management arrangements also being developed as part of the council's new obligations under the Local Government Act and where appropriate will be used as performance indicators to measure and progress.

Reporting and Communication of Results

3.3 As in previous years, it is recommended that the results from the survey will be communicated through the council website, City Matters and via interlink.

4. Resource Implications

4.1 There are no direct resource implications as a result of this report.

Equality Implications

4.2 There are no direct equality implications arising from this report. However, the information obtained will help inform our good relations work and audit of inequalities.

5. Recommendation

The Committee is requested to note the report and to agree the next steps, including the process for communicating the results to the public and feeding in to the strategic planning process with Members, and community planning partners.

Document Attached

Belfast Resident Survey: Summary of Key Findings