

Thursday, 23 January 2025

Report of the leader of the council

Annual residents and budget survey results

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

To share the results of the annual survey and budget consultation, to inform the decision-making process around council budget and priorities.

Recommendations

It is recommended cabinet endorse the content of this report, in preparation for making budget and priority decisions as part of the annual budget setting process.

Executive summary

During September and October 2024, Enventure Research carried out a statistically representative¹ telephone survey of Tamworth residents to measure and track resident satisfaction with; Tamworth in general, council services and to ask about budget priorities and spending.

Given the statistical approach, we can be confident the results are true and representative¹.

This is the first time we've had this level of detail and confidence in the results. Previous surveys have been self-selecting, therefore introducing natural bias into the results². The approach this year has given us much richer data including identifying where a demographic/group has a different view from others.

We've followed the Local Government Association approach and methodology, so can also benchmark Tamworth results with Local Government Association data.

Key findings summary

The full report goes into considerably more detail, highlighting variations across wards and tenure, however in summary:

- The 2024 Tamworth Borough Council's residents' survey has provided some interesting results, with satisfaction levels increasing in most areas compared with the previous surveys in 2023 and 2022.

¹ A statistically representative survey means that the results would be accurate (+/- 3%) as though we surveyed every adult in the borough. This means we can be confident the results are true and representative.

² Research shows that those with an issue/concern or gripe are more likely to proactively respond to this type of survey and are less likely to represent the views of the population in general, Gaganpreet Sharma, All Research Journal. Vol 3. 2017 notes:

"There is likely to be a degree of self-selection bias. For example, the decision to participate in the study may reflect some inherent bias in the characteristics/traits of the participants (e.g. an employee with a 'chip on his shoulder' wanting to give an opinion). "This can either lead to the sample not being representative of the population being studied or exaggerating some particular finding from the study."

- Overall, satisfaction has tended to be the most positive amongst those aged 75+ and 18-34, owner occupiers, and those living in Spital and Trinity wards. Those living in the Castle ward seem to be the most dissatisfied.
- Overall satisfaction with Tamworth Borough Council and the way it runs things increased from 34% in 2023 to 42%, however, it remains lower than the national average of 55%.
- One in three (31%) respondents agreed that Tamworth Borough Council provides value for money, which is a slight decrease from 36% in 2023 but still lower than the national average of 38%.
- The proportion of respondents that think the council is keeping them informed has risen from 23% in 2023 to 41%. Younger respondents aged 18-34 were more likely to say this than older respondents.
- One in five (25%) respondents said they speak positively about Tamworth Borough Council, which is a slight increase from 22% in 2023. Those most likely to speak negatively about the council (31% overall) live in the Castle ward (46%) or are TBC social housing tenants (42%).
- Nationally, 53% of residents trust their council either a great deal or a fair amount. This compares with 47% of respondents that trust Tamworth Borough Council. Trust is particularly high amongst those aged 75+ (54%). Respondents that trust the council the least (not very much or not at all) include those living in the Castle ward (25%) and TBC social housing tenants (32%) compared with 18% overall.
- Views of council service provision have mostly improved since the 2023 survey. The most significant improvement is in relation to street cleaning, where satisfaction has increased from 35% in 2023 to 59% in 2024. This is also slightly higher than the national average of 57%.
- Waste collection has also not only seen an increase from 2023 (73% to 82% in 2024) but is also higher than the national average of 77%.
- Satisfaction with the local area has increased from 52% in 2023 to 65% in 2024, although this is lower than the national average of 75%. Satisfaction is highest amongst those living in Amington, Wilnecote and Trinity wards, and lowest in Castle, Bolehall and Glascote wards.
- Whilst the feeling of safety in the local area during the day and after dark have improved since 2023, both results are lower than the national average, particularly for feeling safe after dark. The national average of people feeling safe after dark is 71%, but in Tamworth this is 46%. Respondents most likely to feel unsafe include females, those with a disability, and those living in Castle, Stonydelph and Belgrave wards.
- There are three main methods for contacting the council – by telephone, via the website and email. Older respondents tend to use the telephone, whilst younger respondents are more likely to use the website or email.
- People using or dealing drugs was the biggest concern amongst respondents, with 46% saying it was a problem, although this is a decrease from 58% in 2023. Younger respondents (aged 18-34) and those living in Castle ward were the most concerned.
- The next biggest impact on the local area was rubbish or litter lying around, with 33% saying it was a problem in their local area.

- Views varied on which service areas should receive more, the same or less funding. The most popular areas that respondents want to see have more funding include tackling homelessness & emergency accommodation, tackling antisocial behaviour and improving Tamworth (economically, physically etc.). The service areas most frequently suggested where there should be less funding included customer services, assembly rooms & free outdoor events, and Tamworth Castle & local heritage.
- The most common suggestion of which service area charges should be increased was the hiring of public spaces and car parking. Waste collection was the least favoured area.
- There was little appetite to increase the Tamworth Borough Council element of the council tax. Three in ten (30%) did not want to see any increase and in contrast, just over one in five (22%) said an increase of £10 or more would be acceptable.

Throughout the survey, we do see a repeat of the same findings; our tenants and those living in Castle ward show more dissatisfaction than other groups, wards and demographics.

The pattern for tenants corroborates the findings of the annual tenant satisfaction measures survey, which is a new requirement from the Regulator for Social Housing. We also know those in Castle ward experience the highest levels of deprivation. These combined gives us insight into some of the complexities which lead to satisfaction with the local area and council services.

Whilst there are two common themes, there is already considerable work going on, particularly with tenants to improve their experiences as we deliver the standards expected by the Regulator for Social Housing, including delivering a new reception service from Marmion House. This will increase the opportunities for tenants/residents to talk to us face to face. And of course, we are in the final stages of the regeneration programme in the town centre (Castle ward) which will create a vibrant town centre fit for the future.

The timing of this survey should also not be overlooked. The survey occurred in September and October, just a short time after the civil unrest seen in August. While we cannot say for certain, the events in August may have also impacted the views of residents, particularly those in Castle ward. The ongoing work with the Belong Network as part of the Community Recovery Fund spend will be the start of honest conversations to address some of the potential feelings behind dissatisfaction seen amongst some survey respondents.

Options considered

N/A, for this report.

However, other options were considered ahead of commissioning the survey, including do nothing (not an option as we have a statutory duty to consult on our budget) or continue as in previous years. This was discounted in order to provide the council with a robust view representative of local people. We've seen in the findings that there is inherent bias in a self-selecting survey, which does not exist in the current results.

Resource implications

None specifically from this report, however the findings are to inform decision making around future council budget and priorities.

Legal/Risk Implications background

N/A for this report, however we have a statutory responsibility to carry out appropriate budget consultation.

Equalities implications

The sample of residents surveyed matched the Tamworth census profile, so views from a broad demography have been actively achieved in this survey.

Any budget and priority decisions taken using this data may have equalities implications.

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

None specifically from this report.

Background Information

See cabinet report 29 August 2024, [budget and medium-term financial planning process 2025/26 appendix D](#) and [appendix E](#) for background papers.

Report Author

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Appendices

Appendix 1, annual residents' and budget survey results

Appendix 2, telephone survey questions