



Ards and North Down Borough Council

Ards and North Down Borough Council: Residents' Survey (2018)



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Executive Summary

The report presents the findings from a survey of residents of Ards and North Down Borough Council. The survey was undertaken in July 2018 and is based on a representative sample of 1035 residents covering all areas of the Borough. The survey was conducted on a face-to-face basis and accordance with the ISO20252 Standard.

Key Conclusions

- Residents report a high level of satisfaction with the Council, with the Council scoring significantly better than the average for all GB Councils. This high level of satisfaction is further evidenced by high levels of satisfaction for specific services, with the overwhelming majority of residents having used a Council service in the last 12 months;
- A significant number of residents' report having had contact with the Council, and regardless of the type of contact (e.g. phone, face to face etc.), their contact experience has been a positive one. ;
- The Council website is an important resource for residents with those using it doing so to either get information on a Council service or opening times. In the overwhelming majority of cases residents using the website are able to find the information they are looking for with residents also reporting a high level of satisfaction with the website;
- The survey has found a high level of internet use among residents with most using social media platforms as well as mobile phone apps. It should be reassuring for the Council that most residents are supportive of the Council making more services accessible online. Although a majority of residents indicate that they are likely to engage in online transactions to avail of Council services, there are some groups of residents (e.g. *older residents and those with a disability*) who are more resistant to any potential changes in this area;
- The evidence from this survey shows that resident participation in Council consultations is limited. Moving forward, residents most commonly would prefer for the Council to engage with them using online approaches, although the Council newsletter is the preferred option for the Council communicating with them to let them know what is going on across the Council;
- Relative to other Councils in GB, residents in Ards and North Down reported a significantly higher level of satisfaction with how the Council engages with them, with most of the view that the Council keeps them well informed about the services and benefits it provides. This positive sentiment is consistent with overall perception of the Council (*'busy', 'good', 'helpful' etc.*), with most giving a positive response when asked about the Council's overall reputation, and the Council providing value for money;
- Finally, residents are positive in their assessment of their local area as a place to live (*significantly higher than the GB average*), with attracting jobs, investment and the local economy seen as the top priority for the Council moving forward. However, set aside this there is a significant number of residents reporting problems associated with dog fouling and litter in their local area.

Findings

Overall Satisfaction

- 83% of residents are satisfied with the Council overall, with 15% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 1% dissatisfied and 2% answering 'don't know';
- The most common suggestions for Council improvement included: cleaner streets, parks and paths (9%); regular upkeep of green areas [7%] (e.g. grass, weeds, hedges etc.); and, reducing or lowering rates (4%).

Awareness of Council Services

- 84% of residents were aware that the Council provides waste and recycling services, with similarly higher numbers aware that the Council is responsible for play parks and open spaces (78%), licensing (78%) and leisure centres (76%);
- Economic development services (40%) and visitor information centres (46%) recorded the lowest levels of resident awareness;
- 62% of residents incorrectly believe that the Council is responsible for street lighting, with more than half believing that the Council is responsible for road maintenance (56%);
- Out of the 21 service areas (both Council and non-Council provided) listed in the questionnaire, residents correctly listed 13 on average (i.e. correctly said that the specific service is provided either by the Council or another provider).

Use of Council Services

- 90% of residents had used at least one Council service in the last 12 months;
- The most commonly used Council services in the last 12 months included: waste and recycling services (57%); play parks and open spaces (51%); carparking (49%); and, leisure centres (43%);
- 1% of residents had used the Council's economic development service, with 3% having used the Council's building control service;
- On average, residents used 3.4 Council services in the last year with particular groups of residents significantly more likely to have used services (e.g. those aged 35-59).

Satisfaction with Council Services

- Residents using Council services reported relatively high levels of satisfaction, with the highest level of satisfaction recorded for environmental health (100%), with a relatively lower level of satisfaction recorded for building control (74%);

Recycling

- 69% rated their commitment to recycling as high, 24% as medium and 7% as low;
- 83% of residents said they are confident that they put different waste materials in the right bins, with 17% saying they are not confident they do so;

- Laziness (15%) and a lack of information on when to leave out recycling bins or what to put in bins (10%), were seen by residents as the single biggest barriers to residents' recycling more.

Contact with the Council

- 28% of residents had contacted or made an enquiry to the Council in the last 12 months, with phone contact accounting for approximately two out of three (64%) contacts;
- 87% rated their most recent contact as either 'excellent' or 'good', 11% 'fair' and 3% 'poor'.

Broadband and Online Activity

- 88% of residents said their home is connected to broadband;
- 80% of those connected to broadband rated the quality of coverage as 'excellent' or 'good';
- 72% use the internet daily, with most (65%) using mobile phone apps at least daily and 69% using Facebook daily.

Council Website

- 24% had visited the Council website in the last 12 months, with the most common reasons for doing so including: getting information on a Council service (56%) and to find out about opening times (44%);
- 44% of those visiting the Council website to get information on services did so to get information on waste and recycling services, 20% to get information on leisure centres and 13% for licencing related information;
- 96% were able to find the service-related information they were looking for;
- 94% of visitors to the website were satisfied with it.

More Council Services being Available Online and Other Options

- 78% are supportive of the Council making more of its services available online, with 69% saying they would be likely to engage in online transactions to avail of Council services;
- 26% were supportive of the Council improving accessibility to services via one-stop-shops, 24% suggested improved online services and 23% suggested that Council services could be more accessible if they were available outside of normal hours.

Consultations, Communication, Perception and Engagement

- 3% had taken part in Council consultations, with most of those who did rating their experience as either 'excellent' or 'good';
- 46% would like the Council to consult with them in the future using online methods, with 26% preferring the Council newsletter and 11% by letter;
- 74% said they find it easy to get information on Council services or initiatives, with 3% finding it difficult and 23% answering 'don't know';

- 37% ranked the Council newsletter as the best way for the Council to communicate with them to let them know what is going on across the Council followed by the Council's website (21%);
- 76% believe the Council keeps residents well informed about the services and benefits it provides;
- 69% are satisfied with the level of engagement the Council offers local residents; *[note that the comparative figure for all GB Councils is 46%];*
- Thinking of the Council as a person, residents most commonly used the following terms to describe its personality: 'busy'; 'good'; 'helpful'; 'friendly'; 'OK'; 'working'; and, 'useful';
- 66% rated the reputation of the Council as either excellent or good, 23% as fair and 2% as poor.

Value for Money

- 58% believe that *'given the range of services provided to residents, Ards and North Down Borough Council provides good value for money'*.

Council Priorities

- Attracting jobs, investment and the local economy was identified by residents as the top ranked priority for the Council (35%), followed by ensuring annual rate increases are kept at or below inflation (15%), and improving people's health and wellbeing through access to leisure facilities, open spaces and arts and heritage initiatives (11%);

Council Area as a Place to Live

- 93% said they are satisfied with their local area as a place to live;
- 92% said they are satisfied with the Council area as a place to live;
- 58% of residents said dog mess and fouling is a problem in their local area, 41% said rubbish and littering lying around is a problem, and 33% said that groups hanging around the streets is a problem.