

Policy and Resources

15 February 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Resident Survey 2017

Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy & Communications
Lead Officer and Report Author	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager.
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That a Resident Survey be undertaken in 2017.
2. Note the timetable for consultation set out at section 3.
3. That the committee review the options set out at section 4 and agree the consultation methodology.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

The resident survey offers an opportunity to understand the views of Maidstone residents providing essential information to help form decision making and develop key strategies which deliver the Council's corporate priorities.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Corporate Leadership Team	16 January 2017
Policy & Resources Committee	15 February 2017

Resident Survey 2017

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Policy and Resources Committee are asked to consider whether or not the Council should undertake a Resident Survey in 2017.
- 1.2 If a survey is agreed the committee are asked to review the options for undertaking the survey and agree a final methodology.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 There is a long tradition of undertaking a Resident Survey to gauge views and satisfaction levels of residents with services and the place they live as well as other areas of interest such as budget consultation, allowing the Council to track progress or otherwise in meeting residents' expectations. Since the Place Survey 2008 the survey has been undertaken every two years. The last survey was delivered in 2015.
- 2.2 The 2015 survey was successful in achieving;
 - a strong response rate
 - a balanced response across the borough, balancing the rural and urban residents
 - a high standard of reporting
 - member and officer engagement
- 2.3 Whilst successful, there were areas where improvements could be made. Any future resident survey should include:
 - Working with members and officers to ensure the questions are relevant, high quality, support decision making and are relevant to current and future projects.
 - Working with groups to improve engagement with the; 75+ and 18-24 year olds and ethnic minorities.
 - Undertaking engagement with young people to gain views of young people and future council tax payers.
 - Programme structured communication with Members throughout the consultation, to ensure they are able to engage residents across the borough.
- 2.4 Whilst there are costs in carrying out a Resident Survey, particularly in terms of staff time, the exercise overall offers value for money. It does this by informing the Council's resource allocation and hence ensuring that the Council is responsive to residents' views. The preferred option in this report is intended to ensure that the Resident Survey is carried out in the most cost-effective way possible.

Sample size

- 2.5 To ensure that the proposed consultation adds value, consideration has been given to the size of the sample of residents selected. How well the sample represents the population is gauged by two elements; the survey's margin of error and its confidence level.
- 2.6 The margin of error sets out the maximum expected difference between the true population and the sample selected. The confidence level indicates the chances of getting the same result, if the survey was repeated.
- 2.7 For example, a survey may have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent at a 99 percent level of confidence. This means that if the survey were conducted 100 times, the data would be within 3 percentage points above or below the percentage reported in 99 of the 100 surveys.
- 2.8 To achieve a 95% response rate with a +/- 3% margin error a minimum of 1058 responses would be required. This figure and the options set out in section 4 have been calculated assuming a 30% response rate.

3. TIMETABLE

- 3.1 The survey has always been undertaken around August/September, continuing the old national timetable; however this does not provide the best fit for the Council's budget and strategic planning process. The analysis is not available for early discussions and tends to be delivered around December when plans are already drafted and engagement with members and officers is already well underway.
- 3.2 Considering the budget and strategic planning process the ideal time to launch the survey would be in May, allowing analysis to be delivered in August to provide an evidence base to feed into discussions.
- 3.3 Looking at the areas of improvement identified in the introduction to ensure member and officer engagement and quality consultation design the following timetable would be followed.

Activity	Timing
Project planning	February
Workshops, survey design, agreement of final questionnaire	February – March
Promotion and preparation for consultation (appointment of staff/external body if relevant)	March – April
Survey roll out	8 May 2017
Consultation open	May – July
Analysis	July – August
Final Report, workshops	August - September

4. Options

Consultation approaches

- 4.1 The possible approaches are outlined in the table over the page. The options do not need to be taken individually, to ensure the most comprehensive and inclusive consultation a mix of options could be agreed.
- 4.2 Where the cost is external, these are based on 2015 quotes, though we would be aiming for a higher response rate than this to increase representation of the borough and to consistently improve our overall response rates.
- 4.3 In addition to the below, existing contacts with local schools, housing associations, equalities networks will be used to increase engagement with under 18, 75+ and 18-24 year olds and ethnic minorities.
- 4.4 There is an existing budget available for budget consultation of £5,000. This budget will be used for the Resident Survey and it will also include questions to inform the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

	Option	Estimated Cost	Pros	Cons
1	Online Survey - (with paper only on request to ensure adherence with equality duty)	Officer time only	<p>There is a strong email consultation group.</p> <p>This is the cheapest option.</p> <p>Can't target specific demographics.</p> <p>Respondent views the materials and self-completes.</p>	<p>Excludes those not online; doesn't engage hard to reach groups.</p> <p>Existing consultees (those on the consultation list) have been heavily engaged already.</p>
2a	<p>Paper survey - Internally printed and distributed, uncoded.</p> <p>These would also need to be input. This could either be done by releasing an officer a day per week or by offering overtime.</p>	<p>£3,705 print and postage costs.</p> <p>£2,970 optional overtime costs</p> <p>Total - £6,675</p>	<p>Respondent views the materials and self-completes.</p> <p>Encourage customers to engage with online survey.</p> <p>Reduced cost.</p>	<p>Customers could possibly submit more than one entry. Would be high demand on officer time</p> <p>Can't target specific demographics</p>
2b	<p>Paper survey - Internally printed and distributed, coded.</p> <p>New survey software would need to be purchased or subscribed to in order to enable paper surveys to be developed.</p>	<p>As above</p> <p>£4880 for purchase.</p> <p>Total £11,555</p>	<p>Respondent views the materials and self-completes.</p> <p>Encourage customers to engage with online survey.</p> <p>Allows easy tracking of who's completed and targeting of reminders</p> <p>This would provide benefit beyond the resident survey</p>	<p>Can't target specific demographics.</p>

	Option	Estimated Cost	Pros	Cons
			and create small efficiencies within the policy and communications teams.	
2c	Paper survey – Externally printed and distributed, coded	£16,145	<p>Respondent views the materials and self-completes.</p> <p>Encourage customers to engage with online survey.</p> <p>Allows easy tracking of who's completed and targeting of reminders</p>	<p>Can't target specific demographics.</p> <p>Most expensive option.</p>
3	Face to Face survey (external)	£14,910	<p>Can easily target by location and demographics.</p> <p>Respondents can see materials.</p>	<p>Customers can't self complete.</p> <p>Is an expensive option.</p>
4	Telephone survey (external)	£13,625	<p>Can easily target by location and demographics.</p>	<p>Respondents cannot view materials or self complete.</p> <p>Cannot easily target our hard to reach groups (BME groups & 18 to 24 year olds)</p> <p>Is an expensive option</p>

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 The last Resident Survey was undertaken in 2015 and the last budget survey was undertaken in 2016. As a council we value engagement and feedback from our residents on their priorities and should use this to inform our decision making. This committee is being consulted on the options for the next Resident Survey in 2017.

6. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Preferred Option

- 6.1 That the Council undertakes a Resident Survey in 2017 and deliver an 'in house' online and postal survey, as shown in section 4 as option 1 and option 2a.
- 6.2 This option provides the most cost effective and inclusive solution, within the existing budget. Currently this option is £1,675 over budget but this could be reconsidered by revisiting the optional overtime cost.

Alternative options

- 6.3 The Council could choose not to undertake a Resident Survey at all. This is not recommended as the Council would not have information covering all of the council's services to inform its decision making on strategic budget and service matters. The council is required to undertake consultation on its budget proposals, the residents survey would achieve this aim.
- 6.4 Undertake telephone or face to face consultation in house. This option has not been presented in the table in section four as staff are not trained to undertake surveys in this way and this would resource intensive.
- 6.5 Options 2b, 3 and 4 have not been selected as whilst they have individual benefits the cost is not considered appropriate given current budget constraints.
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7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Previous resident surveys helped shape the corporate priorities, and shape Council decision making, the timetable outlined in this report would ensure that information was available early enough to inform the	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy & Communications

	<p>Council’s review of the Strategic Plan. Not undertaking the survey would mean that residents’ views would not be as easily available to inform decision making.</p>	
Risk Management	<p>A risk assessment would be developed as part of project planning process.</p> <p>Information gained through the resident survey would be used as part of future service development which could help minimise future risk</p>	<p>Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy & Communications</p>
Financial	<p>Costs of options are set out in section 4. Any cost beyond the £5k would need to be funded. The results of the Resident Survey will feed into the budget planning process.</p>	<p>Section 151 Officer</p>
Staffing	<p>Impact on staffing resources will depend on the option selected. If the work is undertaken in house more resources will be required. This is highlighted in section 4.</p>	<p>Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy & Communications</p>
Legal	<p>A number of the options identified would require appointment of an external market research company.</p>	<p>Legal Team</p>
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	<p>Equality impact will need to be assessed as part of the final option if agreed to ensure that the consultation is open and available to all.</p> <p>Hard to reach groups have already been identified and approaches to increase responses in this area will need to be considered as part of project planning.</p> <p>The results will be analysed by age, gender and disability to identify whether groups are unduly affected by</p>	<p>Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer</p>

	service delivery.	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	Information gained through the resident survey may relate to environmental and sustainable development issues	Policy and Information Manager
Community Safety	Information gained through the resident survey may relate to community safety issues	Policy and Information Manager
Human Rights Act	None identified.	Policy and Information Manager
Procurement	A number of the options identified would require appointment of an external market research company.	Policy and Information Manager
Asset Management	None identified	Policy and Information Manager

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- None
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS