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Resident Survey 2018

College Ward Report

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A. Background and Introduction

A.1 The purpose of the survey was to review resident opinion on issues relating to priorities, sense of place, perceptions and use of facilities, information and communications and preferences for improvements. The questionnaire contained the following sections:

**Section 1:** Living in the Borough

**Section 2:** About the Council

**Section 3:** Darlington Town Centre

**Section 4:** About Your Services

**Section 5:** Residents’ Priorities or Concerns

**Section 6:** Contact with the Council and Information

**Section 7:** Helping Out (Volunteering)

**Section 8:** Community Safety

**Section 9:** About Yourself (Demographic Profile of the Sample)

A.2 This report relates to COLLEGE Ward from which there were 245 responses giving a confidence interval of +/- 6.3% (worst case). Comparisons are made within the report to the overall survey which had responses of 4714 completed surveys. Differences of +/-6.4% would need to be observed for there to be a statistical difference between the ward and the overall sample. Note: numbers of responses for the ward are shown in the figures. ‘Don’t know’ responses have been omitted and in some instances respondents failed to give a response so not all questions have responses from all 245 respondents.

**1. SECTION 1: LIVING IN THE BOROUGH**

1.1 Respondents living in the College ward were more satisfied with their area as a place to live than the overall sample. (27.9% were ‘very satisfied’ and 52.7% ‘fairly satisfied’ = overall satisfaction rate of 80.6% compared with the Borough – 75.6%).

1.2 Similarly, respondents in College were more likely to agree that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together and treat each other with respect. Over two-thirds of all respondents in College (70.3%), agreed with those compared to 64.9% overall. Just 9.4% of all respondents in this area disagreed with this statement (compared with 13.4% in the Borough overall).

1.3 Nevertheless there was no statistically observable difference between College and the Borough overall in respect of strength of belonging to the area. (College – very strongly – 27.4%, fairly strongly – 49.6% - overall strong sense of belonging: 77.0% compared with the Borough – 74.8%).







**2. SECTION 2: ABOUT THE COUNCIL**

2.1 When asked which of the statements given came closest to how they felt about Darlington Borough Council, just a quarter of respondents in College said that they would speak positively about the Council (4.3% ‘without being asked’ and 21.8% ‘if asked about it’ – 26.1%). Conversely, 37.0% would speak negatively (24.0% ‘if asked’ and 13.0% ‘without being asked’). There are no statistically significant differences between College and the overall sample.

2.2 Residents in this ward were as likely to agree that they can influence decisions made by Darlington Borough Council with 12.4% agreeing in College compared to 12.9% of the Borough overall. There were more respondents disagreeing (63.5% compared with 60% in the Borough overall) illustrating that over half of all respondents in the ward feel unable to influence decisions.

2.3 Agreement of residents in College in respect of the statement Darlington Borough Council is well run and good value for money is slightly lower than the rest of the Borough with just 25% agreeing with this statement (DBC 28.9%). Residents here were as likely to both agree (30.3% cf. 29.1% for Borough overall) and disagree (41.4% cf. 43.3%) that the Council acts on the concerns of local residents as the overall sample. Residents in College were less likely to agree (35.4% cf. 39.9% for the Borough overall) that Darlington Borough Council treats all people fairly.







**3. SECTION 3: THE TOWN CENTRE**

3.1 The primary reason for visits to the town centre by respondents from the College ward was for shopping purposes representing a higher level than the response from the overall sample (87.8% cf. overall sample 77.4%). Residents here were also more likely to visit the town centre for leisure (50.9% cf. overall 37.2%) but as likely as the overall sample to visit for work purposes (11.6% cf. 11.8%).

3.2 36.6% of residents in College visit town centre events as a ‘dedicated trip’ – again higher than the overall sample (23.6%).





**4. SECTION 4: ABOUT YOUR SERVICES**

Environmental Services

4.1 Respondents in College tended to be less satisfied with cleanliness in the town centre than the overall sample (College – 52.8% cf. overall sample – 64.4%), while satisfaction with the cleanliness of the local area showed a slightly higher (insignificant) satisfaction rate (50.4% satisfied cf. 48.6% for the overall sample); and a smaller dissatisfaction rate (40.2% dissatisfied in College cf. with 43.1% in the overall sample).

4.2 Residents in this ward were statistically as likely to be satisfied (41.3% cf. overall 43.2%) as well as dissatisfied (36.2% cf. overall 35.2%) with grass cutting. However, satisfaction was higher in respect of household waste collection (refuse and recycling) with a satisfaction rate of just 80.3% (32.0% ‘very satisfied’ and 48.3% ‘fairly satisfied) against and overall sample response of 76.4% satisfied.

4.3 Satisfaction with the upkeep of public parks, recreation ground and open spaces is similar to the overall sample with 54.1% satisfaction (7.1% ‘very satisfied’ and 47.0% ‘fairly satisfied’). Overall sample satisfaction was 56.1%.

4.4 Just over half of all respondents (53.0%) were satisfied with the cleanliness of public parks (7.4% ‘very’ and 45.6% ‘fairly satisfied’). There is no statistically significant difference between the ward and the overall sample.





Facilities

4.5 The most used facility by residents of College provided by Darlington Borough Council was Household Recycling Centre with nearly three quarters of all respondents (73.6%) using this. Over one third of all respondents (34.0%) used it at least once a month (at least once a week – 3.1%, at least monthly – 30.9%). The next most used facility is South Park with 73.2% using this – 31.2% of respondents using this at least once a month. Least used was the Eastbourne Sports Centre (10.1% used this in the last 12 months).

4.6 As can be seen from the tables that follow satisfaction with facilities was generally very high – reaching 80% or more for all but two facilities. The exceptions were for Children’s Centres (satisfaction rate of 71.7%) and other Darlington Borough Council parks (69.6%) but it should be noted that in the case of the former only a small numbers of respondents used these services (13 respondents), and therefore the differences are unlikely to be statistically significant.

4.7 Reasons for not using the facilities largely related to lack of interest in the facility with being unable to access by my usual form of transport only appearing in one in twenty respondents or more in respect of South Park (7.2%) and other Darlington Borough Council parks (7.7%).

4.8 When asked how often they intended to use Darlington Hippodrome in the future responses from residents living in College were more likely to use the facility at least once or twice a year when compared to the overall sample. 37.1% of respondents were likely to use the theatre at least three to four times a year with a further 28.6% using it once or twice a year (overall sample usage at least once or twice a year – 59.4%). Reasons for never intending to use Darlington Hippodrome for this groups were largely related to cost (42.7%) or to the type of shows (18.2%). Responses to the open question category ‘other’ are shown in the appendices.











**5. SECTION 5: RESIDENTS’ PRIORITIES OR CONCERNS**

5.1 Respondents were informed that the Council is interested in their priorities for the Borough and that the Council has set out 8 priority area (themes) for the next four years. Respondents were asked which four of the eight themes were most important to them. The themes were as follows with only the emboldened text being used in the figures that follow:

* **More people healthy and independent** –improving the health and wellbeing of residents (examples… tackling air and noise pollution, addressing poor housing conditions, and encouraging healthy behaviours).
* **Children with the best start in life** – enabling children and young people to maximise and achieve their potential (examples… schools and education, career and employment prospects for young people, child poverty, mental health and wellbeing of children and young people).
* **A safe and caring community** – creating a safer and more socially cohesive community (examples…tackling speeding cars, anti-social behaviour).
* **More people active and involved** -increasing participation of residents in physical activity and civic life (examples… access to recreational activities, unnecessary use of cars, volunteering).
* **More businesses, more jobs** – enabling strong and inclusive economic growth in Darlington (examples… creating jobs, job security, wage levels, cost of living, levels of poverty and debt).
* **More people caring for our environment** – continuing to protect and enhance the local environment (examples… volunteering, tackling fly tipping and litter).
* **Enough support for people when needed –** ensuring residents get the right level and kind of support when they need it to enable them to live independently (examples… supporting older people, the local voluntary and community sector offer, homelessness).
* **A place designed to thrive** – ensuring we have the necessary physical infrastructure for residents and businesses to prosper (examples… vitality of the town centre, availability of affordable housing to buy or rent, accessible public transport).

5.2 In addition respondents were informed that as part of the medium term financial plan (2018-2022) the Council is considering making improvements to the Borough across five themes and respondents were asked to rank these on a one to five basis. These themes were:

* **Community Safety** – for example: - Tackling anti-social behaviour in the town centre or neighbourhoods.- Working with the Police, communities and landlords to improve neighbourhoods.
* **Maintaining an Attractive Street Scene Environment** – for example: return grass cutting to 12-15 day cycles, return to weekly back lane cleanse, a general increase in cleansing across the borough. One off investments for priority areas for deep cleans and physical improvements in some areas.
* **Maintaining a Vibrant Town Centre** – for example: - Flowers and cleanliness in the town centre, events and markets, attracting new business, Improving the environment.
* **Developing an Attractive Visitor Economy** – for example: Celebrating our Rail Heritage and attracting more visitors. Having a Tourist Information Centre. Improving the Head of Steam. Match funding grants to enhance cultural activities such as theatre or dance. Preparing for the bi-centenary of the world’s first passenger railway.
* **Neighbourhood Renewal** – for example: Supporting families and neighbourhoods facing disadvantage and poverty. Schemes to improve health and education in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Tackling some of the impacts of welfare changes.

5.3 Two of the PRIORITY themes listed were clearly the most important priority areas of residents of College each being identified by more than 60% of all respondents. These were ‘a place designed to thrive’ (63.6%) and ‘a safe and caring community’, (61.7%). Least important was ‘more people active and involved’ (18.3%).

5.4 Because the importance of improvements was a ‘ranked response’ question the responses have been analysed as mean scores. The lower the mean score the higher the priority. For respondents living in the College ward the highest priority by far was that of improving community safety with a mean score of 2.00. This was followed by maintaining an attractive street scene environment (2.46). Least important here was developing an attractive visitor economy with a mean score of 3.91.





**6. SECTION 6: CONTACT WITH THE COUNCIL AND INFORMATION**

6.1 When participants were asked how well informed they felt they were the large majority of respondents (78.9%) felt that they were either very or fairly well informed about what can be recycled as part of the waste collection service. 58.2% of respondents felt informed in relation to events and activities in the Borough, while half or more gave such responses in relation to the reason the Council has to make savings (53.6%) and what the Council does (52.7%).

6.2 Conversely around half of all respondents in College felt that they were not very well or not well informed at all about opportunities available to volunteer locally (49.5%).

6.3 As can be seen from the figure on the following pages sources of information used by respondents in College are largely similar to the overall sample although respondents in this ward were significantly more likely to state that they used a ‘local councillor or councillor newsletter’ (51.0% cf. 15.4%). ‘Word of Mouth’ (61.2%) and ‘One Darlington’ (61.0%) magazine are the most used sources in the College ward. (Note – this was a multiple choice question and answers will add to more than 100%. Only responses in excess of 10% have been shown in the charts – full details are available in the tables).

6.4 When asked about the main method of contact when contacting the Council, over half of those interviewed in College (55.4%) said that they had made contact in the last 12 months. This is similar to the overall sample where 57.8% had made contact. The primary source of contact was by phone (21.3%) – lower than the overall sample where 28.1% had made contact by telephone.

6.5 Respondents who had made contact with the Council were asked for the main reason for their last contact. It was clear from the responses that the reasons given in the questionnaire did not resonate with respondents and resulted in over half of all of those who had made contact giving ‘other’ responses. These are shown in the appendices. The largest of the main responses were ‘to make a payment such as council tax or rent’ (13.3%) and ‘to book or apply for something such as Council Tax discount, housing repair or bulky waste collection’ (11.7%).

6.6 Satisfaction with aspects of their last contact was high with 74.6% being satisfied with the ease of using their chosen method of contact and 67.7% with the information provided. 58.2% were satisfied with how the issue was resolved and over a quarter (27.9% being dissatisfied with this). Also to note is that nearly one in four who had made contact were dissatisfied with the information that had been provided (23.2%).

6.7 When asked if they would be willing to contact Darlington Borough Council electronically, 65.3% said that they would or already do so – a slightly higher percentage than the overall sample (60.9%). 5.2% said that either hadn’t got regular internet or any internet access – a lower percentage than the overall sample (11.1%). 13.5% of all respondents had concerns about or were not confident about using the internet to contact Darlington Borough Council.













**7. SECTION 7: HELPING OUT**

7.1 40.6% of respondents living in the College ward had given unpaid help to any groups, clubs or organisations as an individual or through their employer (59.4% not given unpaid help). This is lower than the overall sample where 74.7% had not given unpaid help. Giving unpaid help through an employer was higher (statistically insignificant) in College than in the overall sample (11.7% cf. 7.7% for the overall sample).

7.2 The main barrier to volunteering is that respondents here ‘don’t have time’, (26.5%), with 20.3% stating that they don’t know what opportunities are available and 14.3% saying simply that they are ‘not interested’.





**8. SECTION 8: COMMUNITY SAFETY**

8.1 Respondents were asked how safe or unsafe they felt when out in the dark and during the day in their local area. As can be seen from the figure below, respondents living in College feel considerably safer when outside in the dark than the overall sample (71.0% feel safe compared to 61.1% of the overall sample). Similarly, 15.2% feel unsafe when outside in the dark compared with 25.4% of the overall sample.

8.2 In terms of feelings of safety when outside in respondents’ local area during the day, respondents in College were more likely than the overall sample to feel either ‘very’ or ‘fairly safe’ (97.0% cf. 91.1%). Similarly, College Ward residents felt safer than Overall residents of the Borough in the Town Centre, both during the dark (54.5% cf. 48.3%) and during the day (91.9 cf. 87.3%).





**9. SECTION 9: ABOUT YOURSELF**

