



Royal Borough of Kingston Council

'Your Kingston Your Say'
Digested Report
October 2013



Introduction

This report summarises some of the key results of the 2013 'Your Kingston Your Say' (YKYS) survey delivered by DJS Research Limited. The research combined both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. The survey was statistically robust and consisted of 1,272 questionnaires were completed using a combination of Telephone Interviews and online surveys. Four focus group discussions were also convened (one in each Neighbourhood area) along with 20 telephone interviews to explore a range of topics in greater detail. The survey was carried out between August and October 2013.

Living in Kingston upon Thames

Significantly, residents find living in their local area a positive experience (see **chart 1**). Satisfaction levels have consistently remained above 80% with over 30% of those polled rating their experiences of life in their area as very satisfactory. It was also found that three quarters of residents felt that they belonged to the area where they lived.

Overall, how satisfied are you with your local area as a place to live

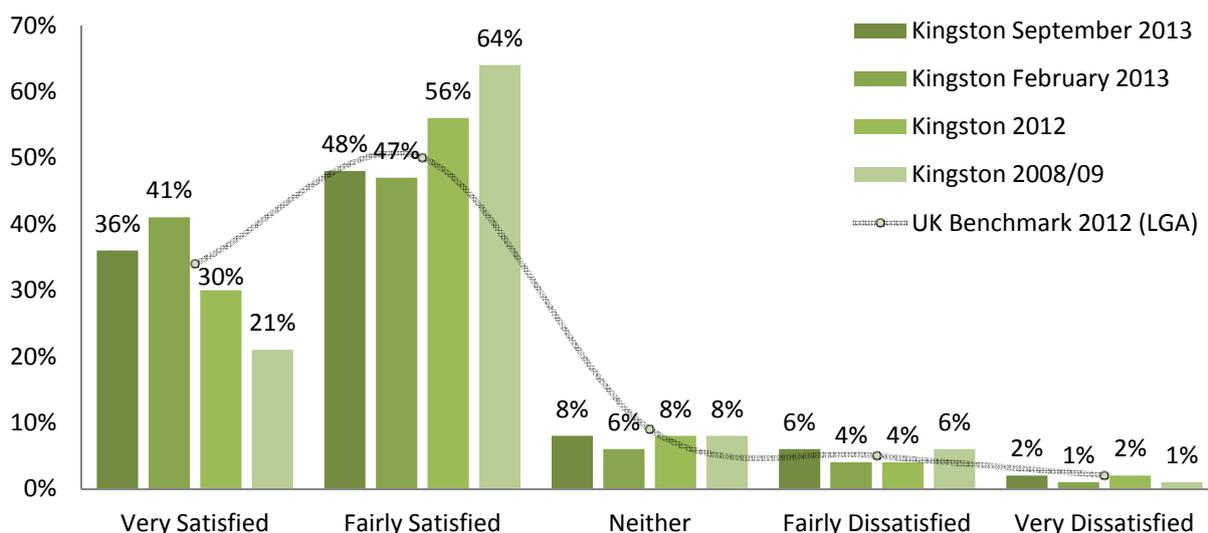


Chart 1

The issue of community cohesion was addressed in both the quantitative and qualitative surveys. The overall message was that the people of the Borough get along well together and most of those who felt that there were problems did not think that they were significant. Problems did not affect how they viewed Kingston as a place to live.

The survey looked at ways to encourage cohesion. Events such as the Kingston Carnival were seen to be the most positive way to promote integration and the Council was encouraged to continue with these events. Participants suggested a range of other ways the Council could encourage cohesion, these mostly focused on public celebrations of the culturally diverse nature of the Borough.

The survey also questioned whether parks and open spaces made the Borough a better place to live; the vast majority (95%) saw the benefits that these areas brought. The main advantages were seen to be a feeling of space, the provision of places for quiet recreation and opportunities for exercise.

Residents see the Borough as a safe place to be during the day. The vast majority (92%) felt either very or quite safe in their neighbourhood. Perceptions of safety fell with the onset of darkness. During daylight hours just 3% felt unsafe but this rose to 20% after dark.

- In Maldens and Coombe feelings of safety fell by 34% between day and night
- In South of the Borough feelings of safety fell by 33%
- For those aged 76 or over feelings of safety fell by 51% between day and night
- For residents aged 66 to 75 feelings of safety fell by 38%

The survey presented residents with a list of problems and asked to say how significant each issue was in their local area (**chart 2**).

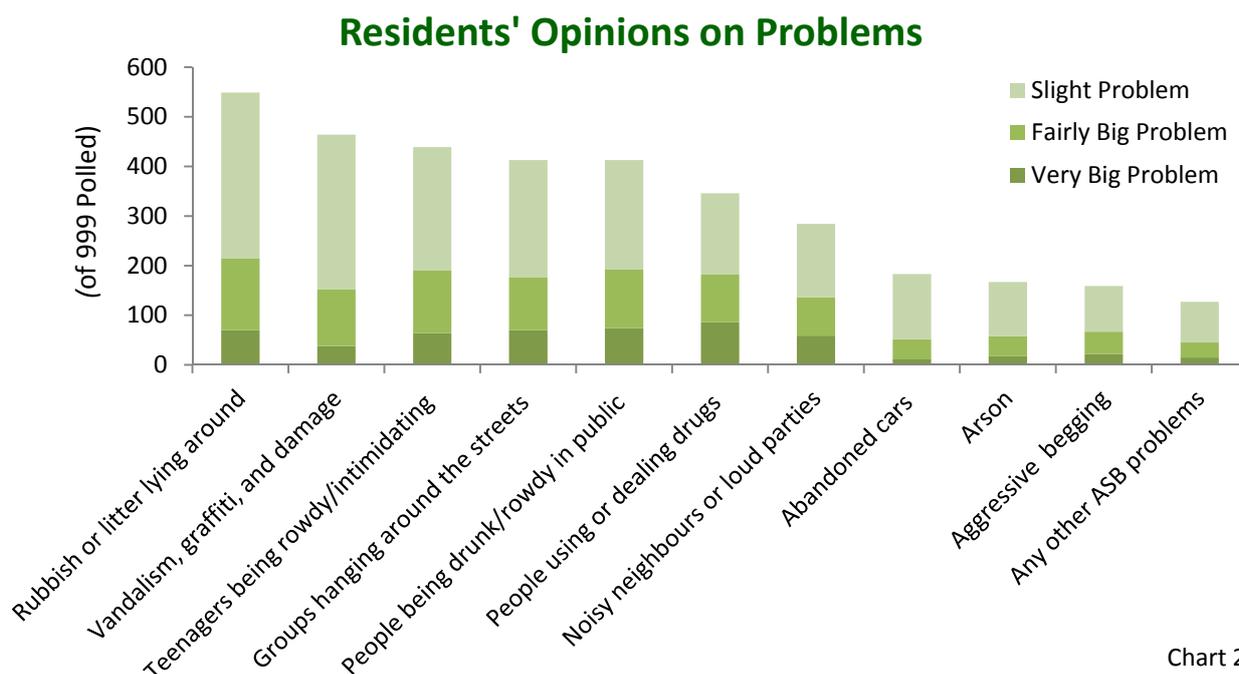


Chart 2

In terms of crime and disorder, incidences of anti-social behaviour were reported to happen most often in the Borough with 15% of participants experiencing it in the 12 months prior to the survey. Men and respondents with a disability experienced more incidences of anti-social behaviour than women and those who did not have a disability or learning difficulty

Just over half (53%) were confident that crime was being tackled effectively in Kingston. Residents felt that the Safer Kingston Partnership needs to invest in increasing the levels of Police presence across the Borough. When asked, the three issues that caused residents the greatest concern were burglary (noted by 40% of participants), anti-social behaviour (noted by 39% of participants) and alcohol misuse (noted by 23% of participants).

Experiences of crime were highest amongst residents of Maldens and Coombe and lowest in Surbiton.

Eleven percent (equating to 140 respondents) had been a victim of crime in the 12 months:

- More crime was experienced by residents of Maldens and Coombe
- Non-White participants had been victims of more crime than white respondents
- Women reported crime to the Police more often than male victims
- White participants were also more likely to report crime to the Police

In the Your Kingston Your Say 2012 survey, residents called for an increase in activities for teenagers. Respondents in 2013 supported this view stating that inactivity and boredom led some teenagers into trouble, and to forming into gangs on the streets.

Participants felt that the Council should provide activities for teenagers and noted the benefits of affordable activities such as sports clubs, youth clubs and education and training opportunities. It was also felt that teenagers would benefit from the health gains associated with exercise and believed that some activities could help build a sense of community.

Residents' Views on Services

Residents were asked to compare levels of importance against satisfaction in 28 services (out of 5, see **table below**). Of these services, residents were relatively satisfied with parks and open spaces and doorstep recycling, however satisfaction was lower for waste collection and Public Health Services.

Residents were also relatively satisfied with shopping facilities and the local bus service.

The biggest differences between importance and satisfaction were discovered for: the level of traffic congestion; affordable decent housing; wage levels and local cost of living and maintenance of roads (the five highest and lowest Differences have been marked in red and green respectively).

Services (Listed by Importance)	Importance to Residents	Satisfaction to Residents	Difference
Waste Collection	4.8	3.86	0.94
Public Health Services	4.76	3.71	1.05
Doorstep Recycling	4.62	3.88	0.74
Parks and Open Spaces	4.59	4.03	<u>0.56</u>
Education Provision	4.58	3.66	0.92
Maintenance of Roads	4.48	2.89	<u>1.59</u>
Maintenance of Pavements	4.47	2.99	1.48
Social Care for Older and Disabled People and Their Families	4.45	3.31	1.14
Local Bus Services	4.45	4.07	<u>0.38</u>
Wage Levels and Local Cost Of Living	4.43	2.81	<u>1.62</u>
Street Cleaning	4.42	3.48	0.94
Job Prospects	4.41	3	1.41
Shopping Facilities	4.38	4.2	<u>0.18</u>
The Level of Pollution	4.34	3.3	1.04
The Level of Traffic Congestion	4.31	2.59	<u>1.72</u>

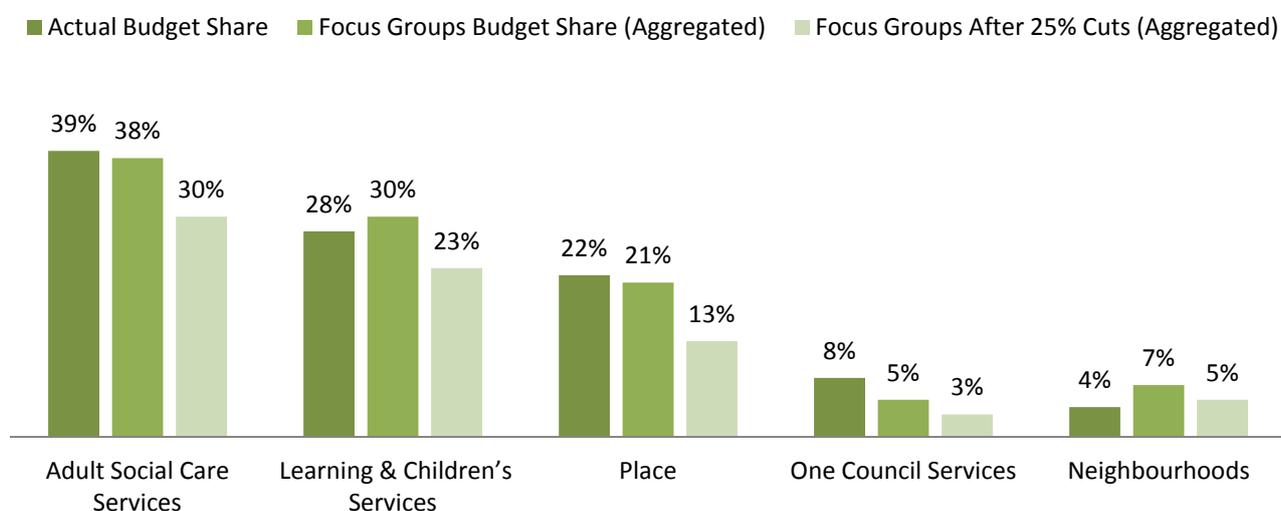
Services (Listed by Importance)	Importance to Residents	Satisfaction to Residents	Difference
Facilities for Young Children	4.28	3.36	0.92
Care and Support Services for Children and Young People	4.27	3.3	0.97
Trading Standards (keeping consumers safe)	4.27	3.71	<u>0.56</u>
Affordable Decent Housing	4.26	2.61	<u>1.65</u>
Local Transport Information	4.21	3.83	<u>0.38</u>
Activities for Teenagers	4.2	2.63	<u>1.57</u>
Sports and Leisure Facilities	4.2	3.55	0.65
Cultural Facilities (e.g. Libraries, Museums)	4.09	3.57	<u>0.52</u>
On Street Parking	4.07	3.02	1.05
Financial Assessments for Adult Social Care	4.02	3.15	0.87
Benefits Advice and Support	3.96	3.2	0.76
Rented Housing Provided by the Council	3.92	2.93	0.99
Community Activities	3.88	3.17	0.71

The four focus groups performed an exercise looking at budget allocation (**chart 4**); participants were asked to reallocate the council budget using 100 bricks then asked to make cuts of 25% to the overall budget. Following the cuts:

- *Adult Social Care Services* still received the largest allocation from participants 30%
- *Learning & Children’s Services* received an average of 23% of the budget
- *Place* received an average of 13% of the budget
- *One Council Services*: The post-cut average for this service was 3%
- *Neighbourhoods*: An average of 5% was assigned to the service

Focus Groups on Council Funding

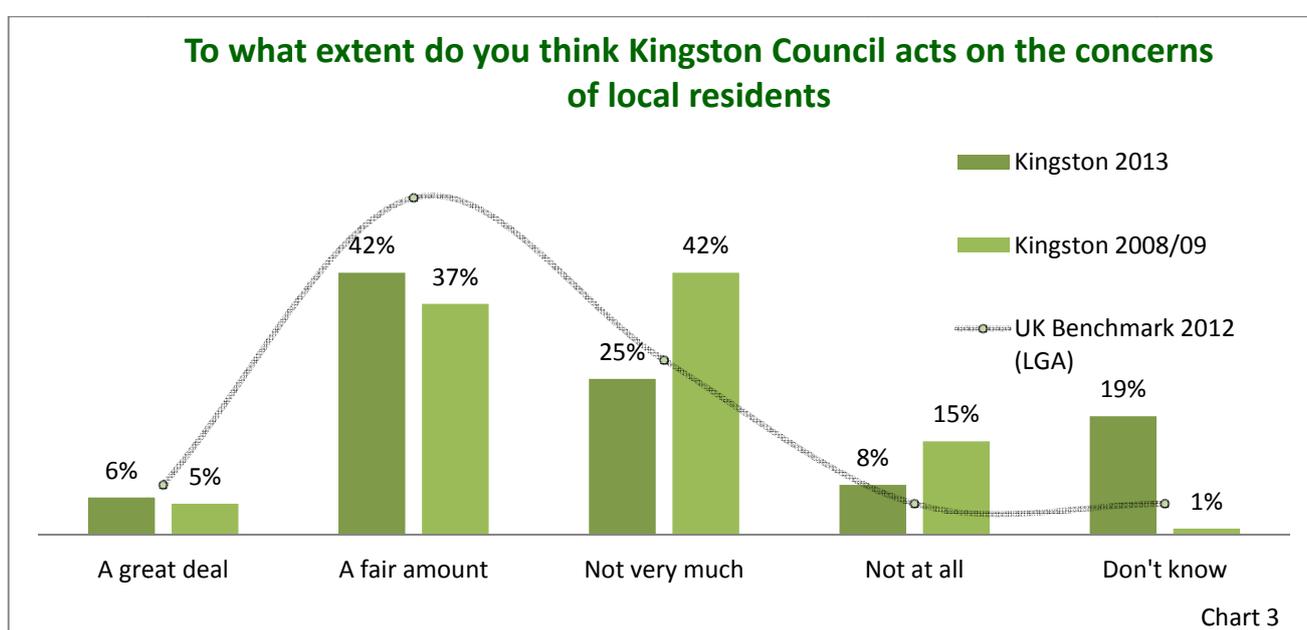
Chart 4



When asked about outsourcing, the focus groups accepted the logic behind it. However they would prefer to see ‘personal’ services such as Adult Social Care Services and Learning and Children’s Services kept within the direct control of the Council. These services are seen as a priority for residents and there was a feeling that a joint approach would detract Kingston Council’s focus away from the Borough. Concerns related to: whether the Council would have sufficient control over the new provider; the quality of provision and whether there would be a contact within the new organisation if a problem arose.

The Council

The results found that slightly less than half of the respondents (48%) believed that the Council acts on the concerns of local residents (**chart 3**).



When asked to say how positively they would speak about the Council, over one third (37%) said that they would speak positively. A similar proportion (39%) was non-committal having no views either way. However, one in five would speak negatively about the Council.

When surveyed, residents will usually rate value for money much lower than their overall satisfaction with Council services. This pattern was true for Kingston where 40% of participants agreed that the Council provides value for money (compared with 59% who were satisfied with the way the Council runs things). When breaking down by age, we found there to be statistically significant differences on opinions on value for money (**see table below**).

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Kingston Council provides value for money?							
TOTAL	16 - 25	26 – 35	36 - 45	46 – 55	56 – 65	66 – 75	76+
40% agree	48% agree	45% agree	37% agree	36% agree	34% agree	41% agree	49% agree

The survey data showed that 59% of residents trusted Kingston Council (**see table below**). However, the focus groups found lower levels of trust in the Council. The focus groups also brought up other concerns such as there being a lack of transparency at the Council and the groups felt the Council does not listen to residents and works to its own agenda and benefit.

How much do you trust The Council							
TOTAL	16 – 25	26 – 35	36 - 45	46 – 55	56 – 65	66 – 75	76+
59% trust	66% trust	65% trust	58% trust	60% trust	57% trust	52% trust	61% trust

Without exception all of the residents who attended the focus group discussions felt that it was vital for residents to trust the Council, especially as the Council is in charge of public money. Participants suggested a range of ways that the Council could improve the trust that residents place in the organization. These included: Being more transparent, improving communication and being more responsive to residents' concerns.

Communication

The survey found there to be a strong relationship between how well informed people felt they were and their perception of its performance. Effective Council communication was one of the most important drivers of reputation among local residents. Some issues were highlighted in regards communication. Residents:

- Did not know that they could get involved in consultation programmes (even though they wanted to)
- Did not feel that they were informed about the services and benefits that the Council provides
- Were not aware of the services that are paid for by their Council Tax

On balance residents found it easy to contact the Council (68% found it easy), however, significantly one quarter (23%) experienced some sort of difficulty. Notably, people with a disability or long term health problem found it harder to contact the Council than those without.

During the focus groups survey participants explained the manner they chose to contact the Council would be determined by the issue they wanted to resolve. For simple enquiries they preferred to use the website or if that failed send an e-mail or make a telephone enquiry. The majority would only visit the Council offices if they could not resolve the issue over the telephone. This was enforced by the survey data where 56% said that telephone was their preferred approach (57% had used this approach when they last contacted the Council).

A number of participants in telephone interviews had visited the new website since its launch. Most said the site was easy to navigate and that they were able to quickly and easily find what they were looking for. A small number of concerns were raised about the search facility.

Appetite for online contact was still relatively low with just 6% expressing a preference for the self-service web form, and 1% for web chat.

Final Thoughts

When considering priorities, the Council should understand that residents are not satisfied with the standard of provision of some services and should focus firstly on improving those which are important to residents. (This does not mean that any service should be neglected but the Council may wish to prioritise those which are important and in need of improvement). Through improving the services that residents value the most and effectively communicating with them the Council may be able to change residents' perception of the value for money that they receive.

Despite the areas for improvement the survey clearly found that the majority of residents find Kingston upon Thames to be a positive place to live, and, even if there are questions on value for money, residents still hold a high level of trust in the Council.