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Resident Survey 2018

Stephenson 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 STEPHENSON Ward from which there were 296 responses giving a confidence interval of +/-5.7% (worst case). Comparisons are made within the report to the overall survey which had responses of 4714 completed surveys. Differences of +/-5.9% 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 296 respondents.

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

1.1 Respondents living in the Stephenson ward are less satisfied with their area as a place to live than the overall sample. (19.6% were ‘very satisfied’ and 48.2% ‘fairly satisfied’ = overall satisfaction rate of 67.8% compared with the Borough – 75.6%).

1.2 Similarly there is a slightly lower level of agreement that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together and treat each other with respect. 58.6% of all respondents in Stephenson agreed with those compared to 64.9% overall. 16.1% of all respondents interviewed in this area disagreed with this statement (compared with 13.4% in the Borough overall).

1.3 There was no statistically observable difference between Stephenson and the Borough overall in respect of strength of belonging to the area. (Stephenson – very strongly – 28.0%, fairly strongly – 47.6% - overall strong sense of belonging 75.6% 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 less than a third of respondents in Stephenson said that they would speak positively about the Council (7.5% ‘without being asked’ and 24.1% ‘if asked about it’ – 31.6%). Conversely, 36.1% would speak negatively (20.2% ‘if asked’ and 15.9% ‘without being asked’). There are no statistically significant differences between Stephenson and the overall sample.

2.2 16.7% of residents in this ward agreed that they can influence decisions made by Darlington Borough Council compared to 12.9% of the Borough overall. There were also 5.3% fewer respondents disagreeing (54.7% 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 Stephenson in respect of the statement Darlington Borough Council is well run and good value for money is in line with the rest of the Borough with just 25.8% agreeing with this statement (DBC 28.9%). Residents here were as likely to both agree (30.2% cf. 29.1% for Borough overall) and disagree (45.2% cf. 43.3%) that the Council acts on the concerns of local residents. Residents in Stephenson were slightly more likely to agree (44.1% 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 Stephenson Ward was for shopping purposes albeit representing a lower number of responses than the overall sample (70.8% cf. overall sample 77.4%). Residents here were less likely to visit the town centre for leisure (25.5% cf. overall 37.2%), but as likely to do so for work (10.3% cf. with 11.8%).

3.2 22.0% of residents in Stephenson visit town centre events as a ‘dedicated trip’ – similar to the overall sample (23.6%).





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

Environmental Services

4.1 Respondents in Stephenson tended to be as satisfied with cleanliness in the town centre as the overall sample (Stephenson – 61.9% cf. overall sample – 64.4%) while satisfaction with the cleanliness of the local area showed a slightly lower satisfaction rate (42.3% satisfied cf. 48.6% for the overall sample).

4.2 Residents in this ward were slightly more satisfied (49.0% cf. overall 43.2%) and displayed a similar level dissatisfaction (33.0% cf. overall 35.2%) with grass cutting. Satisfaction was similar to the overall sample in respect of household waste collection (refuse and recycling) with a satisfaction rate of just 79.0% (28.2% ‘very satisfied’ and 50.8% ‘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 53.7% satisfaction (12.8% ‘very satisfied’ and 40.9% ‘fairly satisfied’). Overall sample satisfaction was 56.1%.

4.4 45.3% (cf. 50.8%) of respondents in Stephenson were satisfied with the cleanliness of public parks (11.3% ‘very’ and 33.9% ‘fairly satisfied’). There is no statistically significant difference between the ward and the overall sample. More local residents have not visited public parks (26.6%) than the overall sample (14.3%).





Facilities

4.5 The most used facility by residents of Stephenson provided by Darlington Borough Council was South Park with 59.1% respondents using this. 13.1% of respondents in Stephenson used it at least once a month, (at least once a week – 3.0%, at least monthly – 10.1%). The next most used facility is the Dolphin Centre with 55.5% using this – 18.8% of respondents using this at least monthly. Least used was Cockerton Library (1.0% 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 – exceeding 80% for most facilities. The exception was in relation to other Darlington Borough Council parks (satisfaction rate of 72.9%).

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 the Household Recycling Centre (12.2%) and South Park (5.9%).

4.8 When asked how often they intended to use Darlington Hippodrome in the future responses from residents living in Stephenson were around 10% less likely than the overall sample’s intention to make use of the facility. 12.5% were likely to use the theatre at least three to four times a year with a further 32.7% using it once or twice a year. (Overall usage at least once or twice a year – 45.2% cf. 59.2% overall). Reasons for never intending to use Darlington Hippodrome for this groups were largely related to cost (21.4%) or to the type of shows (4.2%). 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 Stephenson each being identified by more than 60% of all respondents. These were ‘a safe and caring community’ (72.5%) and ‘enough support for people when needed’ (66.7%). Least important was ‘more people active and involved’ (14.1%).

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 Stephenson ward the highest priority by far was that of improving community safety with a mean score of 1.59. This was followed by maintaining an attractive street scene environment (2.81). Least important here was developing an attractive visitor economy with a mean score of 4.03.





**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 (72.5%) felt that they were either very or fairly well informed about what can be recycled as part of the waste collection service. Only in respect of events and activities in the Borough (58.4%) and what the Council does (50.7%) did half or more of all respondents in Stephenson say that they were very or fairly well informed.

6.2 Conversely over half of all respondents felt that they were not very well or not well informed at all about the reasons the Council has to make savings (53.5%) and opportunities available to volunteer locally (54.7%).

6.3 As can be seen from the figure on the following pages sources of information used by respondents in Stephenson are largely similar to the overall sample. The ‘One Darlington’ magazine is the most used source (61.7% cf. 62.3%) followed by ‘word of mouth’, (40.6% cf. 52.9% of the overall sample). Residents here were less likely to use a local councillor or councillor newsletter than were the overall sample (3.5% in Stephenson cf. 15.4% of the overall sample). (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, 59.0% of respondents in Stephenson 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 (38.6%) and this is higher 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 39.4% of those who had made contact giving ‘other’ responses. These are shown in the appendices. The largest of the main responses was ‘to book or apply for something such as Council Tax discount, housing repair or bulky waste collection’ (31.8%).

6.6 Satisfaction with aspects of their last contact was high with 71.4% being satisfied with the ease of using their chosen method of contact and 64.8% with the information provided. 58.9% were satisfied with how the issue was resolved and over a third (38.9%) were dissatisfied with this. Also to note is that 29.1% of respondents who had made contact were dissatisfied with the information that had been provided.

6.7 When asked if they would be willing to contact Darlington Borough Council electronically 44.7% said that they would or already did so – a lower percentage than the overall sample (60.9%). 21.4% said that either hadn’t got regular internet or any internet access and 12.1% had concerns about or were not confident about using the internet to contact Darlington Borough Council.













**7. SECTION 7: HELPING OUT**

7.1 Only 15% (25.3% overall) of respondents living in the Stephenson ward had given unpaid help to any groups, clubs or organisations as an individual or through their employer, (85.0% 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 also considerably lower in Stephenson than in the overall sample (2.8% cf. 7.7% for the overall sample).

7.2 The main barriers to volunteering were respondents here ‘don’t have time’, (24.4%), with 42.5% 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 Stephenson feel less safe when outside in the dark than the overall sample, (51.6% feel safe compared to 61.1% of the overall sample). Similarly, 33.7% feel unsafe when outside in the dark compared with 25.4% of the overall sample. 87.8% respondents in the Stephenson ward reported feeling safe when outside in their local area during the day – a similar percentage to the overall sample (91.1%).

8.2 Perceptions of safety in the town centre both during the day (46.9% cf. 48.3%) and after dark (85.8% cf. 87.3%) are similar to the views of the overall sample.





**9. SECTION 9: ABOUT YOURSELF**

