


<b>Cabinet</b>	 <b>TOWER HAMLETS</b>
16th October 2024	
<b>Report of:</b> Steve Halsey, Chief Executive	<b>Classification:</b> Unrestricted
<b>Annual Resident Survey 2024</b>	

<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Mayor Lutfur Rahman</b>
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Martin Rogers, Senior Research Officer
<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome</b>	ALL – particularly priority 8: A council that works for and listens to you.

### Executive Summary

- This report summarises the key findings from the 2024 Annual Resident Survey.
- The Annual Resident Survey has been running since 1998 using a trusted methodology allowing comparisons over time.
- The survey is a reliable indicator of trends over time in resident perceptions and includes relevant national benchmark questions to enable comparison.
- Appendix 1 to this report summarises the main results, Appendix 2 covers other councils' residents surveys, and Appendix 3 explores council actions that may have influenced perception.

### Recommendations:

The Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the findings of the latest Annual Resident Survey.
2. Comment on the report and discuss how the results will be shared and used to contribute to service improvement.
3. Comment on priorities for further research.

## **1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 We are seeking CMT's approval for our proposed approach to wider dissemination of the survey results.

## **2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 As an organisation we could choose not to share the survey results more widely. However, this would not comply with the council's commitment to transparency.

## **3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

### **3.1 Context**

- 3.2 Tower Hamlets Annual Resident Survey (ARS) has been running since 1998. Using a proven methodology and a statistically representative sample of residents, it is a vital way of finding out how the residents of Tower Hamlets feel about their council and where they live. The survey is delivered by an external provider using the same methodology as previous editions.

- 3.3 In 2024 the ARS was based on a sample of 1,133 residents aged 18 and over, resident in the borough for at least six months. The sample was constructed to be representative of the characteristics of the overall population including ethnicity, age, and sex. Fieldwork took place from the 23<sup>rd</sup> March to the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

- 3.4 This report highlights some of the findings of the ARS 2024. The summary report shows comparisons with 2023 where possible, and with relevant benchmarks such as LGA data.

### **3.5 Key findings**

- 3.6 The 2024 results highlight many positives. Tower Hamlets continues to be an exemplar of community cohesion with 90% of residents saying that people from different backgrounds get on well, up from 87% in 2019. Tower Hamlets is a place that people want to live and work in – 84% of residents are satisfied with the local area, up six percentage points from 2023 and above the national benchmark (74%). Satisfaction with council run services amongst service users has generally improved across the board.

- 3.7 Despite a challenging period for the public sector in the last few years, overall satisfaction with the council is statistically unchanged from 2023 to 2024. This is a considerable achievement against the backdrop of recovery from the pandemic and the ongoing cost of living challenge.

- 3.8 Likewise, almost all of our results are above the national benchmark data provided by the LGA.

- 3.9 However, many people living in Tower Hamlets face enormous challenges that have been exacerbated during the cost of living crisis. In 2023 the cost of living was the number one personal concern for residents, displacing crime for only the second time. In 2024 it is tied with crime in first place, while three of the top four concerns relate to the cost of living.
- 3.10 For a more detailed summary of the results see Appendix 1 – Annual Resident Survey 2024 summary briefing (PowerPoint presentation). For a summary of benchmarking against comparator local authorities identified by the mayor and Chief Executive see Appendix 2. For detail presenting services results alongside council actions see Appendix 3.
- 3.11 **Next Steps and timeframe**
- 3.12 The results will be published after the report has been to Cabinet in Autumn 2024.
- 3.13 The survey results are scheduled for discussion at MAB on 9th October. An Overview and Scrutiny session on the survey findings is scheduled for Monday 21st October. The results will be disseminated to Service Managers at DLTs to inform service improvement. Staff will be further engaged via a POD session on the ARS results and internal communications.
- 3.14 The Chief Executive has agreed a budget for further research. He asked that options for further research be presented to him and the mayor after CMT, before MAB. The Chief Executive and mayor outlined that their priority for further work is around services, especially returns on investment, specifically:
- Investigating poor performance,
  - (especially) where ARS data seems at odds with any other data we have,
  - Where the findings can inform decision-making,
  - A long-term investigation on social cohesion.
- 3.15 Comment on priorities for further research would be welcomed.

#### **4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The contractor was selected on a number of criteria relating to diversity and equality including its ability to engage diverse communities and to provide interviewers who speak community languages. Our survey sample was large enough to provide statistically relevant results and balanced to be representative of the local demographic characteristics including ethnicity, age and sex. This provides a statistically reliable base upon which to extrapolate results to the wider collective community. Interrogation of smaller subsets of the main sample based upon equalities criteria provide less statistically reliable results due to their smaller size.

#### **5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There is no longer a statutory duty for local authorities to conduct an annual residents survey to a prescribed methodology.

## **6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

6.1 N/A –no requirement for finance comments

## **7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

7.1 N/A –no requirement for legal comments

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### **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

#### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Annual Resident Survey 2024 summary briefing (See separate PowerPoint document)
- Appendix 2 – Benchmarking against comparator local authorities
- Appendix 3 – Explaining the results.
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#### **Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012**

Previous editions of the Annual Resident Survey are available online [at the website](#).

#### **Officer contact details for documents:**

N/A

## Appendix 2

Benchmarking against comparator local authorities identified by the mayor and Chief Executive

London boroughs take various approaches to resident perception. Of the 33 boroughs, Bexley, Bromley, and Kensington and Chelsea have confirmed they do not run resident perception surveys at all. Tower Hamlets is one of seven that runs resident perception surveys annually. Four other boroughs (Ealing, Harrow, Richmond upon Thames, and Westminster) run the surveys annually using face-to-face methodology. Barking and Dagenham and Lambeth run them annually with different methodology.

Surveys of this kind are sensitive to differences in methodology, so comparisons should be treated with a great deal of caution. They are better suited to tracking change over time rather than comparing different authorities. The surveys, because they are measures of perception, will be sensitive to external influences such as the pandemic or the cost of living challenge.

Of the comparators identified:

### Hackney

Hackney last ran a resident survey in June and July 2022 using the same method as Tower Hamlets but with residents aged 16 and over, not 18 and over as in Tower Hamlets. Hackney's survey was published on their [Policy, evidence and statistics](#) web page.

	Tower Hamlets 2024	Hackney 2022
To what extent do you agree or disagree that this local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together? Summary Agree	90%	
Your local area is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together. Summary Agree		75%
This is a neighbourhood where people from different socio-economic or class backgrounds get on well together. Summary Agree		70%
Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live? Summary Satisfied	84%	85%
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way [Tower Hamlets/Hackney] Council runs things? Summary Satisfied	61%	65%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that [Hackney/Tower Hamlets] Council provides value for money? Summary Agree	51%	51%
How much do you trust [Tower Hamlets/Hackney] Council? Summary: A great deal / A fair amount	66%	67%
Overall, how well informed do you think [Tower Hamlets/Hackney] Council keeps residents about the	65%	57%

services and benefits it provides? Summary: Very well informed / Fairly well informed		
To what extent do you think [Tower Hamlets/Hackney] acts on the concerns of residents? Summary: A great deal / A fair amount	59%	50%
People using or dealing drugs (problem)	58%	38%
People being drunk and rowdy (problem)	30%	31%
Noisy neighbours (problem)	22%	24%
Vandalism and graffiti (problem)	36%	23%

### **Islington**

Islington most recently ran a Resident Survey in 2021. They ran a resident survey in 2023 focused on wellbeing that did, however, include some of the same questions as Tower Hamlets ARS. That 2021 edition used phone methodology, so different to Tower Hamlets. The results of 2021 were not published, 2023 results are expected to be published in Autumn 2024.

### **Newham**

Newham most recently ran a Resident Survey in 2023. Newham use a different methodology (called push to online) so any comparisons would not be like with like. The results are not yet publicly available.

### **Camden**

Camden last ran a resident survey in 2018. They have contacted us to learn from in the hope of running theirs again soon.

### Appendix 3

This document meets the Chief Executive's request for a cover report setting ARS findings against council actions that may impact the results. Because the ARS is a perception measure, caution must be exercised in examining how actions might impact resident views. The impact of the actions on perception cannot be proved, and further research is required to explore the issues in more depth.

The measure chosen for this report is the views of all residents because in the ARS the views of service users are based on smaller samples (numbers of people). The figures are therefore less reliable statistically and may be unrepresentative. The ARS is a survey of all residents, some of whom are service users, not a survey of service users. For that reason, services such as pest control and housing benefit are excluded from this analysis. The experiences of those services will be important to users, but they are few in number in a survey of all residents.

The information on council actions in this document has been taken from 2023/2024 Q4 Strategic Delivery and Performance Report (the most recent edition at time of writing).

Sport and leisure services and Idea Stores/libraries are excluded because they saw no statistically significant change on 2023. Those included are ordered by percentage point change year-on-year 2023 to 2024.

#### **Policing (up 16 points)**

Policing	2016	2017	2018	2019	2023	2024
Sum: Good	59%	64%	48%	41%	36%	52%

- The council has 45 Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers with 12 more due to start in November 2024 and an additional 7 to be recruited.
- We have recruited a Senior Commissioning Manager and adopted the new Target Operating Model.
- Additionally, the programme to upgrade CCTV cameras is complete. The community safety team deliver regular community engagement events through the year and in Q1 delivered 18 community events.

#### **Parks and green spaces (up 14)**

Parks and green spaces	2016	2017	2018	2019	2023	2024
Sum: Good	69%	71%	64%	66%	67%	81%

- Victoria Park has seen many events, and the council delivered 139 arts events last year across the borough.
- The tree-planting programme has overshot its target of 400 with 930 trees planted last year.
- There are 16 Outdoor Gyms in the borough available to residents.

#### **Recycling services and Waste collection (up 11 and 5 respectively)**

Waste collection	2016	2017	2018	2019	2023	2024
Sum: Good	70%	72%	72%	63%	63%	69%

Recycling	2016	2017	2018	2019	2023	2024
Sum: Good	66%	66%	61%	53%	62%	73%

- The improvement in public perception is a surprising result. Perception has improved despite other data showing a deterioration.
- The main projects that the service was working on to try to increase the recycling rate included the Flats Recycling Package project, improving recycling infrastructure, signage and communications at blocks of flats and estates.

### **Council and Social Housing (up 9 and 10 respectively)**

Council housing	2016	2017	2018	2019	2023	2024
Sum: Good	29%	42%	34%	36%	27%	36%

Social housing	2023	2024
Sum: Good	26%	36%

- All staff and services transferred back to the council from Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) on 1st November 2023 though we cannot say for sure what impact this has had on resident perception.
- Resident engagement via the Tenants' Voice and Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Strategy may have impacted residents' views.
- Advice and guidance was provided to residents on how best to minimise damp and mould.
- The Regulation 18 Local Plan Review Consultation engaged residents and stakeholders on our draft Local Plan.
- The delivery plan for HSF outlining the package of support was agreed by the mayor on 2nd June and subsequently submitted to DWP. The HSF funds Government allocation for Tower Hamlet for the financial year 2023/24 is £5,992,559.

### **Street cleaning (up 9)**

Street cleaning	2016	2017	2018	2019	2023	2024
Sum: Good	70%	72%	62%	58%	54%	63%

- The council committed to a review of all businesses to ensure they have contract in place.
- The council has increased enforcement fines for enviro-crime such as fly tipping, graffiti and littering. New monitoring mechanisms have been put in place to assess the impact of this action.
- The service conducts enforcement actions through the year. These consist of investigations, warning letters, statutory notices, fixed penalty notices, duty of care inspections and prosecutions. Fly-tipping incidents are comprised by customer/public reported fly-tips and those reported by, and pro-actively cleared by, our own and contractor's crews.
- Compared to Q4 2022/23 the percentage of enforcement actions to fly-tip incidents have gone up from 168% to 347% in Q4 2023/24.