



LONDON COUNCILLOR POLL

SPRING 2013

FOREWORD



I am delighted to present to you a summary of the second of our series of London Councillor surveys which we are commissioning through YouGov in the run up to the London local elections in May 2014.

Our first survey back in autumn 2012 produced some fascinating results from London's councillors and here again we gain a real insight into the views and priorities of the capital's local authority decision makers.

We were pleased that the number of councillors completing this survey was up from 215 in the autumn to 263 this time round, an overall response rate of 13% with every borough represented by an average of over eight councillors. By party, the response was also again reasonably reflective of London's make up, and the findings have of course been weighted to reflect the actual representation.

In this survey we asked some of the same questions as before around council priorities, the state of the local economy and the aviation capacity debate to track these issues over time so we can see if and how they change.

We focussed a number of questions on public services and public health which are very relevant given the end of the council year and the recent major changes in NHS structures. We also looked at the planning system which has gone through major changes relatively recently, following the enactment of the Localism Act, the arrival of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Government's decision to allow a change of property use from commercial to residential without the need for planning permission, something that has caused great concern amongst a number of London's local authorities and from which 11 are now exempt.

We hope that our clients and friends across the London scene find this survey interesting and of value to their work. We would welcome feedback including ideas for questions for the next survey which we intend to commission in the early autumn. Please contact Chris Madel or Stefan Swift on cm@londoncommunications.co.uk or ss@londoncommunications.co.uk for more information or with any comments.

Finally, our thanks to YouGov for their help and advice in preparing this survey and to London Councils for promoting this to their members.

Robert Gordon Clark

Executive Chairman

London Communications Agency

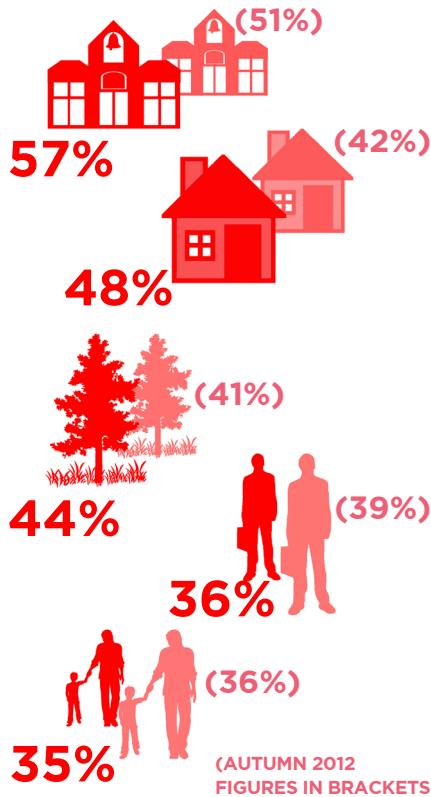
London Communications Agency

Middlesex House, 34-42 Cleveland St, London W1T 4JE

020 7612 8480 londoncommunications.co.uk

[@ldncomms](mailto:lca@londoncommunications.co.uk)

BOROUGH PRIORITIES AND SERVICES



IN OUR FIRST LONDON SURVEY, 51% OF ALL COUNCILLORS CHOSE THE CREATION OF MORE SCHOOL PLACES AS THE MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITY FOR THEIR LOCAL AUTHORITY. THIS REMAINS THE TOP ANSWER, WITH EVEN MORE (57%) NOW CONSIDERING IT AS THEIR MAIN CONCERN.

SUPPORT FOR DELIVERING MORE HOMES HAS INCREASED (FROM 42% TO 48%), AS HAS IMPROVING THE BOROUGH'S ENVIRONMENT (41%-44%) BUT SUPPORT FOR ATTRACTING JOBS (39%-36%) AND DELIVERING BETTER SOCIAL SERVICES AND IMPROVED PUBLIC HEALTH (36%-35%) HAS DROPPED.

At party level 59% of Conservatives consider improving the borough's environment as their top answer. Liberal Democrats consider both school places and more homes as their top priorities (almost two-thirds each); whilst Labour's top concern is delivering more homes, as it was in November.*

91% of all respondents believe that public services have suffered from the budget cuts imposed on councils over the last three years. 30% of respondents feel that 'public services have suffered dramatically', with a further 37% claiming that services have 'suffered somewhat', whilst 24% feel that services have 'suffered slightly'. Just 9% of London's councillors polled believe that 'public services have not been affected at all'.

When looking at areas that will be affected by budget cuts, children and adult social care, education and housing scored the highest when asked which services needed protection from cuts. On average, children's social care came out on top, with a score of 7.68 out of 10, closely followed by education (7.48), and adult social care (7.25).

THE NEW PLANNING SYSTEM

48% of councillors think that Neighbourhood Forums – community groups empowered to set local planning policy by the Localism Act – will not improve planning and development within their area compared with 33% who think it will.

Labour councillors are, perhaps surprisingly, more supportive of the creation of Neighbourhood Forums (34%) than the Conservatives (16%). Liberal Democrats were the most positive with 69% of respondents in favour.*

Similarly, 65% of all councillors opposed the introduction of Parish Councils in their area whilst only 18% were in favour. Parish Councils were re-introduced to the capital through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

78% OF COUNCILLORS ACROSS ALL POLITICAL PARTIES EXPRESSED THEIR OPPOSITION TO NEW POLICY THAT ALLOWS A CHANGE OF BUILDING USE FROM OFFICE TO RESIDENTIAL WITHOUT THE NEED FOR PLANNING PERMISSION. ONLY 17% WERE IN FAVOUR OF THE PLANS.

Only 13% of Labour councillors support the Government's change of use new policy compared with 28% of Conservatives. The Liberal Democrats were the most negative – only 12% of their respondents were in favour of the planned changes.



CHANGES IN HEALTH

London boroughs are now responsible for delivering a whole range of public health services – just over half of all councillors (54%) think this change will mean residents being consulted more about their health. But less than half (45%) think that public health services will improve as a result of the change, although Conservatives (53%) are more optimistic than Labour (44%) or Liberal Democrat (39%) councillors.*

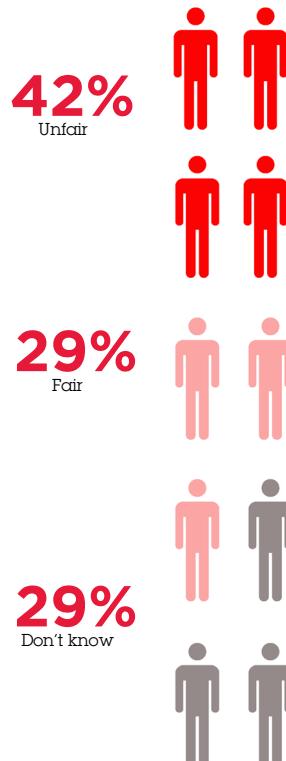
Only four in 10 councillors in the survey agree that the change will bring ‘an overall improvement in the general health of the population’. Labour councillors (44%) are fractionally more optimistic than either Conservative or Liberal Democrat (39% each) councillors.*

At party level, Labour councillors (58%) are more than twice as likely as Conservatives (29%) to think the funding formula for public health is unfair. The controversial formula used to decide what a borough gets favours authorities with a larger elderly population. Overall, public health issues are associated more with lifestyle than old age, and many in London’s local government believe the formula does not reflect the challenges of obesity, high levels of smoking and excessive drinking in many parts of London.

Three quarters (73%) of all councillors think it is too early to declare any progress on achieving closer integration between social care and healthcare services – now administered by local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), compared with nearly a quarter who think this work is already proving a success.

MORE THAN FOUR IN 10 (42%) COUNCILLORS THINK THEY HAVE RECEIVED AN UNFAIR LEVEL OF RESOURCES TO DELIVER THEIR PUBLIC HEALTH DUTIES, WITH NEARLY A THIRD MORE (29%) NOT KNOWING IF THE SETTLEMENT THEIR BOROUGH GOT IS FAIR OR UNFAIR.

However, councillors are optimistic about the ability of their social services departments to play their part in managing the long-term impact of major changes to London’s hospitals. More than half of Conservatives (56%) think that better supporting people with a long-term medical condition to live at home can be achieved, albeit ‘with some difficulty’, markedly more than Labour (39%) or Liberal Democrat (42%) councillors.*



TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE DEBATES

SINCE OUR LAST POLL, GATWICK HAS BECOME LONDON COUNCILLORS' PREFERRED SOLUTION TO INCREASE AVIATION CAPACITY IN LONDON AND THE SOUTH EAST. SUPPORT FOR A SECOND RUNWAY AT GATWICK AIRPORT (38% NOW COMPARED WITH 34% IN NOVEMBER 2012) HAS OVERTAKEN SUPPORT FOR A NEW HUB AIRPORT IN THE THAMES ESTUARY (32% COMPARED WITH 37%), WHILST A THIRD RUNWAY AT HEATHROW (25% COMPARED WITH 30%) IS CONSIDERED ONLY THE FIFTH BEST SOLUTION.

(AUTUMN 2012 FIGURES IN BRACKETS)



However, a Thames Estuary airport is still the favoured option for Conservative councillors, with 67% supportive within the Party. A second runway at Gatwick is the preferred choice for Labour councillors (40%), although a Heathrow third runway was close behind (35%). Over half (54%) of Liberal Democrats did not think aviation expansion should take place in London and the south east.*

In our last survey, Crossrail 2 was the second most important priority for investment behind Tube upgrades. In this survey – and following the publication of London First's interim report on the project – an overwhelming number of respondents declared support for Crossrail 2 (78%) and more than half (51%) support the current proposed route and stations.

A further 27% support Crossrail 2 but would like to see minor (16%) or major (11%) changes to either the proposed route or stations. Only 8% of the capital's councillors opposed the project outright.

METHODOLOGY

YouGov completed online interviews with 263 of London's 1,990 Councillors – or 13% – representing all of London's local authorities, including the City of London.

The fieldwork was carried out between 16 April and 1 May 2013.

The data has been weighted and is representative of London Councillors by gender, party, council control (i.e. Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Other), and London Plan sub-regions.

YouGov plc make every effort to provide representative information. All results are based on a sample and are therefore subject to statistical errors normally associated with sample-based information.

* Please note the small sample size for Liberal Democrat councillors – only 40 (unweighted) councillors were surveyed.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 263 councillors and the data is correct at a 95% confidence interval of +/- 6%.

Some questions allowed for more than one answer. Therefore, the results could add up to greater than 100%.

LONDON COMMUNICATIONS AGENCY

London Communications Agency
Middlesex House, 34-42 Cleveland St, London W1T 4JE
020 7612 8480 londoncommunications.co.uk
[@ldncomms](mailto:lca@londoncommunications.co.uk)

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