

Meeting	Cabinet
Portfolio Area	Leader of the Council / Resources & Performance
Date	14 January 2026



2025 RESIDENTS SURVEY FINDINGS

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the key findings from the 2025 Residents Survey, which was undertaken independently by an external research agency over a five-week period between May and June 2025. This report summarises the headline results and their implications, with the full survey report, methodology and detailed analysis set out in Appendix A.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the results from the latest Residents Survey, set out in Appendix A.
- 2.2 To note that the results compare very favourably with both the latest national benchmark Local Government Association (LGA) Resident Satisfaction Survey and previous Stevenage Residents Surveys across a number of areas.
- 2.3 To approve the 2025 Residents Survey findings being shared with all Members through the Co-operative Neighbourhood Strategic Board in March 2026, so that the results are used to inform ongoing neighbourhood priorities.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Regular resident surveys are widely recognised as best practice for local authorities such as Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), as they provide an

essential mechanism for monitoring satisfaction levels and engagement within the community. SBC has a strong track record in this area, having conducted surveys every two years between 2009 and 2017, followed by a survey in 2021 and the most recent in 2025, which reflects a shift to a four-year cycle. These surveys are a vital resource for understanding residents' views, shaping services, and guiding resource allocation, ensuring that the community has a meaningful voice in decision-making processes.

- 3.2 The surveys cover a broad range of topics, including overall satisfaction with the local area and the Council, how informed and engaged residents feel, and their priorities for service provision. This information helps SBC to build a comprehensive picture of local sentiment and identify emerging trends or concerns. Regular surveys also enable the Council to benchmark its performance against Local Government Association (LGA) standards, providing valuable insight into how SBC compares nationally and historically. This approach not only supports continuous improvement but also demonstrates transparency and accountability to residents.
- 3.3 Beyond measuring satisfaction, the insights gained from these surveys play a critical role in shaping strategy, service delivery, and communication. Understanding how residents consume information and access services allows the Council to tailor its messaging and engagement methods, ensuring they resonate with local communities. By focusing on the priorities highlighted by residents, SBC can build trust and confidence, reinforcing the perception that residents are at the heart of decision-making. Ultimately, this process helps the Council to maintain consistent service standards while adapting to changing needs and expectations.
- 3.4 The LGA has historically carried out a triannual telephone survey on resident satisfaction with councils, with the latest available at the time of writing from October 2024 (round 39) or June 2024 (round 38), depending on the metric. This presents an opportunity to benchmark the Council's survey results against LGA data, providing valuable context and identifying trends. The October 2024 benchmarking reported some of the lowest scores since polling began in areas such as whether local councils provide value for money and the level of trust residents have in their council. Nationally, there is a clear downward trajectory in terms of resident satisfaction, highlighting the challenging circumstances that the sector faces. However, despite this national erosion, the results of Stevenage's latest residents' survey do not follow this pattern, which is a positive indicator for the Council.
- 3.5 Comparisons with LGA national polling provide context and help identify possible relationships with other variables. These benchmarks are referenced throughout this report alongside current and historic Stevenage scores to illustrate performance trends. This analysis not only updates the Council's understanding of residents' views and satisfaction levels but also informs future policy and service provision as part of the Making Stevenage Even Better Corporate Plan. It further reflects the Council's Co-operative values and commitment to shaping services through continuous engagement with residents.

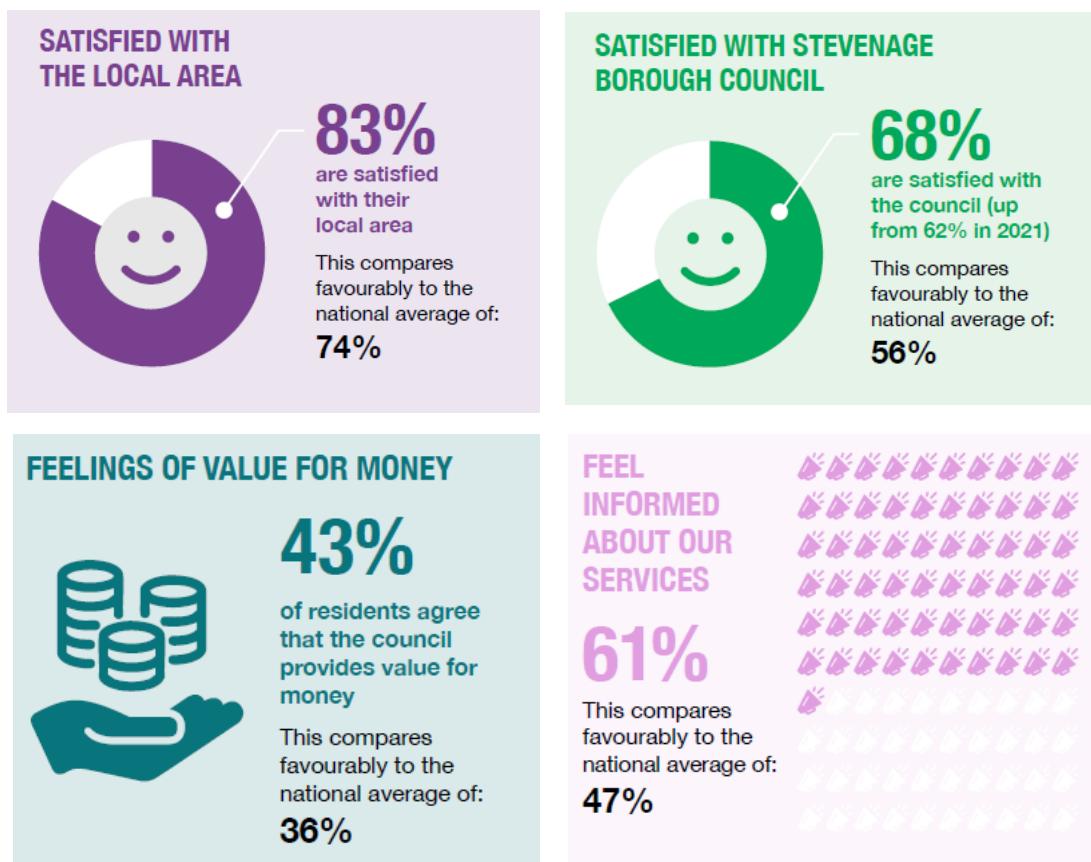
4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Council commissioned DJS Research to deliver its 2025 Residents' Survey, after a formal procurement process. DJS Research is an LGA registered resident survey supplier, having carried out market research for a number of sectors including both central and local Government. They have a specific long-standing track record of carrying out large-scale resident surveys in Lambeth, Southwark, Surrey, Suffolk, Nottinghamshire, North Warwickshire, Reading, North Tyneside,

Oxfordshire, Croydon, and Herefordshire, among others in the last two years alone.

- 4.2 The survey was conducted using a mixed-method approach of telephone (CATI) and face-to-face (CAPI) interviewing, compared to 2021 when only a telephone approach was taken. This combined methodology aimed to improve survey response rates and representativeness through targeting CAPI interviews at groups that are difficult to reach via telephone (e.g. young people).
- 4.3 The sample selected for participation in this Residents Survey was weighted to the latest population statistics across demographics such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, tenure and wards.
- 4.4 In total, 1,103 interviews were achieved across a fieldwork period of five weeks between May and June 2025.
- 4.5 Residents were asked a total of 18 questions covering a range of topics such as local area, satisfaction with the Council, safety, perceptions of value for money and resident priorities.
- 4.6 While a Residents Survey carried out every four years provides the Council's most formal and consistent overview of residents' perceptions, it sits alongside a wider set of engagement and insight gathered throughout the year. In particular, the Council's Co-operative Neighbourhoods approach and tenant involvement activity are designed to capture further feedback from residents and tenants on an ongoing basis, helping to augment and add depth to what is heard through the Residents Survey. This is complemented by programme and service-specific engagement linked to major areas of work such as housing development, regeneration and planning-related schemes. Together, this broader mix of feedback helps the Council to understand residents' experiences in more detail and shape improvements between survey cycles.
- 4.7 LGA benchmarking for residents' surveys is focused on responses from those aged 18 and over, and this report therefore reflects adult residents' views. As part of this Residents Survey exercise, and historically, the Council has not sought the views of under 18s through this method, instead prioritising more interactive and ongoing ways to engage young people. The Council is strengthening this approach further through the creation of a Youth Advisory Board, funded through the Council's partnership with Mission44. This is being co-produced with a working group of young people led by the Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor. The intention is for the Youth Advisory Board to be established as a standing forum that helps shape Council priorities and strengthens ongoing dialogue with a broader range of young people across the town.
- 4.8 The LGA periodically publishes regional level results and conducts national telephone polling three times a year. This national survey timetable has been carried out since September 2012 and measures six key indicators of resident satisfaction that councils can then utilise to place themselves within the national picture and carry out benchmarking against other local authorities. A series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) outlined below are tracked alongside the LGA benchmark to highlight trends over time.

4.9 Stevenage sits comfortably above or matches the national LGA average for aspects such as satisfaction with local area; satisfaction with the Council; agreements that the Council provides value for money; feelings of safety during the day; and feeling informed about council services. Further detail and analysis on these areas is provided below.

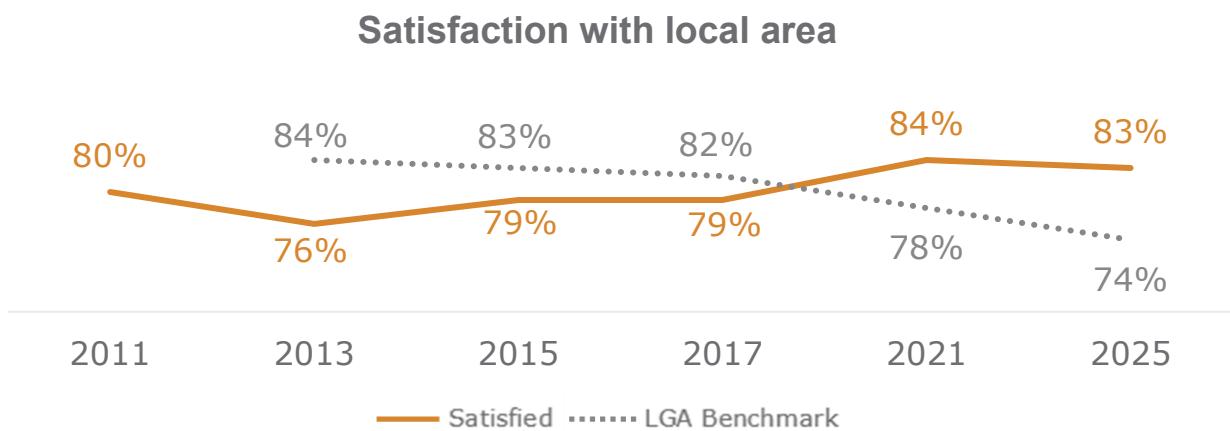


4.10 A summary of headline findings is provided below, with a full independent analysis of the results set out in Appendix A.

4.11 Local Area, Community And Safety

4.11.1 Residents were asked seven questions in relation to their local area, community and safety, as follows:

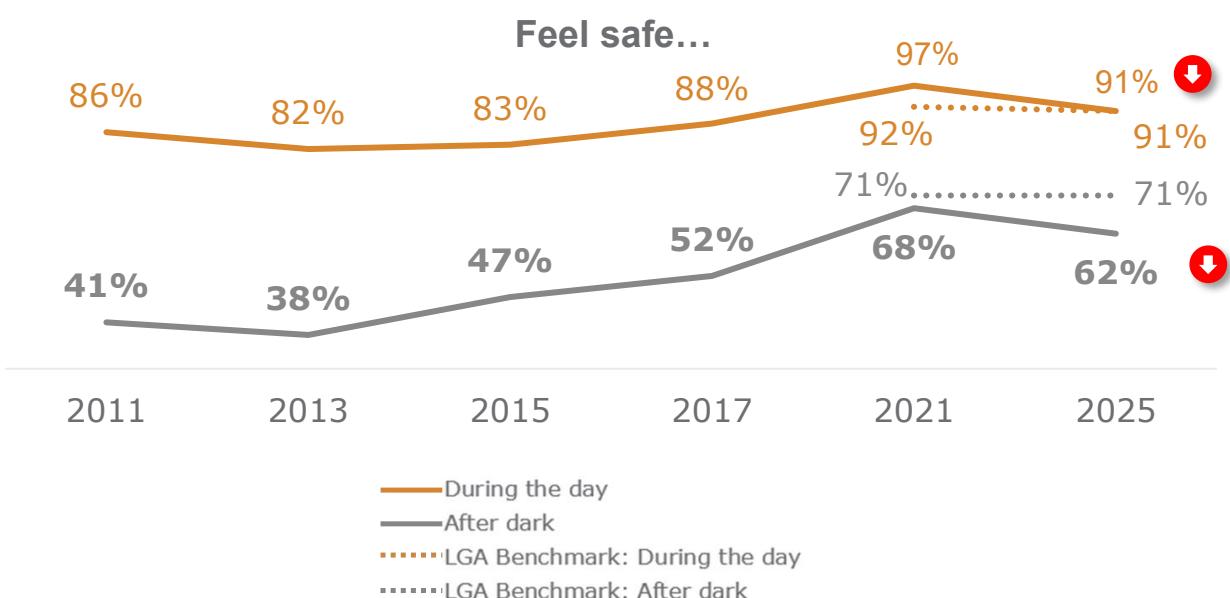
No.	Question
1	Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?
2	Are there any specific issues or aspects of your local area you would like to inform us about?
3	How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area after dark?
4	How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in your local area during the day?
5	What concerns you the most about being outside in your local area?
6	How strongly do you feel you belong to your local area?
7	To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local area is a place where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together?



4.11.2 83% of Stevenage residents are satisfied with their local area, maintaining the performance seen in 2021 (84%).

4.11.3 Over time, satisfaction with the local area in Stevenage has moved from the high-70% range into the low-80% range, while the LGA benchmark has fallen from the mid-80% range to 74% in 2025. Stevenage has therefore shifted from sitting below the national benchmark to outperforming it by 9 percentage points, at a time when satisfaction with local areas nationally has declined.

4.11.4 Residents raised a range of issues regarding their lived experience of local life. Concerns regarding crime and anti-social behaviour are most prominent (19%), followed by a general feeling that the area is suffering from decline and neglect (16%). It should be noted, however, that 16% of residents had no issues to raise, while 25% “don’t know”. The youngest cohort (18-34) are more likely to say that they have no specific issues (22%), while the oldest (65+) are more likely to flag a range of issues, including area decline (24%), parking issues (18%), and footpath condition (11%).



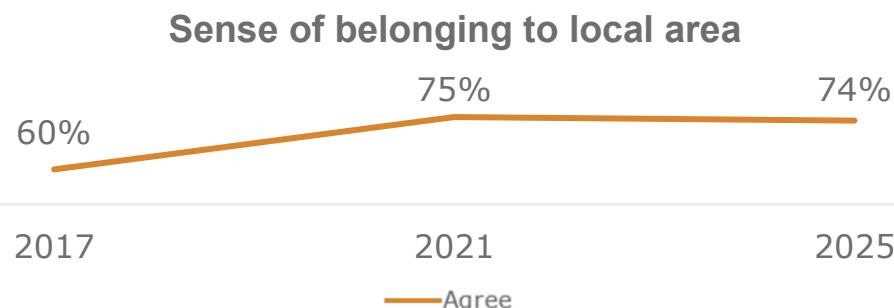
4.11.5 Nine in ten residents (91%) feel safe during the day; while this is in line with LGA average, it does represent a significant fall from the high seen in 2021 (97%). Meanwhile, six in ten (62%) feel safe after dark which is below both Stevenage's 2021 score (68%) and the LGA comparator (71%). The top three concerns among those who do not feel safe outside are gangs/groups of people hanging around (32%), drug dealing/use (30%) and youth crime/disruption (28%).

4.11.6 While the findings from this question have not improved compared to the previous Residents Survey in 2021, it is important to view these results as part

of the broader context. Firstly, it is important to note the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and consequent lockdowns that may have impacted the findings during 2021 and what may have ultimately increased perceived feelings of safety amongst residents during this time, such as residents being asked to stay at home under Health Protection Regulations. Secondly, national polling on community safety in 2023 revealed a notable contrast between urban and rural areas, with residents in urban locations expressing greater concern about crime levels, particularly anti-social behaviour (ASB). This suggests that, like other urban towns, Stevenage residents may be more likely to report lower levels of perceived safety compared to those living in rural areas. As a result of both of these factors, it is important to recognise that the findings reflect the impact of specific time-based circumstances, such as the pandemic, and the limitations of national benchmarks, which may not fully account for the unique challenges faced by urban areas like Stevenage.

4.11.7 Following the receipt of these results, targeted action has taken place with the Community Safety team to understand if there was alignment or disparity between the perceptions versus incidents of crime in Stevenage. According to LG Inform, Stevenage recorded 84.08 crimes per 1,000 people in the 12 months prior to Q2 2025, which is in line with the national average of 84.40 crimes per 1,000 people in England. So, whilst Stevenage's resident survey findings of perceptions of safety are below the LGA average, the actual recorded crime rates mirror the national picture. Further, the police recorded crime rate has been consistently lower in predominantly rural areas than in the predominantly urban areas such as Stevenage.

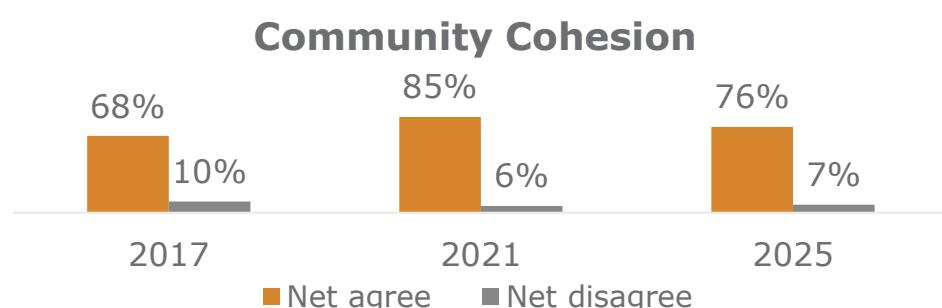
4.11.8 Further, whilst there are already dedicated programmes in place for many of the concerns residents identified through Stevenage Borough Council and partners, this information will help better allocate and align services to ultimately improve feelings of safety going forward.



4.11.9 A similar pattern also emerges in terms of sense of belonging to the local area. Like in 2021, three-quarters of residents feel either a very or fairly strong sense of belonging (74%).

4.11.10 The results for sense of belonging to local area follow a similar pattern to local area satisfaction, with overall positive sentiment matching 2021 levels despite a softening in the granular results.

4.11.11 Those aged 35-44 are more likely to feel a strong sense of belonging to the local area (82%). In contrast, those aged 45-54 are more likely to have answered not very/not at all strongly (31%).



4.11.12 It was found that a strong majority of residents agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds can get along (76%). This does represent a decline compared to 2021 (85%), but this year's figure is higher than 2017 (68%).

4.12 The Council

4.12.1 Residents were asked nine questions in relation to Stevenage Borough Council, as follows:

No.	Question
1	Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Stevenage Borough Council runs things?
2	To help the council understand residents' priorities in terms of the services it provides, can you please tell us which of the following areas you consider to be of importance to you?
3	Now using the same list, I would like you to tell me, of the service areas you consider to be important, can you please tell me your top three priority areas?
4	How often do you visit Stevenage Town Centre?
5	To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council Tax paid to Stevenage Borough Council provides value for money?
6	The council continues to consider efficiencies and make savings where possible, please tell us your preference of where they should do this for each of the following options by ordering them 1 to 5, when 1 is most preferred and 5 is least preferred?
7	Overall, how well informed do you think Stevenage Borough Council keeps residents informed about the services it provides?
8	During the past 12 months, how have you accessed information about the council and its services?
9	Do you have an online personal council account? If not, could you please tell us why?

Satisfaction with Stevenage Borough Council



4.12.2 Satisfaction with the Council has increased significantly compared to 2021, rising from 62% to 68%. The Council now stands 12 percentage points above the latest LGA benchmark score (56%).

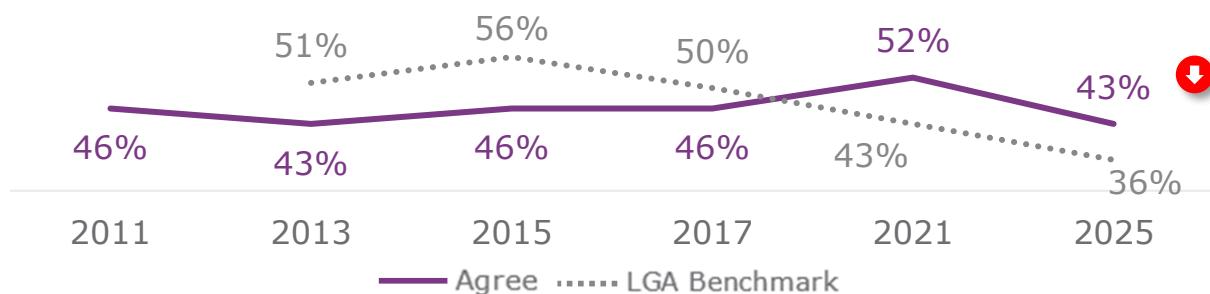
4.12.3 Historically, Stevenage's satisfaction scores were a few points below the national benchmark and fell to 56% in 2017, when the LGA figure was around 65%. Since then, national satisfaction with councils has fallen to 56%, while satisfaction with Stevenage Borough Council has recovered and improved to 68%. This represents a clear reversal of the previous gap and indicates a stronger relative position for Stevenage despite the continued financial pressures facing local government.

4.12.4 In terms of service provision, views are largely consistent with the previous survey, although there are a few notable deviations for services that are considered less important. Specifically, there have been significant upticks in the importance ratings for the enforcement of parking restrictions, arts and cultural activities, local community/voluntary groups, and town centre/leisure park regeneration. In contrast, the percentage who think efforts to reach net-zero are important has declined by 10 percentage points, although it should be noted that three-quarters of residents do still deem this to be very or fairly important.

4.12.5 Following on from this, residents were asked to select their top three priority services from the same list. Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour emerges as a clear priority, (47%), and this is unsurprising given it was the top theme mentioned when residents were asked about specific issues affecting their local area. The next most selected priorities are housing (33%) and clean streets (32%). The council should look to prioritise these areas in order to help improve satisfaction going forward.

4.12.6 There has also been an uptick in the percentage of residents who visit the city centre regularly, particularly for the frequency "at least once a week". Interestingly, the percentage who never visit the city centre has declined by 8 percentage points in this survey. Nearly a quarter of 18–44-year-olds visit the town centre every day or most days (23%). This percentage is five times higher than 45–64-year-olds and twice as high as those aged 65+.

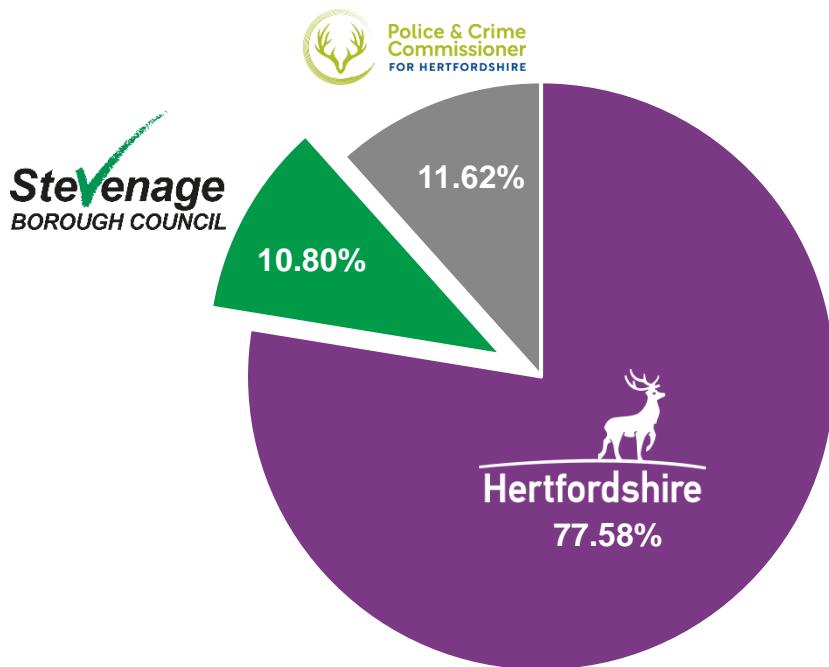
Agreement that the Council provides value for money



4.12.7 Agreement that Stevenage Borough Council provides value for money sits at 43%, which is 7% above the LGA's national average of 36% but represents a decline from 52% from the last Residents Survey in 2021. When asked to consider ways to generate efficiencies and extra income for the Council, residents' most preferred option is to modernise services or sell more of the Council's services.

4.12.8 When analysing residents' views on value for money, local and national evidence suggests that perceptions of council tax are a significant factor, particularly in relation to the rate of increase and its link to funding key local services. These concerns sit within the wider context of reductions in central government funding to local authorities since 2010, which has increased reliance on council tax to support essential statutory services. To help manage affordability for residents most in need of support, the Council operates a Council Tax Support Scheme. Eligible working-age residents on maximum

support pay 8.5% of their council tax bill, while support for pension-age residents is delivered in line with nationally prescribed requirements, ensuring a consistent safeguard for pension-age households.



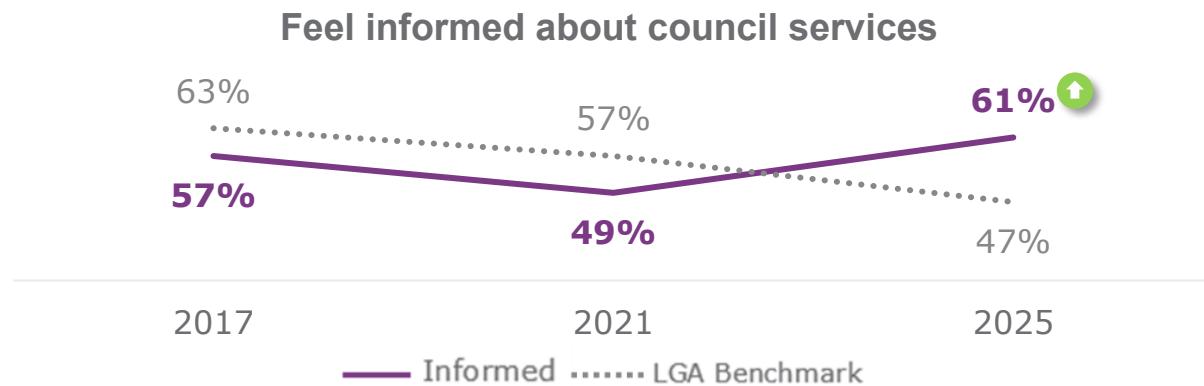
Authority	2024/25	2025/26	Cost per week	Increase	Share
Hertfordshire County Council	£1,498.45	£1,573.22	£30.25	4.99%	77.58%
Stevenage Borough Council	£212.68	£219.03	£4.21	2.99%	10.80%
Police and Crime Commissioner	£223.11	£235.56	£4.53	5.58%	11.62%
Total	£1,934.24	£2,027.81	£39.00	4.84%	100.00%

4.12.9 It is worth noting that the Council has limited control over the overall increase in council tax bills, as the majority of the charge is set by other authorities. The Borough Council element represents 10.80% of the total council tax collected and equates to £4.21 per week for residents. While the Borough Council's charge has increased by 2.99%, the larger elements of the bill relate to Hertfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner, meaning the overall change experienced by residents is often driven by factors beyond the Council's direct control.

4.12.10 Over the longer term, residents' views of whether the Council provides value for money have been relatively stable, at or around the current findings. However, prior to 2017 these scores sat several percentage points below the LGA national benchmark. Only in 2021 and 2025 have Stevenage's value for money ratings moved above the national picture, at a time when national perceptions have fallen sharply from 50% in 2017 to 36% in 2025. This suggests that, while there is more to do, the Council has strengthened its relative position on value for money compared with other areas.

4.12.11 As the Council strives to provide the most efficient services for its residents in the context of sustained financial pressures on local government and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, these results will be utilised to explore where additional productivity gains and income can be generated. The perceptions of value for money findings have been shared with the Council's Resources Portfolio Holder, Section 151 Officer, the Strategic Leadership Team

and Finance team to determine what can be specifically targeted and actioned to help increase perceived value for money moving forward.



4.12.12 There has also been an improvement in the percentage who feel informed about council services. In 2021, just under half (49%) felt very or fairly well informed, but this has increased to three in five (61%). This means that Stevenage is comfortably ahead of the LGA benchmark (47%).

4.12.13 Residents' top way of accessing information is accessing the council website, with nearly half of residents indicating that they do this (48%). Around two-thirds of residents do not have an online personal council account, and a quarter of this group say this is because they were unaware of it, rising to a third for those aged 45+.

4.12.14 Whilst this is largely good news in terms of greater engagement with residents, considerably above the national average, these results were shared directly with the Council's Communications team to reinforce the success of the actions they are currently taking but also the necessity for increased exposure of online council website accounts. These findings will help to continue to drive forward the perception that Stevenage Borough Council is consistently and effectively communicating and engaging with its residents.

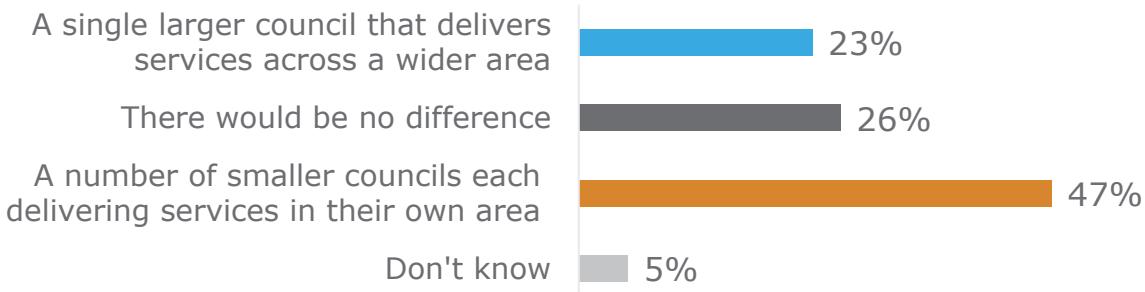
4.13 Local Government Reorganisation & Devolution

4.13.1 Residents were asked two questions in relation to Local Government Reorganisation & Devolution, as follows:

No.	Question
1	Stevenage Borough Council currently provides local services such as waste collection, leisure, planning, and housing. In your view, which of the following approaches would be more effective for maintaining the quality of these services?
2	The government is proposing to delegate further powers to local government. This is often referred to as devolution. What would be your top three priorities to improve your area through Devolution?

4.13.2 When asked to consider the ideal council size for maintaining the quality of services, a plurality of residents opt for a smaller council (47%). This is around double the percentage who would prefer a larger council (23%). Meanwhile, 26% do not feel like it would make a difference one way or the other.

Ideal Council Size



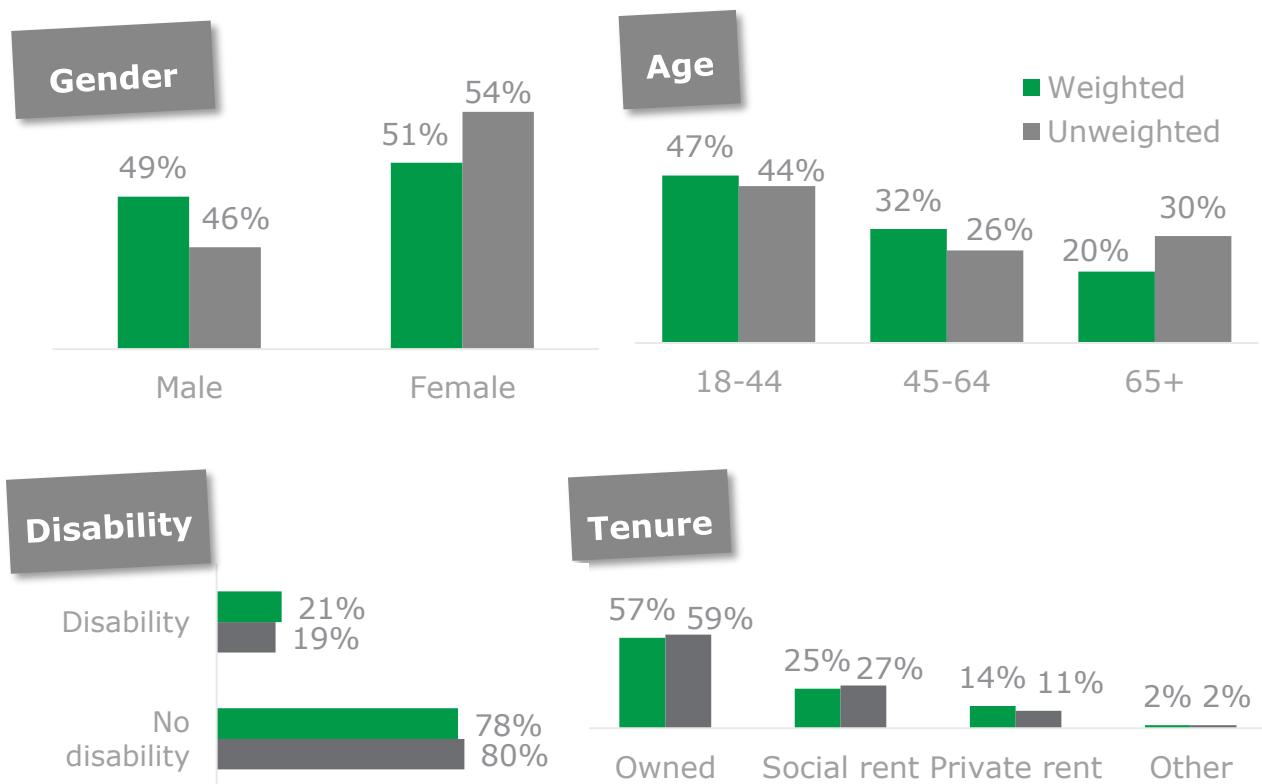
4.13.3 In terms of devolution, residents are most eager to see progress in terms of affordable housing and planning (59%), followed by health and public safety (52%). Traffic and highways (44%) and skills and employment support (41%) also represent priorities for a substantial number of residents.

4.13.4 Housing and planning are especially salient to those aged 18-44, with 67% selecting housing as a top priority for devolution.

4.13.5 These findings were used to help inform Hertfordshire's joint Local Government Reorganisation Proposal for either two, three or four Unitary Authorities for Hertfordshire. The joint proposal outlines how local government will be reshaped to deliver simple, accountable, and sustainable services for all residents.

4.14 Respondent Profile

4.14.1 As referenced previously, the sample selected for participation in this Residents Survey was weighted to the latest population statistics across demographics such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, tenure and wards. Therefore, the results that are reported as part of this survey and linked report are the weighted figures, so the published outputs already adjust for this using the latest population statistics. A few examples are shown below, with a full breakdown available in the linked full findings report. Please note that figures may not sum to 100% due to refusals (not charted) or rounding:



4.14.2 A stratified random quota sampling approach was adopted for the CATI (telephone) component of the research and in-street interviewing was used for the CAPI (face-to-face) element.

4.14.3 In total, 1,103 interviews were achieved across a fieldwork period of five weeks between May and June 2025; 623 interviews via CATI and 480 via CAPI. This is above the sample size recommended by LGA guidance as an acceptable level of accuracy for a survey of this nature. Further, the robustness of the sample has been strengthened since the last residents survey, as only 764 interviews were carried out in 2021, compared to 1,103 interviews in 2025.

4.14.4 A sample size of 1,103 for the survey gives a sampling error of +/-2.9% based on a statistic of 50% at the 95% confidence interval. A 95% confidence level with a sample of around 1,000 respondents is widely regarded as an industry standard for robust, large scale resident surveys in local government. In practice, this means that if the survey reports that 50% of respondents hold a particular view, there is 95% confidence that the true proportion among all adult residents lies between 47.1% and 52.9%.

4.14.5 There has been a national shift in the preferred survey fieldwork methodology, with more organisations using face-to-face methods to improve representation in younger age groups, where telephone-only approaches often struggle. This approach was taken during the 2025 Residents Survey, in contrast to previous iterations when telephone-only approaches were taken. Whilst this does not alter the positivity of the responses, it simply makes it easier to capture a representative sample size in those younger age groups.

4.15 Next Steps

4.15.1 Following the receipt of the findings of the 2025 Resident Survey, follow up analysis was undertaken with specific teams throughout the remainder of the 2025/26 financial year.

4.15.2 Targeted action was undertaken to both champion the Council's successes such as maintaining high satisfaction levels despite the erosion of the LGA benchmarking figures, and address the challenge of the national mood shifting in terms of value for money and perceptions of safety. Collaboration with relevant teams such as Housing & Neighbourhoods, Community Safety, Communications, Business Change & Digital, Finance and Stevenage Direct Services has taken place to specifically dissect the key findings linked to their associated areas.

4.15.3 The key findings will be used as an evidence base to help target interventions for the 'Heart of the Town' initiative, inform prioritisation as part of the upcoming 80th anniversary of the town celebrations, and feed into Local Government Reorganisation transition planning going forward.

4.15.4 They will also be utilised to inform the prioritisation and utilisation of the Community Infrastructure Levy as the Council delivers new development and infrastructure across the town. It will also feed into future budget decisions regarding the prioritisation of savings.

4.15.5 Further, as part of the Co-operative Neighbourhood Strategic Board in March, a presentation to all Members will be delivered to ensure widespread dissemination of these findings and continued targeted action.

4.15.6 Triangulation with the newly released Indices of Multiple Deprivation will also be undertaken to align national data with resident feedback and target combined priorities.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1.1 The Council historically budgets for the Residents Survey through the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 5.1.2 The implementation of any actions from recommendations in the Residents Survey will be the responsibility of each service area and any associated costs arising will be met from within their existing resources.

5.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, legal advice will be provided, whenever required, in relation to the Council's responses to the residents' feedback.

5.3 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.3.1 SBC and DJS Research ensured the survey design, execution and analysis considered the needs and experiences of residents across all protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- 5.3.2 A representative sample of the borough, target quotas and weighting were used based on age, gender, ethnicity, economic status, disability and tenure. Weighting was applied where necessary to ensure the final results were representative of the adult population of Stevenage.

5.4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the council in agreeing the recommendation(s).
- 5.4.2 The Council has an embedded approach to risk management that mitigates any adverse effect on delivery of the Council's objectives and internal control processes and provides good governance assurance.

5.5 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.5.1 The Council declared a climate change emergency in June 2019 with a resolution to work towards a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030. This report includes findings relating to climate change and will be used to help inform future decision making.

6 APPENDICES / SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Appendix A - Residents Survey 2025 Findings Report