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Councillor remuneration and citizen engagement with councillors: Survey of public attitudes

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Survey of public attitudes

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Welsh Government is undertaking a programme of research to find out more about the role of councillors in Wales and their remuneration. This programme of work builds on an evaluation of the first phase of the Welsh Government's Diversity in Democracy programme carried out in 2019 which identified the need for a more targeted and tailored approach to supporting under-represented groups to help them actively participate in local democracy. The evaluation also highlighted a lack of awareness among the general public of the role of the councillor and the important contribution they make on behalf of communities.
- 1.2 One element of this research has involved examining general public perceptions of the role of councillors and the work they do and exploring the extent to which those perceptions influence the respect shown to councillors and general support for the principle of providing payments for their work. The Welsh Government commissioned additional questions about the role of councillors in the March 2021 wave of the Wales Omnibus Survey (conducted by Beaufort Research Ltd), with analysis conducted in-house by Knowledge and Analytical Services.
- 1.3 Additional research is being undertaken alongside this work, including an evidence review of councillor remuneration in Wales and a small range of case study countries, and a survey of councillors at principal and community and town council levels about their workloads and remuneration.
- 1.4 The remainder of this report outlines the methodology for the survey and presents key findings under the following themes:
 - levels of public interest in councillors and the work they do;
 - councillors' allowances and remuneration;
 - the contribution of councillors within local communities; and
 - behaviour and attitudes towards councillors at a community level.

2. Methodology

About the survey

- 2.1 The Wales Omnibus Survey involves interviews with a representative sample of a minimum of 1,000 adults aged 16 years and over who are resident in Wales. Fieldwork for the March 2021 wave of the Wales Omnibus Survey took place between 2 and 9 March 2021. A total of 1,000 interviews were completed.
- 2.2 The Covid-19 public health crisis prevented the survey from being carried out in its usual manner of face to face interviewing at selected sample points throughout Wales. Instead interviews were undertaken online using the [Cint online panel exchange platform](#), a software that is used in digital survey-based research to gather insights from a large number of respondents. The online surveys were configured for PC/tablet and smartphone completion and English and Welsh versions of each were offered to every respondent.

Significant differences

- 2.3 Statistical significance testing of the data was undertaken in the analysis to aid interpretation of the results. When a difference between two sub-groups is described as being 'significant' in this report, this means that the probability of obtaining the finding by chance is less than one in 20 - i.e. it is likely to reflect a genuine relationship in the population.
- 2.4 When survey data are tested for statistical significance, an assumption is made that the achieved sample represents a random sample of the relevant population. The Wales Omnibus Survey uses proportional quota sampling. Genuine statistical significance cannot, strictly speaking, be established for this sampling method. Therefore, 'significant' differences based on data from the Wales Omnibus Survey refer to a pseudo-statistically significant difference at the 95 per cent confidence level.
- 2.5 More information on the survey methodologies, along with definitions of regions, educational attainment and socio-economic group classifications used in this report, are included in Annex A. Information about the additional questions commissioned in the March 2021 wave of the Wales Omnibus Survey is attached at Annex B.

3. Findings

Levels of public interest in councillors and in the work that they do

Respondents to the Wales Omnibus Survey appeared to have a good understanding of the role of local government councillors in Wales and offered a range of views on their day-to-day work.

- 3.1 The survey included a series of questions to gauge levels of interest among the population of local government councillors in Wales and in the work that they do.
- 3.2 All respondents were asked what their understanding was of what councillors do as part of their role. This question allowed an open-ended response to encourage respondents to share opinions and provide a wide range perspectives on the role of councillors.
- 3.3 Around a fifth (21 per cent) thought that councillors represented their local areas and acted on behalf of local residents. A further 16 per cent stated that they had responsibility for managing local services, while 14 per cent thought they had responsibility for 'making decisions about local services' (Table 1).

Table 1: What is your understanding of what councillors do?

Response	Percentage of respondents ^a
Represent local area and act on behalf of local residents	21
Run or manage local services	16
Making decisions about local services	14
Help local area / community	9
In charge of local budgets	9
Not very much / they do nothing	8
Respond to local problems and concerns	6
Other responses reported by less than 5 per cent of respondents ^b	
Approve planning / new buildings / infrastructure	
Attend meetings / sit on committees	
Improve / look after local area	

Base: All respondents to the Wales Omnibus Survey - March 2021 wave (1,000 respondents)

^a Table may sum to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to give more than one answer.

^b 'Other' responses are presented alphabetically.

The majority of respondents had heard of town councillors and county councillors, but there appeared to be lower awareness of community councillors.

- 3.4 Respondents were asked which type of councillors they had heard of. Over three quarters of respondents (78 per cent) had heard of town councillors, and a similar proportion (73 per cent) had heard of county councillors. Half of all respondents had heard of community councillors, while less than a tenth (7 per cent) stated that they had not heard of any of the councillors mentioned (Table 2).

Table 2: Which of the following types of councillors have you heard of?

Response	Percentage of respondents ^a
Town Councillor	78
County Councillor	73
Community Councillor	50
I have not heard of any of the above	7

Base: 1,000 respondents

^a Table may sum to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to give more than one answer.

- 3.5 There were significant differences in the proportion of respondents who had heard of the different types of councillors by age. A higher proportion of respondents aged 16-34 years (12 per cent) had not heard of any of the councillors listed, compared with 4 per cent of respondents aged 35-44 years and 4 per cent of respondents over the age of 55 years.
- 3.6 All respondents were asked how much they knew about the work of their local councillors. Half of respondents (50 per cent) thought they knew a 'fair amount' or 'a great deal' about their local councillors, while four out of ten (41 per cent) said they knew nothing at all about the work of their councillors. Around a tenth (9 per cent) said they 'did not know' (Table 3).

Table 3: How much, if anything, would you say you know about the work of your local councillors?

Response	Percentage of respondents ^a
A fair amount	44
Nothing at all	41
Don't know / I have no opinion	9
A great deal	6

Base: 1,000 respondents

^a Table may sum to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to give more than one answer.

- 3.7 There were some differences in the proportion of respondents who stated that they knew about the work of their local councillors by age.
- Most respondents said they had an interest in the work of their councillors.**
- 3.8 The survey asked respondents how much interest they had in the work of their local councillors. Over half of all respondents (54 per cent) said they had quite a bit or some interest in the work of their councillors and an additional 6 per cent said they had a great deal of interest. Over a third of respondents (36 per cent) responded negatively to this question and said they had very little interest or no interest at all in the work of their councillors (Table 4).

Table 4: How much interest do you have in what councillors do?

	Percentage of respondents ^a
Somewhat	36
Very little	28
Quite a bit	18
Nothing at all	8
A great deal	6
Don't know / I have no opinion	3

Base: 1,000 respondents

^a Table may sum to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to give more than one answer.

3.9 There was a small difference in the proportion of respondents who responded negatively to this question by age. Around two out of five respondents (39 per cent) aged 16-34 years said that they had very little interest or no interest at all in the work of their local councillors, compared with 37 per cent of 35-54 year olds and 34 per cent of respondents aged 55+ years.

The majority of respondents said they would like to hear more about the work of councillors in their area.

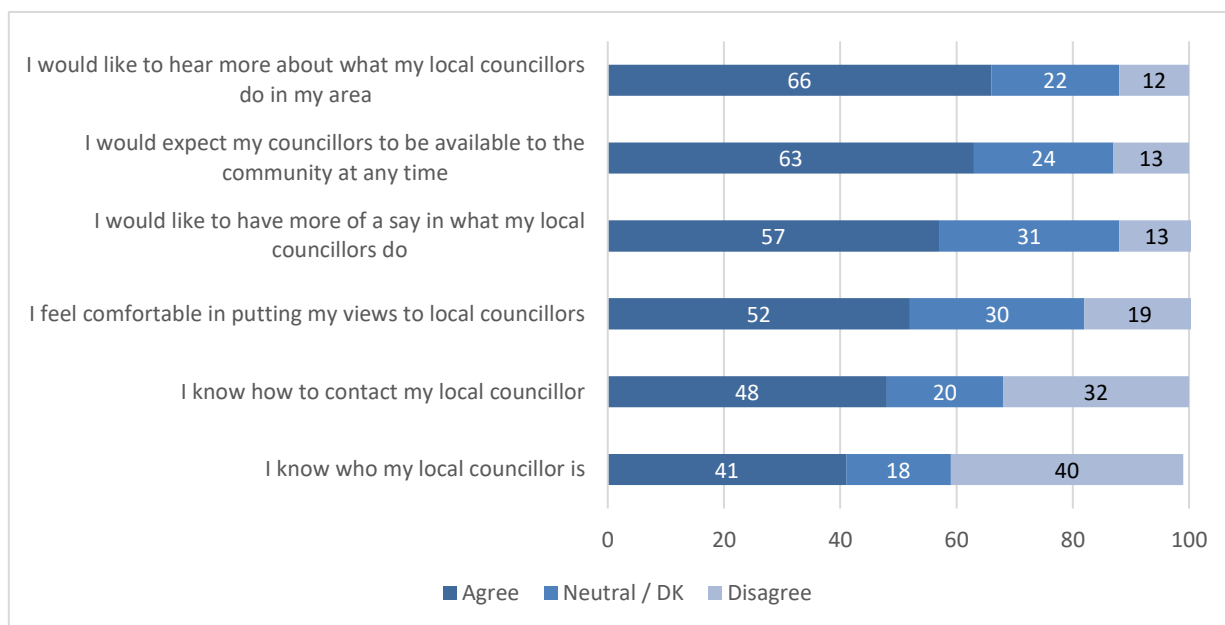
3.10 Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements about their local councillors:

- I would like to hear more about what my local councillors do in my area
- I would like to have more of a say in what my local councillors do
- I feel comfortable in putting my views to local councillors
- I would expect my councillors to be available to the community at any time
- I know who my local councillor is
- I know how to contact my local councillor

3.11 As Figure 1 shows, two-thirds of respondents (66 per cent) agreed they would like to hear more about the work of councillors in their area. There were significant differences by age, with respondents aged 55+ years (70 per cent) and 35-54 years (68 per cent) more likely to agree than those aged 16-34 years (59 per cent).

3.12 Nearly three-fifths of respondents (57 per cent) agreed that they would like to have more say in what local councillors do in their area. There were no significant differences in responses to this statement by age, socio-economic group or gender.

Figure 1: Statements about councillors



Base: 1,000 respondents.

'Agree' category includes 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree'; 'Neutral' category includes 'Neither agree nor disagree' and 'Don't know' and 'Disagree' category includes 'Strongly disagree' and 'Disagree'.

3.13 Around half of all respondents (52 per cent) agreed with the statement 'I feel comfortable putting my views to local councillors'. Around one in five respondents (19 per cent) disagreed with the statement.

3.14 There were significant differences in responses to this statement by age, with respondents aged 55+ years (60 per cent) and aged 35-54 years (47 per cent) more likely to agree than those aged 16-34 years (45 per cent).

3.15 Respondents were more unanimous when asked to respond to the statement: 'I would expect my councillors to be available to the community at any time'. Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) agreed with the statement and around one in ten respondents (13 per cent) disagreed with the statement.

3.16 There was a small difference in responses to this statement by age and socio-economic group. The proportion of respondents who agreed was highest among respondents:

- aged over 55 years (66 per cent) compared with 62 per cent of 16-34 year olds and 60 per cent of 35-54 year olds; and
- from C2DE socio-economic groups (66 per cent) compared with those from ABC1 socio-economic groups (60 per cent).

3.17 Two out of five respondents (40 per cent) agreed with the statement 'I know who my local councillor is'. The same proportion of respondents disagreed with the statement (40 per cent).

3.18 There was a difference in responses by age, with the proportion who agreed highest among respondents aged over 55 years, compared with 41 per cent for 35-54 year olds and around a third (35 per cent) of 16-34 year olds.

3.19 Almost half of all respondents (48 per cent) agreed with the statement 'I know how to contact my local councillor'. Around a third (32 per cent) tended to disagree with the statement.

3.20 There was a significant difference in responses by age and socio-economic group. The proportion who agreed with the statement was highest among respondents:

- aged over 55 years (58 per cent) compared with 46 per cent of those aged 35-54 years and 38 per cent of 16-34 year olds; and
- from ABC1 socio-economic groups (51 per cent) compared with those from C2DE socio-economic groups (45 per cent).

A third of respondents did not think that 'anyone' could become a councillor and most said they had no desire at all to take on the role.

3.21 All respondents were asked 'Do you think anyone can become a councillor?' Around three out of five respondents (59 per cent) thought that anyone could become a councillor, while around three out of ten (29 per cent) disagreed (Table 5).

Table 5: Do you think anyone can become a councillor?

	Percentage of respondents ^a
Yes	59
No	29
Don't know	1

Base: 1,000 respondent

^a Table may sum to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to give more than one answer.

- 3.22 There was a significant difference in responses by age, with the proportion who thought that anyone could become a councillor highest among respondents aged over 55 years (69 per cent), compared with 59 per cent of 35-54 year olds and just under half (48 per cent) of 16-34 year olds.
- 3.23 When respondents were asked: 'Have you ever been or are you considering becoming a councillor in your area?' seven out of ten respondents (70 per cent) said they had no desire to become a councillor. Around a quarter of respondents (24 per cent) said that whilst they had not considered becoming a councillor, they were open to the idea. Only two per cent of respondents were either working as councillors at the time the survey was carried out, or had been councillors in the past. An additional five per cent had considered becoming a councillor (Table 6).

Table 6: Have you ever been or are you considering becoming a councillor in your area?

Response	Percentage of respondents ^a
I have no desire to become a councillor	70
I have not considered becoming a councillor, but am open to the idea	24
I have considered becoming a councillor	5
I am a councillor / I have been a councillor	2

Base: 1,000 respondents

^a Table may sum to more than 100 per cent as respondents were able to give more than one answer.

- 3.24 Of the respondents who said they had no desire to become a councillor, there was a small difference in responses by age. Around three quarters (76 per cent) of respondents aged over 55 years said they had no desire to become a councillor, compared with 67 per cent of 35-54 year olds and 64 per cent of 16-34 year olds. Similarly, the proportion of respondents who said they had no desire to become a councillor was highest among women (75 per cent) compared with men (64 per cent).

- 3.25 For the 52 respondents who said they had considered becoming a councillor, the survey included a follow-up, open-ended question which aimed to find out more about why they had considered becoming a councillor.
- 3.26 The most common response, given by 21 respondents, was that they wanted to help others and to give back to the community, and 12 respondents thought that it offered an opportunity to make a contribution to the local area. Among the other answers given were: respondents felt motivated to become a councillor as a result of their dissatisfaction with existing councillors in their areas and believed that they could do a better job; respondents had been encouraged by others to become a councillor; or had developed an interest in becoming a councillor following their involvement in local politics (Table 7).

Table 7: Why did you consider becoming a councillor in your area?

Response	Number of respondents
Help the area / give back to community / help others	21
Thought I could offer something / make a contribution	12
Other responses reported by less than 10 of the 52 respondents ^a	
Asked to by others	
Dissatisfied with current councillors / could do better job than current councillors	
Like politics \ active politically	

Base: 52 respondents

^a 'Other' responses are presented alphabetically.

- 3.27 These respondents were then asked whether there was anything that made them decide not to become a councillor. Once again, this was an open-ended question that allowed respondents to provide a more detailed response. A small number of respondents (11 respondents) stated that they did not feel confident enough or suitably qualified to undertake the role and a further 9 respondents felt they could not commit the time required to undertake the role. Around one in ten respondents (11 per cent) said they had decided not to become a councillor to avoid potential stress and abuse and a similar number (11 per cent) did not feel confident that they would be elected and therefore decided not to pursue the option (Table 8).

Table 8: What, if anything, made you decide not to become a councillor?

Response	Number of respondents
Not confident enough / didn't think I was qualified	11
Didn't have the time required	9
Did not want the stress or abuse	6
Other responses reported by less than 5 of the 52 respondents (10 per cent) ^a	
Covid-19 pandemic	
Don't think I'd be elected	
Financial reasons	

Base: 52 respondents

^a 'Other' responses are presented alphabetically.

- 3.28 Respondents were asked how many hours they thought councillors worked each week and were presented with a list of five response options.
- 3.29 More than a third of respondents (37 per cent) thought that councillors worked over 20 hours, around a quarter (24 per cent) said between 10-20 hours, 15 per cent said between 5-10 hours and 5 per cent said under 5 hours (Table 9).

Table 9: How many hours do you think councillors work each week?

Response	Percentage of respondents
Under 5 hours	5
Between 5-10 hours	15
Between 10-20 hours	24
Over 20 hours	37
Don't know	19

Base: 1,000 respondents

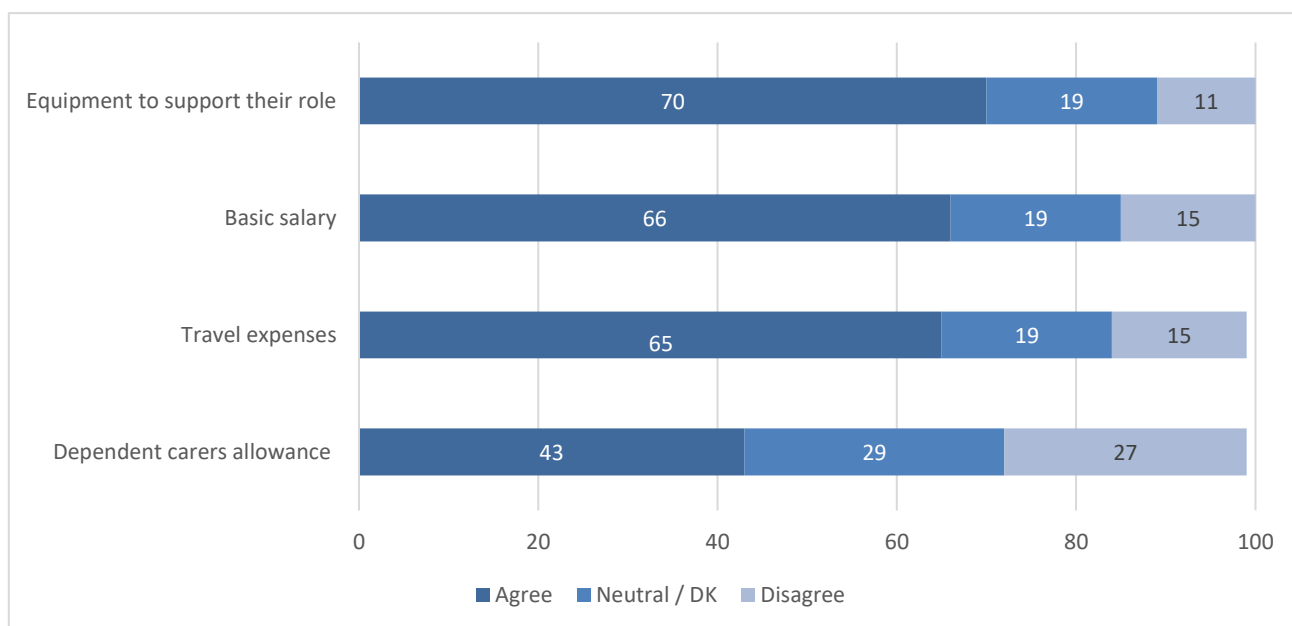
Councillors' allowances and remuneration

- 3.30 Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that councillors should be entitled to specific payments or reimbursements to enable them to undertake their role effectively, including the following:
- Basic salary;
 - Dependent carers allowance (i.e. to cover childcare costs / care of elderly residents and/or other dependents);
 - Travel expenses; and
 - Equipment to support their role (i.e. ICT and other office equipment).

Most respondents agreed that councillors should be entitled to a basic salary, travel expenses and equipment to support their role, but there appeared to be less support for councillors' entitlement to a dependent carer's allowance.

- 3.31 As Figure 2 shows, the majority of respondents (66 per cent) agreed that councillors should be entitled to a basic salary to undertake their role, while a smaller proportion of respondents (15 per cent) disagreed.
- 3.32 The proportion of respondents who agreed that councillors should be entitled to a basic salary was highest among respondents aged 35-54 years (72 per cent) and 16-34 years (69 per cent) compared with 59 per cent of those over the age of 55 years.
- 3.33 Respondents were much more divided on the issue of offering councillors a dependent carers allowance to cover childcare costs, care of elderly residents and/or other dependents. Around two out of five respondents (43 per cent) agreed that councillors should be entitled to this payment, more than a quarter (27 per cent) disagreed, while around a quarter (24 per cent) neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 3.34 There were significant differences in responses by age, with the proportion of respondents who agreed that councillors should be entitled to a dependent carers allowance highest among respondents aged 16-34 years (54 per cent) compared with 45 per cent of 35-54 year olds and 33 per cent of respondents over the age of 55 years.
- 3.35 Around two-thirds of respondents (65 per cent) agreed that councillors should be entitled to travel expenses to undertake their role. A further 15 per cent of respondents disagreed with the principle of providing councillors with a travel expenses entitlement, and a similar proportion neither agreed nor disagreed (16 per cent).
- 3.36 There were significant differences by age. The proportion who either agreed with providing travel expenses was highest among respondents aged over 55 years (75 per cent) and aged 35-54 years (66 per cent) compared with around half of all 16-34 year olds (51 per cent).

Figure 2: Statements about councillor payments or reimbursements



Base: 1,000 respondents.

'Agree' category includes 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree'; 'Disagree' category includes 'Strongly disagree' and 'Disagree'; 'Neutral' category includes 'Neither agree nor disagree' and 'Don't know'.

3.37 The majority of respondents (70 per cent) agreed that councillors should be entitled to access ICT equipment and other office equipment to support their role, while around a tenth (11 per cent) disagreed.

3.38 Respondents were also asked if there are any other payments or reimbursements that councillors should be entitled to in order to undertake their role. Around three out of five respondents (58 per cent) said that councillors should not be entitled to any additional payments, while 15 per cent said they did not know or could not think of anything. Only around one in ten respondents (9 per cent) said that they should be entitled to 'out-of-pocket expenses' relating to their role and 5 per cent thought they should be entitled to expenses to cover food.

The contribution of councillors within local communities

Over half of all respondents thought that local councillors had made very little or no contribution at all in their local area.

3.39 Respondents were asked about the value of councillors in their local area and what differences, if any, they had made to the local communities.

3.40 Around two out of five respondents (41 per cent) thought that local councillors had made a minor contribution in their area, while 15 per cent thought they had made a major contribution. Around one in ten respondents (12 per cent) thought they had made no contribution in their local area, while almost a third of respondents (32 per cent) said they did not know (Table 9).

Table 9: What contribution, if any, have your councillors made in your local area?

Response	Percentage of respondents
Major contribution	15
Minor contribution	41
No contribution	12
Don't know	32

Base: 1,000 respondents

- 3.41 Those respondents who said that their local councillors had either made a major or minor contribution, or no contribution at all in their local area, were then asked to explain their answer in a follow-on, open-ended question.
- 3.42 Almost half of all respondents (45 per cent) provided a range of negative comments, which included that there was no evidence in their area of what councillors had done (12 per cent), that local councillors were 'useless' (9 per cent) or that respondents had never heard from their local councillors or did not know who they were (7 per cent). Other negative responses are shown in Table 10.
- 3.43 Conversely, almost one in four respondents (37 per cent) responded more positively when asked to explain their answers. More than a tenth (13 per cent) thought that their councillors had helped to bring about positive changes to their local areas, through improvements to local services such as parks, recreational facilities and community buildings; placing litter bins in public areas and keeping communities clean and tidy; and addressing issues relating to local traffic problems and road conditions. A further 11 per cent thought that their local councillors were generally good at their jobs and worked hard to ensure local issues were addressed. The remaining responses are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: What contribution have your councillors made in your local area?

Response	Number of respondents
No evidence of what they've done	79
General negative comment (e.g. useless)	61
Never hear from them / don't know them	49
Work hard for community / work on community issues / ensures local issues are addressed	42
Do a good job / do a lot	37
Helped improve the local area	31
Other responses reported by less than 30 of the 681 respondents (5 per cent) ^a	
Budget limited	
Don't do what is needed / local issues not being resolved	
Don't listen to residents	

Base: 681 respondents

^a 'Other' responses are presented alphabetically.

More than two out of five respondents said that councillors in their area had been successful in influencing change within their area and played an active role in the community.

- 3.44 Respondents were asked to what extent councillors had been successful in influencing change within their local areas. A 3-point likert scale was provided with response choices ranging from 'very successful' and 'fairly successful' to 'not successful'.
- 3.45 The responses were fairly divided on this issue, with around two in five respondents (41 per cent) saying that councillors in their area had been very or fairly successful in influencing change within their area, and a quarter (25 per cent) saying that they had not been successful (Table 11).

Table 11: To what extent have councillors been successful in influencing change in your area?

Response	Percentage of respondents
Very successful	7
Fairly successful	34
Not successful	25
Don't know	33

Base: 1,000 respondents

- 3.46 There was a small difference in the proportion of respondents saying that their local councillors had been very or fairly successful in influencing change in their area by age, with positive responses highest among respondents aged 16-34 years (50 per cent) compared with 38 per cent of over 55 year olds and 36 per cent of 35-54 year olds.
- 3.47 Respondents were asked to what extent councillors played an active role in their local areas, on a scale from 'very active' and 'fairly active' to 'not very active'. Around a tenth of respondents (11 per cent) thought that their local councillors were 'very active' and more than a third (36 per cent) said that they were 'fairly active'. Around a third of respondents (34 per cent) said that their local councillors were 'not very active' (Table 12).

Table 12: To what extent do councillors play an active role in your area?

Response	Percentage of respondents
Very active	11
Fairly active	36
Not very active	34
Don't know	20

Base: 1,000 respondents

- 3.48 Respondents were asked if they had noticed any changes in the contribution made by councillors in their local area during the Covid-19 pandemic, using a likert scale ranging from 'contribution has increased' to 'contribution has lessened'. Around two in five respondents (41 per cent) said that their contribution had stayed the same during this period. Around a tenth of respondents (13 per cent) thought that the contribution made by councillors in their area had increased, while almost one in five respondents (19 per cent) thought that their contribution had diminished (Table 13).
- 3.49 There was a small difference in the proportion of respondents who thought that the contribution made by councillors within their area had increased by age, with positive responses highest among respondents aged 16-34 years (19 per cent) compared with around a tenth of over 55 year olds (11 per cent) and 35-54 year olds (10 per cent).

Table 13: Any changes in the contribution councillors have made during the pandemic?

Response	Percentage of respondents
Contribution has increased	13
Contribution has stayed the same	41
Contribution has lessened	19
Don't know	27

Base: 1,000 respondents

Behaviour and attitudes towards councillors

The survey showed that respondents had mixed attitudes towards councillors within their area, with around a quarter saying that they were generally viewed positively and a similar proportion saying that they were viewed negatively.

3.50 The survey asked respondents how councillors were generally viewed by residents within their area, with response choices ranging from very positively to very negatively. Responses to this question were divided, with around a quarter of respondents (26 per cent) saying that they were generally viewed positively and around one in five respondents (21 per cent) saying that councillors were generally viewed negatively by residents within their area. Around a third of respondents (31 per cent) said that they were not viewed positively nor negatively in their area (Table 14).

Table 14: How would you say councillors are generally viewed by residents within your area?

Response	Percentage of respondents
Very positively	5
Fairly positively	21
Not positively nor negatively	31
Fairly negatively	15
Very negatively	5
Don't know	22

Base: 1,000 respondents

- 3.51 Looking in more detail at the distribution of responses by age, the proportion of respondents who thought that councillors were either viewed very or fairly positively was highest among respondents aged 16-34 years (31 per cent) compared with a quarter of 35-54 year olds (25 per cent) and 22 per cent of over 55 year olds.
- 3.52 All respondents (with the exception of those who responded 'don't know' when asked how councillors were generally viewed by residents within their area) were then asked to explain their answer. The use of an open-ended question allowed respondents to include more information about their perceptions of local councillors.
- 3.53 Around a third of respondents to this question (35 per cent) thought that councillors were generally viewed negatively in their areas. Of these respondents, 14 per cent said they never heard from their local councillors or had no interaction with them; around one in ten respondents (7 per cent) thought that there was no evidence that they had done anything in the area; and a further 8 per cent described their councillors using negative terms, such as 'useless', 'in it for themselves' and 'don't listen to residents'. Other negative comments that were mentioned are shown in Table 15.

Table 15: How would you say councillors are generally viewed by residents within your area?

Response	Percentage of respondents
Never hear from them / don't know them	14
Don't know enough to make judgment	11
General positive comment (e.g. good, do a good job)	8
General negative comment (e.g. useless, In it for themselves, don't listen)	8
Haven't done anything / no evidence of what they've done	7
Nice people / friendly / very popular / well-respected	7
People are generally negative / don't understand what they do	6
Communicate well / approachable / transparent	6
Other responses reported by less than 5 per cent of respondents ^a	
Didn't help during pandemic	
Don't do what is needed / local issues not being resolved	
Don't hear any complaints or criticisms	

Base: 778 respondents

^a 'Other' responses are presented alphabetically.

3.54 Around a third of respondents (35 per cent) described their councillors in more positive terms. Common responses included 'they do a good job' and 'they do a lot for the area' (8 per cent); 'nice people', 'friendly', 'very popular and well-respected' (7 per cent); 'approachable', 'communicate well' and 'transparent' (6 per cent); and 'work hard for community', 'ensure local issues are addressed' and 'helpful' (6 per cent). Around one in ten respondents (11 per cent) said that they did not know enough about their councillors to make a judgment and a similar proportion (9 per cent) thought that people were generally negative towards their councillors and did not necessarily have an understanding of what councillors did in their day-to-day roles. Some of the other positive comments provided are shown in Table 15.

The majority of respondents had not witnessed any anti-social behaviour or hostility towards councillors in their area and said there had been no change in the standard of behaviour towards councillors during the last few years.

3.55 Respondents were asked whether they had witnessed, or were aware of, any anti-social behaviour or hostility (either online or face-to-face) towards councillors in their area. The majority of respondents (86 per cent) had not witnessed any anti-social behaviour or hostility against councillors, while almost a tenth (7 per cent) said that they had (Table 16).

Table 16: Have you ever witnessed, or are aware of, any anti-social behaviour or hostility (either online or face-to-face) towards councillors within your area?

Response	Percentage of respondents
Yes	7
No	86
Don't know	7

Base: 1,000 respondents

3.56 The respondents who had witnessed anti-social behaviour or hostility against councillors in their area were then asked to describe the behaviour they had witnessed. The open-ended nature of the question allowed respondents to provide free responses. Around two in five respondents (44 per cent) reported that they had come across negative comments or abuse towards councillors online and more than a quarter (27 per cent) had witnessed councillors being verbally abused or subjected to name calling and insults. Other respondents reported hostility towards

councillors during public meetings (3 per cent) and had observed arguments between councillors in the local area (3 per cent) (Table 17).

Table 17: Can you describe the anti-social behaviour or hostility you were aware of?

Response	Percentage of respondents
Abuse / negative comments on Facebook / social media / online	44
Negative comments / abuse / name calling (unspecific)	27
Other responses reported by less than 10 per cent of respondents^a	
Abuse / hostility at public meetings	
Arguments / abuse between councillors	
Physical abuse	

Base: 71 respondents

^a 'Other' responses are presented alphabetically.

3.57 Respondents were asked to comment whether the standard of behaviour towards councillors in their area had improved, stayed the same or got worse during the last few years. Almost two out of three respondents (64 per cent) thought that the standard of behaviour had stayed the same. Only a small proportion of respondents thought it had got worse (5 per cent) or had improved (5 per cent) (Table 18).

Table 18: In the last few years, do you think the standard of behaviour towards councillors in your area has...

Response	Percentage of respondents
Improved	5
Stayed the same	64
Got worse	5
Don't know	26

Base: 1,000 respondents

3.58 The small proportion of respondents (10 per cent) who said that the standard of behaviour towards councillors had improved or got worse were asked in an open-ended question why they thought this was the case. Of the respondents who said that the standard of behaviour had improved, 16 per cent thought that this was due to councillors being more visible within the local community, while around a tenth (8 per cent) said that more respect was now being shown towards councillors within

their areas. Some of the other reasons cited included 'got better since the pandemic' (5 per cent), and that councillors 'have made a contribution and got things done' (5 per cent) and 'helped those in need' (4 per cent) (Table 19).

- 3.59 Of the respondents who said that the standard of behaviour towards councillors had got worse, around a tenth (13 per cent) thought that their local councillors were not sufficiently involved in local matters and had become less visible locally. Around a tenth of respondents (11 per cent) felt that people were now less respectful towards councillors and a further 9 per cent of respondents thought that the increased use of social media made it much easier to verbally abuse councillors. Some of the other reasons cited by respondents are shown in Table 19.

Table 19: Why has the standard of behaviour towards councillors in your area improved or got worse?

Response	Percentage of respondents
More visible / engage with local community	16
Not involved enough in local matters / less visible	13
People less respectful	11
Other responses reported by less than 10 per cent of respondents ^a	
Area has got worse / is in decline	
Area has improved	
Got better / things have improved	

Base: 100 respondents

^a 'Other' responses are presented alphabetically.

Annex A: Methodology

Wales Omnibus Survey

- 3.60 The Wales Omnibus Survey sample is designed to be representative of the population resident in Wales aged 16 years and over. The Surveys are conducted four times a year – in March, June, September and November – and a fresh sample is drawn each time. The unit of sampling is Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) and 69 interviewing points throughout Wales are selected with probability proportional to resident population, after stratification by unitary authority and social group.
- 3.61 Within each sampling point, demographic quota controls of age and social class within sex are employed for the selection of respondents. Quotas are set to reflect the individual demographic profile of each selected point.
- 3.62 The data have been weighted by age group within gender within unitary authority grouping to give each cell its correct incidence within the Wales total derived from the results of the 2011 Census.
- 3.63 A fresh sample of interviewing locations and individuals are selected for each survey and no more than one person per household is interviewed. The Covid-19 public health crisis has prevented the survey from being carried out in its usual manner of face to face interviewing at selected sample points throughout Wales. Instead interviews are undertaken online using the [Cint online panel exchange platform](#), a software that is used in digital survey-based research to gather insights from a large number of respondents.
- 3.64 Fieldwork for the March 2021 wave of the Wales Omnibus Survey took place between 2 and 9 March 2021. A total of 1,000 interviews were completed.

Proportional quota sampling

- 3.65 When survey data are tested for statistical significance, an assumption is made that the achieved sample represents a random sample of the relevant population. The Wales Omnibus Survey uses proportional quota sampling. Genuine statistical significance cannot, strictly speaking, be established for this sampling method. Therefore, 'significant' differences based on data from the Wales Omnibus Survey refer to a pseudo-statistically significant difference at the 95 per cent confidence

level. This means that, if the survey did use a random sample, the probability of obtaining the finding by chance would be less than one in 20.

Definition of socio-economic groups

3.66 Table A.3, below, provides a definition of the socio-economic group classification used in the analysis of data from the Wales Omnibus Survey.

Table A.1: Definition of socio-economic groups

Socio-economic group	Definition
ABC1	
A	High managerial, administrative or professional
B	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
C1	Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2DE	
C2	Skilled manual workers
D	Semi and unskilled manual worker
E	State pensioners, casual or lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only

Annex B: Wales Omnibus Survey Questions

The additional questions commissioned in the March 2021 wave of the Wales Omnibus Survey (Beaufort Research Ltd.) were as follows:

Levels of public interest in councillors and in the work that they do

I'm now going to ask you some questions about the work of local government councillors in Wales. That is, the people elected to represent their local community in the running of their county council, and community and town councils.

1. What is your understanding of what councillors do?
2. Which of the following types of councillors have you heard of:
 - County Councillor
 - Community Councillor
 - Town Councillor
 - I have not heard of any of the above
3. How much, if anything, would you say you know about the work of your local councillors?
 - A great deal
 - A fair amount
 - Nothing at all
 - Don't know / I have no opinion
4. How much interest do you have in what councillors do?
 - A great deal
 - Quite a bit
 - Somewhat
 - Very little
 - Nothing at all
 - Don't know / I have no opinion

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
I would like to hear more about what my local councillors do in my area						
I would like to have more of a say in what my local councillors do						
I feel comfortable in putting my views to local councillors						
I would expect my councillors to be available to the community at any time						
I know who my local councillor is						
I know how to contact my local councillor						

6. Do you think anyone can become a councillor?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q7a Have you ever been or are you considering becoming a councillor in your area?

- I am a councillor / I have been a councillor
- I have considered becoming a councillor
- I have not considered becoming a councillor, but am open to the idea
- I have no desire to become a councillor

ASK IF CONSIDERED BECOMING A COUNCILLOR:

Q7bi Why did you consider becoming a councillor in your area?

Q7bii Did anything prevent you from becoming a councillor in your area?

8. How many hours do you think councillors work each week?

- under 5 hours
- between 5-10 hours
- between 10-20 hours
- over 20 hours
- Don't know

9. In your opinion, what type of payments or reimbursements, if any, should councillors be entitled to in order to enable them to undertake their role effectively?

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
Basic salary					
Dependent carers allowance (i.e. to cover childcare costs / care of elderly residents and/or other dependents)					
Travel expenses					
Equipment to support their role (i.e. ICT and other office equipment)					

Are there any other payments or reimbursements that you think councillors should be entitled to to undertake their role?

The value of councillors in your area

I'm now going to ask you some questions about the value of councillors in your area and what, if any, differences they've made to local communities.

10. What contribution, if any, have your councillors made in your local area?

- Major contribution
- Minor contribution
- No contribution
- Don't know

Why do you say this?

11. To what extent have councillors in your area been successful in influencing change within your area?

- Very successful
- Fairly successful
- Not successful
- Don't know

12. To what extent do councillors play an active role in your area?

- Very active
- Fairly active
- Not very active
- Don't know

13. Have you noticed any changes in the contribution councillors have made in your area during the Covid-19 pandemic?

- Contribution has increased
- Contribution has stayed the same
- Contribution has lessened
- Don't know

Behaviour and attitudes towards councillors in your area

I'm now going to ask you some questions about general behaviour and attitudes towards councillors in your local area.

14. How would you say councillors are generally viewed by residents within your area?

- Very positively
- Fairly positively
- Not positively nor negatively
- Fairly negatively
- Very negatively

Why do you say this?

15. Have you ever witnessed, or are aware of, any anti-social behaviour or hostility (either online or face-to-face) towards councillors within your area?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Can you describe the anti-social behaviour or hostility you were aware of?

16. In the last few years, do you think the standard of behaviour towards councillors in your area has:

- Improved
- Stayed the same
- Got worse
- Don't know

Why do you say this?