

Chapter 7: Residents Opinions

7.1 Introduction

The Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' 2006 emphasised a new focus on improving outcomes for local people and places rather than focusing on processes, institutions and inputs. It recognised that no single organisation could achieve success on the complex issues of improving public health, reducing poverty, tackling crime and sustainable economic development. The challenges are too complex and the needs often too local for all solutions to be imposed from the centre. Everywhere, solutions would require effective co-operation. Central to this has been the importance of capturing local people's views, experiences and perceptions, so that the solutions for an area can both reflect local views and preferences and track people's changing perceptions as a way of determining whether interventions made in an area result in the right outcomes for local people (i.e., do people feel happier, healthier, safer?). This concept has been echoed by the idea of 'The Big Society' that now forms part of the legislative programme of the Conservative – Liberal Democrat Coalition Agreement, whereby local people and communities are empowered to build a big society that takes power away from politicians and give it to people.

The Place Survey became a statutory survey that all local authorities in England carried out between 29 September 2008 and 19 December 2008 in attempt to achieve this. It supplied data by which a number of National Indicators could be measured. The National Indicators measure how well a Government's priorities are being delivered by local government and local government partnerships over future years, as well as other questions related to quality of life, perceptions of the local council and other local services and the local area in general.

The Place Survey measured how residents experience life in Thurrock, what they think about Thurrock the place, and their satisfaction with a range of public services.

The Survey asked residents about their perceptions of the local area and their views about local public services. The survey was divided into the following themes:

- Your local area
- Local public services
- Information - about how well informed people feel
- Local decision making
- Helping out or volunteering
- Respect and consideration
- Community Safety

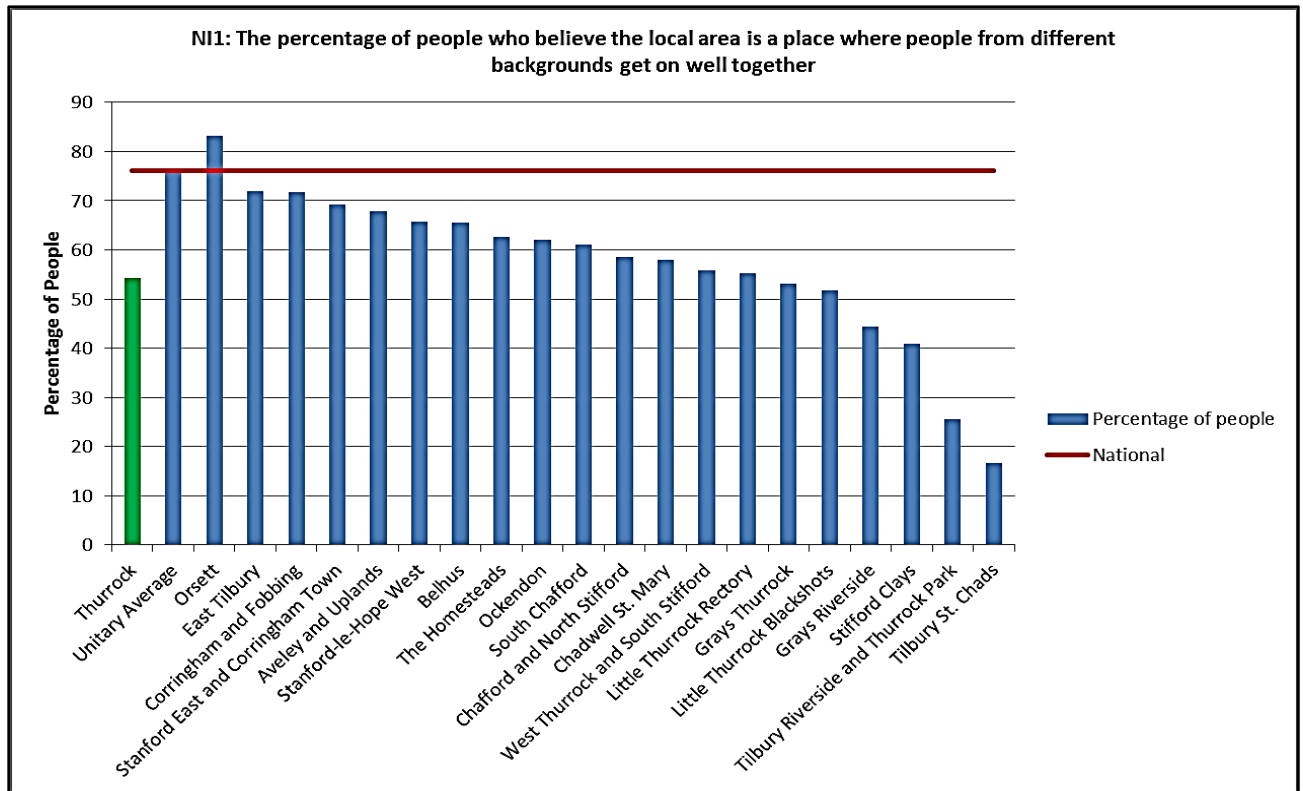
Results of the survey were used to ensure that any development outcomes mirror the views and preferences of local people.

7.2 Stronger Communities

The Local Government White Paper sets out Government’s aim of creating strong and cohesive communities and thriving places in which a fear of difference is replaced by a shared set of values and a shared sense of purpose and belonging. The aim in doing so is to ensure that the economic and cultural benefits of diversity are experienced by everyone in each community, recognising that this means promoting similar life opportunities for all. National Indicator 1 is a key indicator of a cohesive society, shown to measure a number of strands of the community cohesion definition.

Figure 7.1 below shows the proportion of the adult population who say they ‘tend to agree’, or ‘definitely agree’ that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well, (National Indicator 1 Q18).

Figure 7.1



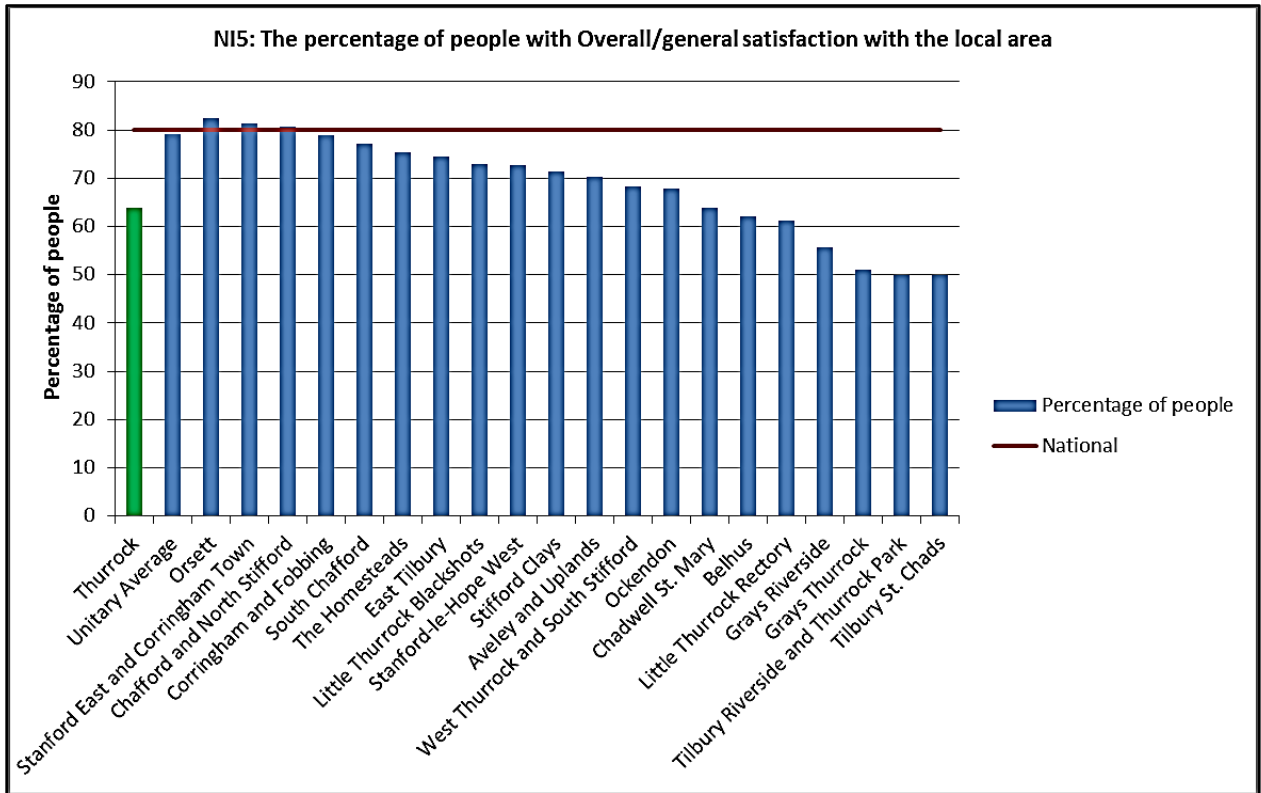
Although variations between wards for all the questions asked in the place survey should be read as indicative only due to the relatively small number of responses (fewer than 100) received from each, figure 7.1 shows that 54.3% of people in Thurrock think that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

This is less than average for the unitary authorities. The unitary average is similar to that of the National average at 75.85 and 76% respectively.

The most positive responses tend to come from residents of Orsett, with results above the national average at 83.1%. The lowest percentage of residents that believe people from different backgrounds get on well together was found in Tilbury St. Chads at 16.7%

The quality of place remains a priority to local residents and will drive how satisfied they are with the local area as a place to live. Figure 7.2 shows the percentage of residents satisfied with the local area (National indicator I5 Q3). Overall, 63.9% of Thurrock respondents say they are satisfied with their local area as a place to live. This is both below the national average at 80% and the unitary average of 79.2%. These results are very similar to that seen in the number of people who feel their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

Fig 7.2

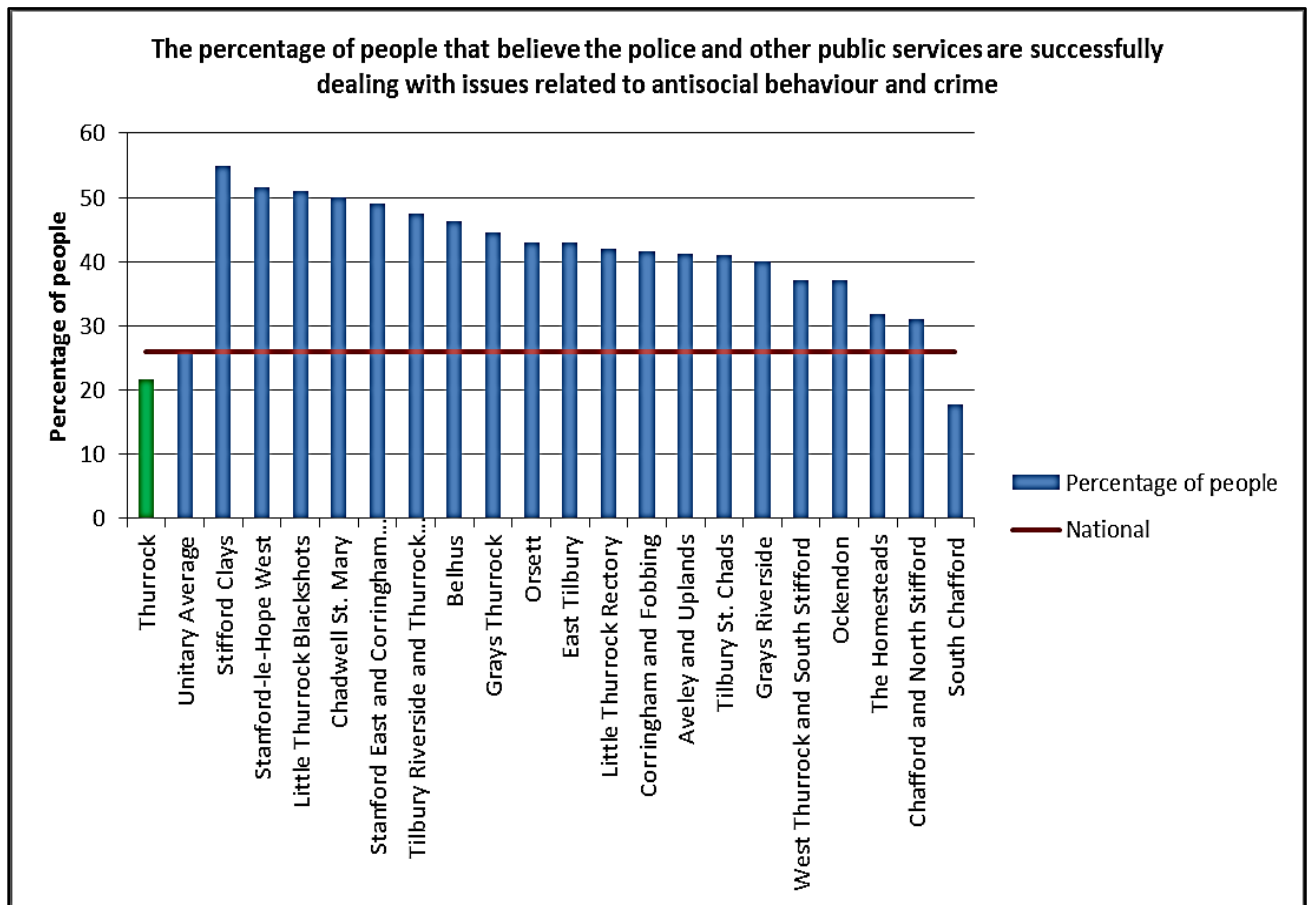


Orsett has the greatest percentage of residents at 82.4% that are satisfied with their local area, which is above both the national and unitary average. People living in Tilbury St. Chads and Tilbury Riverside were the least likely to be satisfied with their local area as a place to live with 50% of residents satisfied.

7.3 Safer Communities

Figure 7.3 shows the results for how well residents believe that the local council and police are dealing with local concerns of anti-social behaviour and crime issues, (National Indicator 21 Q26). The results can give a proxy for measuring confidence in local agencies to tackle the community safety issues that matter to local people. Thurrock is both below the unitary and national average with 21.6% of respondents expressing confidence that crime and anti-social behaviour are dealt with successfully in their local area. Although the national average is only at 26% suggesting this is a shared concern across the country.

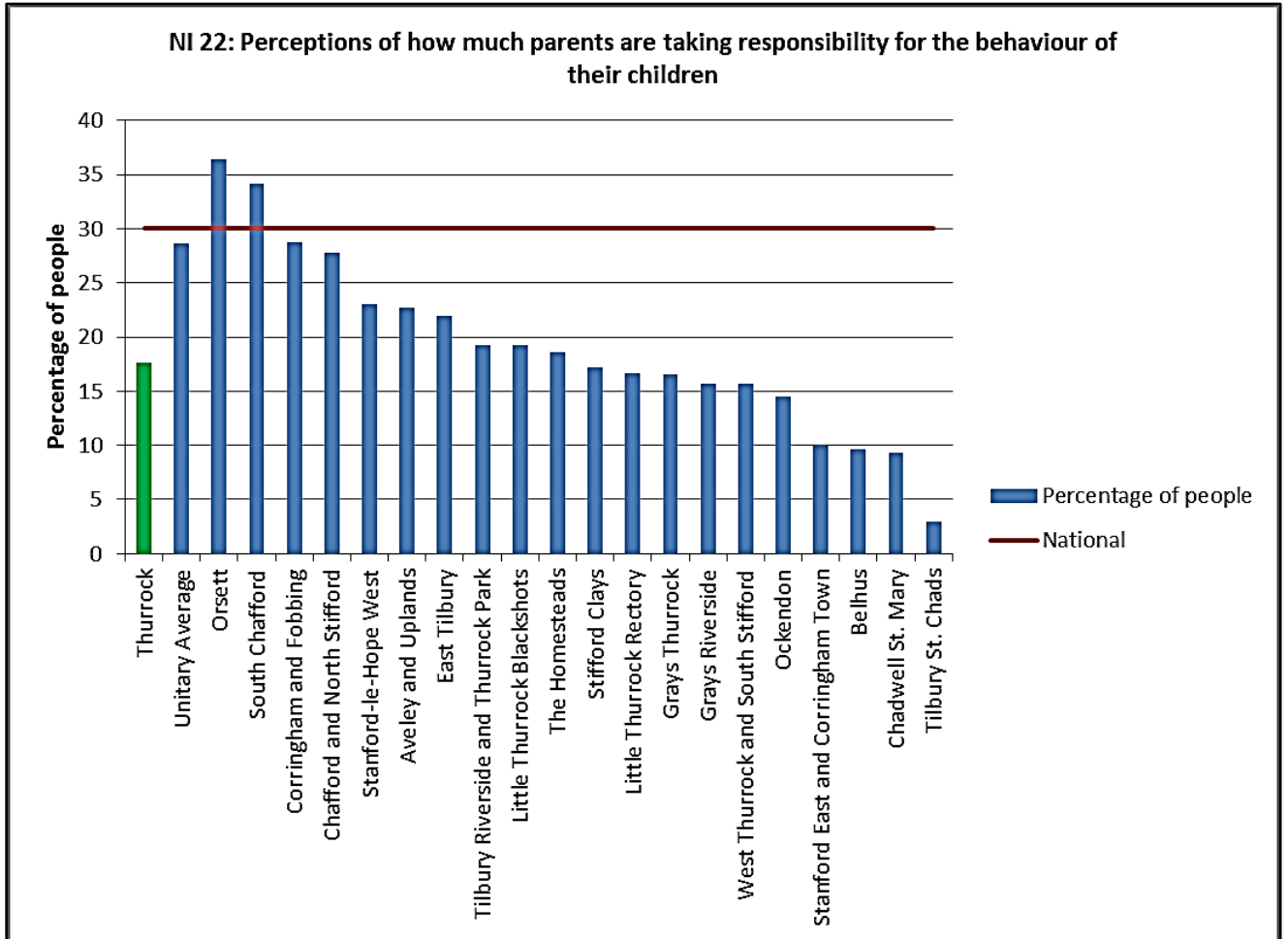
Fig 7.3



The highest percentage of respondents that agree the police and other public services are successfully dealing with issues related to anti-social behaviour and crime were from Stifford Clays at 54.8%, more than double that of the unitary average. People living in South Chafford were the least likely to agree with only 17.8% residents. Overall, the majority of wards in Thurrock had less than half the respondents feel anti-social behaviour and crime are being dealt with effectively.

Figure 7.4 shows resident perceptions of how much parents are taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children (National Indicator 22 Q17). The unitary average and Thurrock are below the national average of 30% with 28.6% and 17.6% respectively.

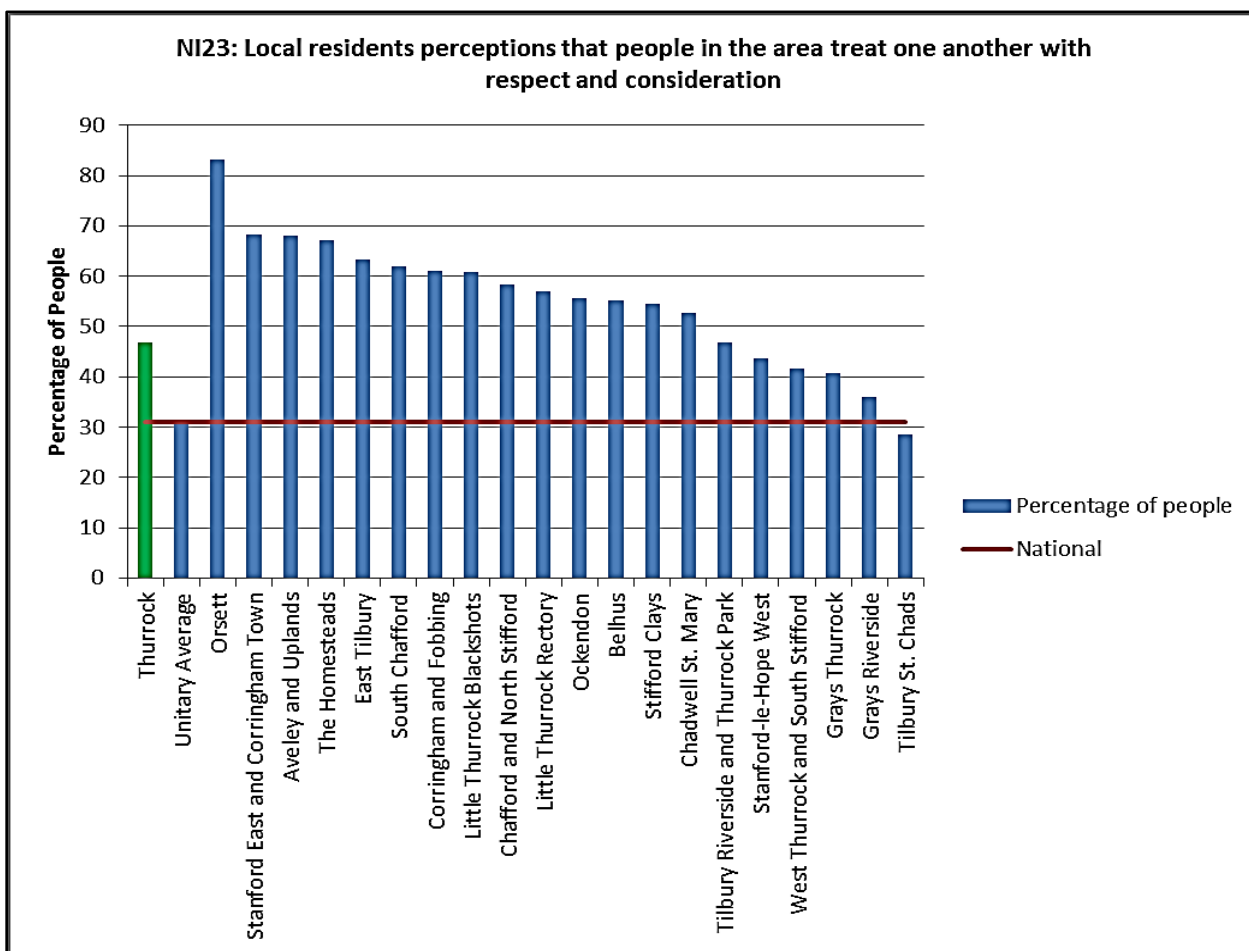
Fig 7.4



Respondents from Orsett and South Chafford are more likely than other wards in both Thurrock and nationally, to believe that parents in their area take enough responsibility for the behaviour of their children. Tilbury St. Chads had the fewest number of respondents believing in responsible parenting with only 3%.

Local authorities and their partners are encouraged to take action to promote strong communities with shared values where community members treat one another with respect and consideration. graph below, figure 7.5Figure 7.3.2 shows the results for local residents perceptions that people in the area treat one another with respect and consideration, (National Indicator 23 Q19). Within Thurrock, 46.9% say people treat each other with respect and consideration. This is higher than the unitary and national averages of 31.5% and 31.0% respectively.

Fig 7.5



Respondents from Orsett were the most likely to say that people treat each other with respect and consideration with 83.3%, which is considerably higher than both the unitary and national average. In contrast Tilbury St. Chads were the least likely agree with this statement with 28.6%.

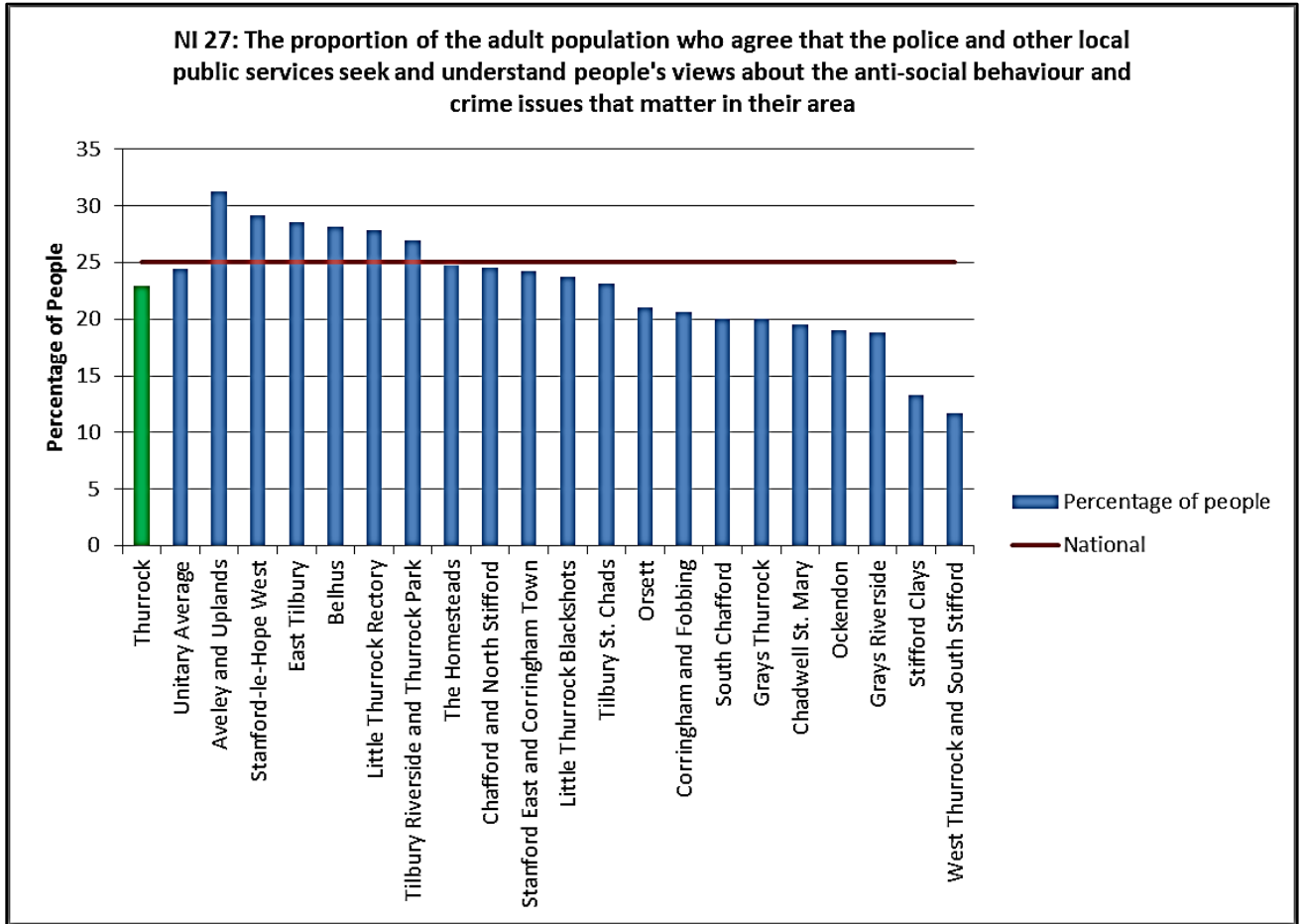
Results of this question mirror those found when residents were asked if their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, further highlighting the lack of community cohesion in some wards of Thurrock.

Local public services and police have a joint target to improve public confidence that they are dealing with the crime and anti-social behaviour issues that matter locally. Evidence shows that listening to people’s concerns on crime and anti-social behaviour, acting on those concerns and feeding back information on action taken is what will increase public confidence.

National Indicator 27 Q25 measures the proportion of the adult population who agree that the police and other local public services seek and understand people’s views about the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in their area.

Figure 7.6 shows that 22.9% of Thurrock respondents agree that the police and other local public services seek people’s views about the issues related to community safety. This is slightly lower than the unitary average of 24.4% and national average of 25%.

Fig 7.6



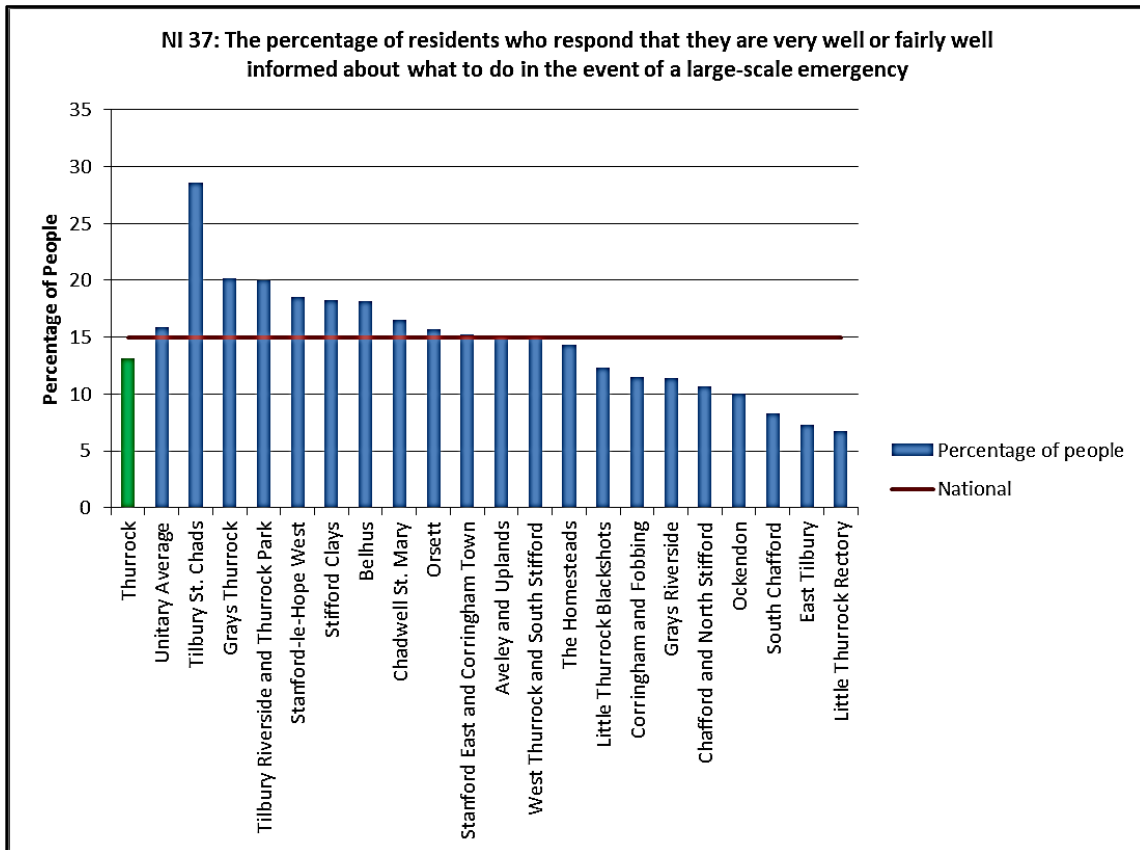
Respondents from Aveley and Uplands were most likely to agree that the police and other public services seek people’s views with issues related to community safety. West Thurrock and South Stifford were the least likely with 11.7%. The percentages of people who feel involved in community safety are low across the unitary but only marginally in comparison with the national average suggesting this is a widespread issue.

‘Local Responders’ have been the forefront of work over the past few years to improve the UK’s preparedness for emergencies. The delivery chain for civil protection comprises national, regional and local government; the public, private and voluntary sectors, together with citizens and their communities who work together to support public authorities.

Frontline responders' capabilities to effectively plan for and respond to emergencies is a crucial element of resilience activity, but development of citizens themselves being prepared, so that they can sustain the safety of themselves, their families, neighbours and communities is also essential. An informed public are better prepared to deal with the consequences of an emergency.

Awareness of civic protection arrangements in the local area (National Indicator 37) is designed to measure the impact of local agencies arrangements for communicating/educating citizens regarding civil protection matters, by measuring how informed they feel, by local agencies, about what they should do in the event of a large scale emergency in their local area. Figure 7.7 Figure 7.3.4 shows the percentage of residents who responded that they are very well or fairly well informed about what to do in the event of a large-scale emergency (National Indicator 37 Q12). Only 13.1% of Thurrock respondents say they feel well informed about what to do in the event of a large-scale emergency e.g. flooding, human pandemic flu. This is slightly lower than the unitary and national averages of 15.9% and 15% respectively.

Figure 7.7



Residents in parts of Tilbury St. Chads are more likely to say they feel well informed about what to do in the event of a large-scale emergency at 28.6%. This is almost double that of both the unitary and national average.

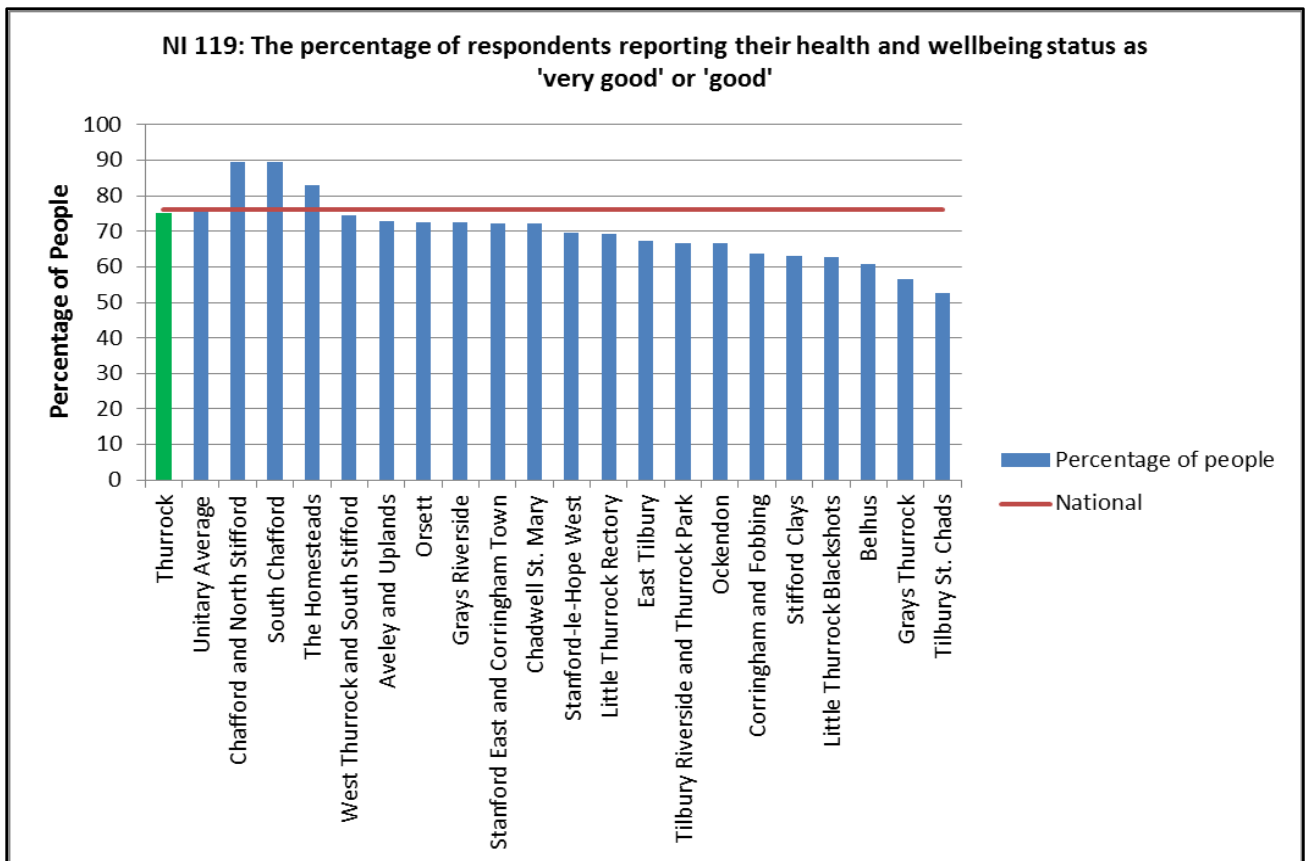
People living in Little Thurrock Rectory are least likely to say they feel well informed about what to do at 6.7%. The numbers of residents that feel well informed about what to do in the event of a large-scale emergency are low across the unitary average but are still marginally higher in comparison with the national average suggesting this is a widespread issue.

7.4 Adult Health and Wellbeing

Subjective measures of health and wellbeing are important indicators of the general health of the population. Self-reported metrics are effective in assessing progress on improvements, since the local population is best placed to assess whether their health and wellbeing are improving.

Self-reported measure of people’s overall health and wellbeing (National Indicator 119 Q29) measures the percentage of respondents reporting their health and wellbeing status as 'very good' or 'good'. Figure 7.8 shows that 75.3% of Thurrock respondents say they are in good or very good health. A similar picture holds true for both the unitary and national averages with 75.7% and 76% respectively.

Figure 7.8



Residents of Chafford and North Stifford, South Chafford and The Homesteads are more likely to say they are in good or very good health at 89.5%, 89.4% and 83.0% respectively. This is above the national average. Respondents from Tilbury St. Chads were the least likely to say they are in good or very good health at 52.6%. This self-reported health and wellbeing correlates positively with the 2010 IMD deprivation as those from the least deprived MSOAs in Thurrock are more likely to say they are in good or very good health and those from the most deprived MSOA's in Thurrock are the least likely to say they are in good or very good health.

Local authorities seek to assess how far older people in a locality are getting the support and services they need to live independently at home by asking a sample of the whole local population the extent to which older people receive the support they need to live independently (National Indicator 139 Q21).

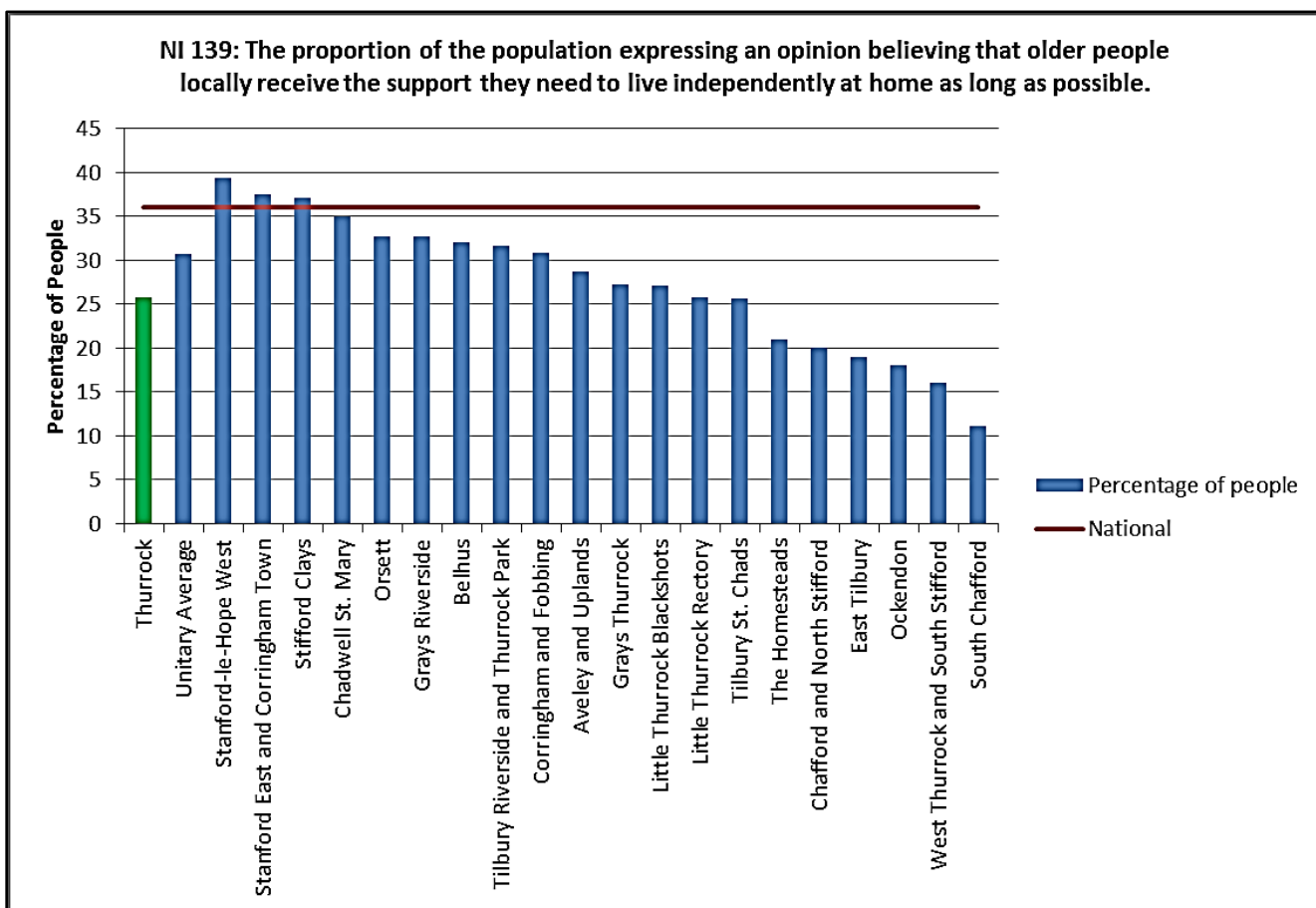
It is designed to reflect a wider view of 'support' than simply a narrow definition of services provided by or via Social Services; and to capture the views of those, including potential future users, who are not necessarily current direct clients of a particular service as well as those who are.

Therefore, taking into account the views of the majority of older people who do not receive 'formal' services, but are provided with support that they value from local government, its partners and the local community.

The use of a survey question, rather than administrative records of particular services provided, allows any kind of relevant support to be taken into account, and for the assessment of the need for support and whether it has been available to come from citizens and clients rather than service providers. This reflects desired outcomes for client-focused systems and provision. Figure 7.9

Figure 7.9 shows the proportion of the population expressing an opinion believing that older people locally receive the support they need to live independently at home as long as possible. Only around 1 in 4 (25.8%) of respondents believe that older people in their area are able to get the services and support they need to continue to live at home for as long as they want to, compared with 30.7% for the unitary average as a whole and 36% nationally.

Fig 7.9



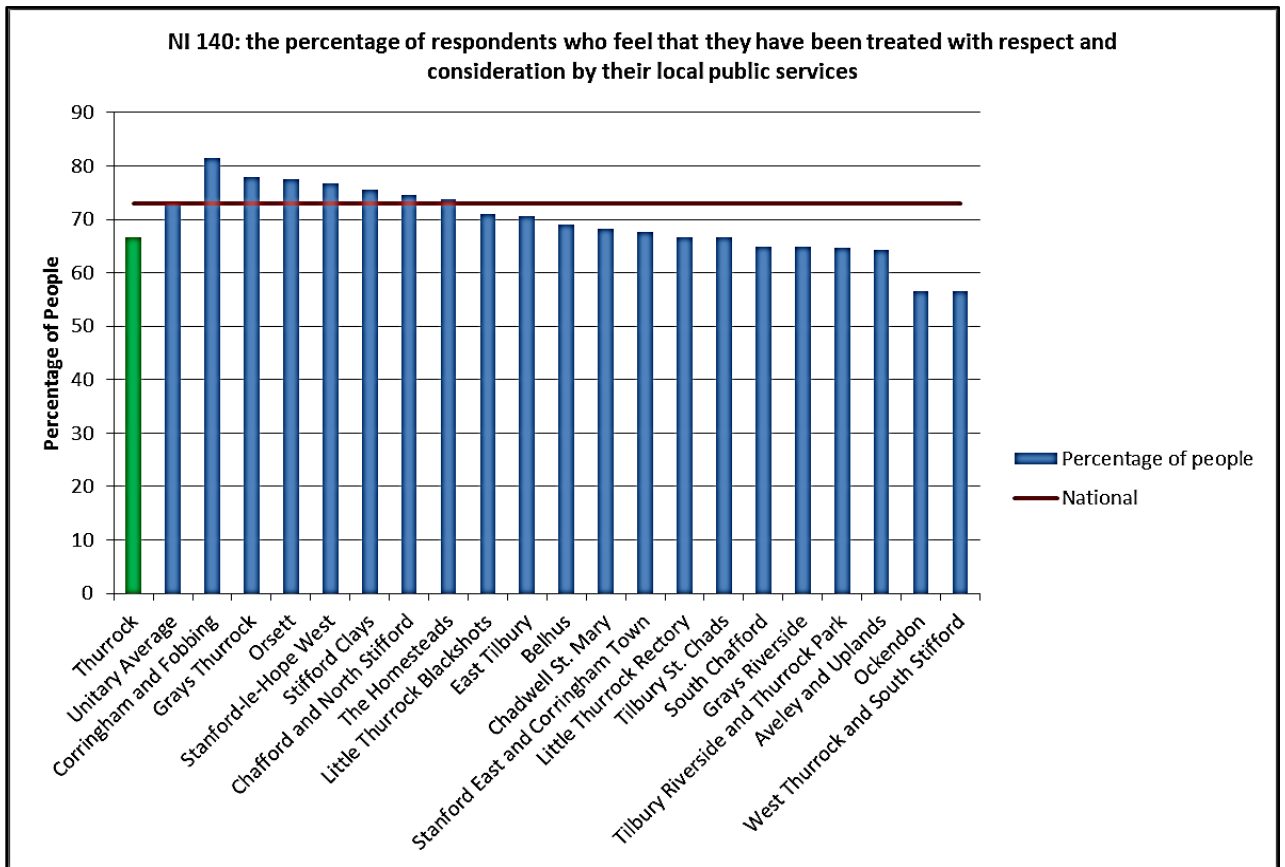
Responses suggest a slight North to West divide of opinion with people living in Stanford-le-Hope West, Stanford East and Corringham Town and Stifford Clays being more likely to believe that older people in their local area are able to get the services and support they need to continue to live at home for as long as they want to with 39.4%, 37.5% and 37.1% respectively. This is greater than the both the unitary and national average. Whereas, residents in South Chafford (11.1%) and West Thurrock and South Stifford (16.1%), are least likely to believe that older people in their local area are able to get the services and support they need to continue to live at home for as long as they want to.

Dignity and respect are recognised as key determinants of an individual's well-being. Fair treatment by others is a critical component of removing inequalities of process, which create unjust barriers to involvement in society as well as in the economy. As a moral and ethical principal, fair and equal treatment is one to which we should aspire but in addition, the low self-esteem and sense of identity that unfair treatment can create impacts on all areas of daily life - including economic and civic participation, mental well-being and social relationships.

Local authorities are encouraged to consider 'Fair treatment by local services' in terms of narrowing gaps between perceptions for different groups. Disadvantaged groups may include women, people from an ethnic or religious minority, disabled people, young people, older people, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people.

Figure 7.10 shows fair treatment by local services (National Indicator 140 Q20) which measures the percentage of respondents who feel that they have been treated with respect and consideration by their local public services by calculating the number of respondents who reported that they are fairly treated 'all of the time' or 'most of the time', as a percentage of the total number of respondents. In Thurrock, 66.7% of respondents say they have been treated with respect and consideration by their local public services, which is lower than the unitary average of 72.6% and 73% nationally.

Fig 7.10



Residents from Corringham and Fobbing are most likely to say they have been treated with respect and consideration by their local public services at 81.5% which is above the national average. However, in the West of Thurrock areas such as West Thurrock, Ockendon and Aveley and Uplands are less likely to say they have been treated with respect and consideration by their local public services with 56.5%, 56.6% and 64.3% respectively.

Summary

- There is a strong relationship between how well informed people feel they are kept by their local council and their perception of its performance. People who feel well informed about what their council does are much more likely to think it provides high quality services and that it offers residents good value for money.