

Upton-by-Chester

Survey of public opinion

Fieldwork: March - April 2022

Sample: 226

Written report by Cllr Ben Walker (Upton Heath)

The parish council sought to survey public opinion both through an online and paper copy medium. The survey garnered over 200 responses. In market research, it is often difficult for a polling company to get 500-700 responses for a parliamentary constituency (a population of c75,000). While the 200 figure may seem low to some residents, I do consider it an adequate sample size for the parish council's purposes.

Headline points

In essence, there were two sections to the survey. The first was tick-box and multiple choice, and the second invited residents to give verbatim views on the community and council more generally.

- **Residents are aware (90 per cent) they have a parish council. They are not, however, aware (60 per cent) what it does.**
 - Awareness of staff members, social media, the noticeboards and the parish council's website sits north of 50 per cent, but the share of residents that use all these services averages out at just 25 per cent.
- **Residents want the parish council to prioritise future spending plans on the pavilion (51 per cent), youth provision (46 per cent) and the QEII playing fields (45 per cent).**
 - Just four per cent said they'd like the parish council to prioritise future spending on the tennis courts, six per cent on the bowling green.
 - 31 per cent would like the parish to host more community events.
- Public awareness of what the parish council is responsible for varies. 93 per cent are aware the council is responsible for Upton Pavilion. 74 per cent are aware it is responsible for the tennis courts. 20 per cent meanwhile believe it is responsible for bus shelters, and 38 per cent believe it is responsible for overgrown hedges and trees.
- **When prompted with the question whether £2.84 PCM per resident is good value for money to fund Upton parish council, 58 per cent of residents responded in the**

affirmative. 15 per cent responded in the negative, and 28 per cent said they were ensure.

- 49 per cent of residents want to receive future newsletters in an online form.

Verbatim points

Responses in *italics* are verbatim from residents.

- A lot of comments were made with regards to the general upkeep of Upton's public spaces, be it the roads, verges or otherwise. A unifying theme all residents can get behind appears to be a general aesthetic improvement.
 - *"General appearance could be better - footways are a mess and need to all be redone"*
 - *"More dog poo bins in residential areas, more benches or picnic tables in parks and playing fields"*
 - *"More litter picking, dog waste removal. Liaising with police on enforcement of speed limits"*
 - *"Would like more flower containers around"*
 - *"Perhaps improve Weston grove parade, or encourage businesses to occupy the premises."*
 - *"Make zoo refuse area look more attractive"*
- **There were plenty of requests from residents for things the parish council is not responsible for, suggesting that to many residents, local government is local government, with no differentiation between parish or borough. Residents do not know what councils do.**
- More attention for cycle lanes came up a number of times.
- Support for children and young adults was raised by a number of residents.
 - *"More for the children to do, the playground is lovely but can often come very over crowded, we need somewhere else to be able to take children."*
- A number of residents gave extended views worthy of attention.
 - *"I think the events you have organised have been great. What I have enjoyed about them is the sense of community they bring and I think that's really important because we will collectively take greater responsibility (I hope) when we feel part of something. I have seen good engagement on social media on other local groups so will seek out the parish council. My point is that engagement is key in my mind and catching people of all ages whether that be through an event, meetings or quick polls or sharing ideas on social media is a good way to do that so think just need to build on that more. I do have some concerns about youth services and making sure we have things for young people to do. I'm also worried about those Ginger scooters which look like an accident waiting to happen but guess that is local CWaC?"*
 - *"There have been many improvements to amenities and services in Upton which are appreciated, however maintenance and protection of footpaths and roadside verges needs to be prioritised. This is most noticeable along the A41 and Liverpool Road: grass and hedge cutting is irregular and of poor quality; weeds and brambles are allowed to overtake footpaths, particularly along council owned*

property; and even where footpaths have been restored, over a short time they are narrowed by leaves, grass and hedge cuttings. Narrowed footpaths along these roads are not safe for pedestrians. Compared with other parishes such as Vicar's Cross and Huntington, our footpaths and grass verges are in a state of neglect, yet they are widely used, and as peripheral main roads create a first impression of Upton."

- *"I feel lucky to live in an area such as Upton, I'm happy with our environment and the maintenance and expenditure of on the different provisions available. However I would like to see to see an improvement in keeping pavements free from dogs fouling, cars and van parking on verges and pavements. The pavements in Oulton Avenue are in a terrible state and heavy vans and cars persistently parking up onto the kerb restricting access is not helping."*

Extra comments from Ben Walker

- The survey succeeded in reaching Upton's retired and home-owning residents. It struggled, however, to reach those in full and part time work as well as those renting, privately or socially. Young people, too, could have been better represented in the sample. **I would recommend future *targeted* surveys to prioritise seeking out renters, young people, and those in social housing.**
- In the survey we put out a request for interested residents to appear on a regular focus group of sorts so as to trial projects and initiatives with those living on the ground. While I would recommend pursuing this, I would also advise diversifying the residents invited to the focus group, per the above point.

Methodology + Data

Surveys of public opinion rely on a healthy sample size, and a representative one to boot. The Upton-by-Chester parish council survey succeeded in ascertaining the views of 226 residents living within the parish.

During the collation process, we detected attempts by some to submit duplicate responses. We succeeded in discovering these entries and deleting them forthwith from the final sample. The sample of 226 residents is, to the best of our knowledge, of unique residents living within the appropriate boundaries.

The survey succeeded in reaching those over the age of 45, as well as those retired, unemployed, and those who own their own home. The survey struggled, however, to reach those under the age of 45, full and part time employees as well as those renting socially and privately.

To allay this issue, like all surveys, we weighted the poorly represented samples up, while weighting the over-represented samples down.

A summary of the sample is available below.

Detail	Sub	Parish (%)*	Sample, unwghtd.	Sample, wghtd.	Reach (%)
Overall	—	1	226	226	—
Age-group	0-17	21%	4	47	8.5%
	18-44	32%	55	72	76.8%
	45-64	26%	111	58	190.4%
	65+	22%	56	49	114.7%
Housing tenure	Owned	75%	197	170	116.2%
	Private rented	12%	15	28	54.4%
	Social rented	12%	11	26	42.3%
	Living rent free	1%	3	3	102.1%
Work status	Employee: full-time	46%	86	103	83.2%
	Employee: part-time	18%	34	40	84.6%
	Self-employed	9%	20	21	97.0%
	Unemployed	3%	10	8	126.6%
	Student	5%	6	11	55.7%
	Retired	19%	70	43	162.3%

*Data refers to figures from the 2011 census or 2017 or later estimates if available.

A link to the headline responses can be found [here](#).