Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey 2016
Summary of results

TOWER HAMLETS

Summary
This report summarises the results from the 2016 Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey, which explores residents' views about the Council, services and the local area. Key findings:

- **Overall satisfaction** with the Council: more than two thirds of residents (71 per cent) were satisfied with the way the Council runs things – up 6 points on last year.

- **Service ratings:** Half of the 18 services monitored have seen an improvement in service ratings this year, while no service area saw a decline in ratings.

- **Image of the Council**: Views about different aspects of the Council's image were similar to last year's across most indicators, however, notably, agreement with the statement: *'My council is doing a better job than one year ago'* jumped by a record 17 points to 61 per cent.

- As in previous years, views about **resident involvement** remain mixed: 55 per cent felt the Council involves residents when making decisions, while more than one third disagreed; 57 per cent felt the Council listens to concerns of local residents, while 35 per cent disagreed.

- Opinion is divided on the issue of **council responsiveness**: one third disagreed with the statement 'the Council responds quickly when asked for help' and 49 per cent felt the Council was difficult to get through to on the phone (up 8 points from last year).

- **Trust and transparency**: Almost three quarters (72 per cent) of those surveyed said they trusted the Council *a great deal* or *a fair amount*. Residents were more ambivalent on the issue of transparency: just over half (52 per cent) of those surveyed agreed that the Council is *'open and transparent about its activities'* while 37 per cent said they neither agreed nor disagreed (or didn't know), and 11 per cent disagreed.

- **Cohesion and the area**: The majority of residents (87 per cent) feel their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together – up 6 points on last year – a new high. The majority (83 per cent) of residents are very or fairly satisfied with their area as a place to live, in line with previous years.

- **Anti-social behaviour and resident concerns**: Levels of concern about ASB problems have fallen for three out of the four areas monitored, continuing last year's downward trend. As in previous years, the top three most cited resident concerns were: crime, lack of affordable housing and litter/dirt in the street.

- **Contact and communications:** While telephone remains the main method of current and preferred contact, there is increasing use and interest in online methods. In terms of how residents would like to get information about the Council, there is a strong preference for both online and print sources.

- **Internet access:** Most (92 per cent) adults surveyed had access to the internet, and of those, the most popular ways to get online were via a smart phone (83 per cent) or a laptop (70 per cent).

About the Survey

The Annual Residents' Survey is designed to collect data on resident perceptions about the Council, local services and the area. The questions are closely tied to service priorities, and form a core component of the Council's performance monitoring. They are also designed to provide context for policy development, service delivery and review. The main topics covered are:

- Views about the image of the Council;
- Transparency and trust;
- Satisfaction with services;
- Personal concerns and worries;
- Views about anti-social behaviour;
- Satisfaction with the local area;
- Cohesion and engagement;
- Communication with the Council;
- Internet access and use;
- Demographic data.

Methodology

The survey took place during 15th January – 17th March 2016 and comprised 1,100 face to face interviews. The methodology is designed to ensure that the sample drawn is representative of the borough's population generally. Residents were interviewed at 140 different sample points across the borough to ensure a good cross section of residents across all areas. Sampling quotas were set on age, gender, ethnicity and working status to ensure that the sample reflected the characteristics of the population.

Survey contractor

The survey is carried out by an independent market research company on behalf of the Council. Following a competitive tendering process in 2015, Westco Trading was commissioned to carry out the 2016 survey. Previously, the survey had been carried out by TNS-BMRB over the period 1999-2015. Despite the change in contractor, the survey design and methodology remains the same as before.

Trend data and potential discontinuities

Where available, trend data are presented in this report. While every effort has been made to minimise potential discontinuities in the survey data over time, inevitably, some may occur (eg due to changes in question wording, order). This year, there is also the possibility of differences associated with the change in survey contractor. For this reason, some caution is advised when interpreting changes in the survey data this year.

Statistical significance and interpretation of survey data

All figures presented are survey estimates, not precise measures, and as such, they have a degree of sampling variability attached to them. The concept of 'statistical significance' is used here to highlight those differences that are likely to reflect 'real' changes over time, as opposed to those which may be simply reflecting sampling variability attached to estimates. **Changes that are statistically significant are denoted by arrows ⇧⇩.** All figures presented are rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Key findings

Image of the Council

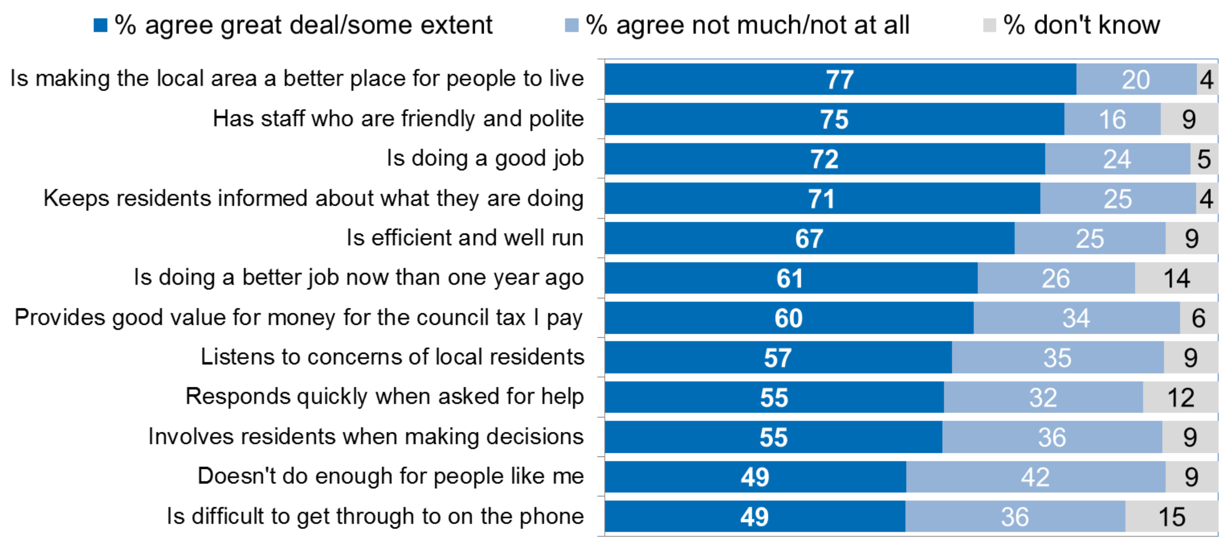
Residents were asked about 12 different aspects of the Council's image (Figure 1). Views remain similar to last year's for 8 out of the 12 areas.

More than three quarters of residents agreed that the Council was making the local area a better place to live and a similar proportion felt that Council staff were friendly and polite (77 and 75 per cent) – both similar levels to last year (Table 1).

Around seven in ten residents felt that the Council was doing a good job and that it was keeping residents informed about what it was doing – again, in line with last year's ratings.

Views about resident involvement were more mixed: 55 per cent felt the Council involves residents when making decisions, while more than one third disagreed. Similarly, 57 per cent agreed that the Council listens to concerns of local residents, while 35 per cent disagreed.

Figure 1: Views about image of the Council, Tower Hamlets, 2016



Source: Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey 2016, Westco Trading, (sample size=1,100)

Opinion is also divided on the issue of council responsiveness: almost one third disagreed with the statement *'the Council responds quickly when asked for help'* and the percentage of residents who felt the Council was *'difficult to get through to on the phone'* saw an increase this year to 49 per cent, up 8 points.

The other aspect of the Council's image, where views have become more negative, was in relation to the extent of agreement with the statement '*the Council doesn't do enough for people like me'* which rose by 6 points to 49 per cent.

Views were significantly improved for two aspects:

- More residents felt that the Council provided good value for the Council tax they pay (+7 points);
- However, most notably, agreement with the statement *'My Council is doing a better job than one year ago'* jumped by a record 17 percentage points to 61 per cent.

Overall level of satisfaction with the Council

Consistent with this rise, the overall level of satisfaction with the Council has also shown a significant increase over the year. After residents had been asked a range of questions about individual services, they were then asked: '*Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Tower Hamlets Council runs things'.* In response, over two thirds (71 per cent) said they were very, or fairly, satisfied with the way the Council runs things, up 6 points on last year's rating of 65 per cent, and now at a historical high (Table 1).

Table 1: Views about the image of the Council, Tower Hamlets, 2007-2016

	% agreeing with statement ('a great deal' or 'to some extent')										*Change over year**	
'My council…'	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016		
Is making the local area a better place to live	66	67	67	72	72	74	74	74	76	**77**	1	-
Has staff who are friendly and polite	71	75	76	76	81	80	77	74	75	**75**	0	-
Is doing a good job	64	68	69	72	72	76	76	73	75	**72**	-3	-
Keeps residents informed about what it is doing	66	68	70	72	71	76	73	69	73	**71**	-2	-
Is efficient and well-run	56	61	59	64	65	67	66	66	67	**67**	0	-
Is doing a better job now than one year ago	45	50	49	52	51	45	42	48	44	**61**	**17**	⇧
Provides good value for Council Tax I pay	37	41	43	50	51	49	50	51	53	**60**	**7**	⇧
Listens to concerns of local residents	54	55	57	57	61	58	56	56	55	**57**	2	-
Responds quickly when asked for help	49	49	52	56	58	59	51	51	52	**55**	3	-
Involves residents in decision-making	45	51	49	53	53	49	49	47	53	**55**	2	-
Doesn't do enough for people like me	*48*	*51*	*50*	*47*	*45*	*41*	*40*	*42*	*43*	***49***	**6**	⇧
Is difficult to get through to on phone	*43*	*43*	*40*	*37*	*40*	*36*	*38*	*44*	*41*	***49***	**8**	⇧
Overall satisfaction: % very/fairly satisfied with the way Tower Hamlets Council runs things	-	59	59	67	63	64	64	62	65	**71**	**6**	⇧

Source: Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey, Westco Trading (2016 data), TNS-BMRB (previous years).
Notes: Figures *in italics* are negative statements - so a fall in the percentage is an improvement.
* All data rounded to nearest percentage point. Changes that are statistically significant are denoted by arrows.

Trust and transparency

Two new questions were asked on this year's survey in relation to trust and transparency. When asked how much they trusted the Council, almost three quarters (72 per cent) of residents surveyed said they trusted the Council *'a great deal'* or *'a fair amount'*, while just under one quarter said *'not very much'* or *'not at all'*.

On the issue of transparency, there was more ambivalence. When asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement '*Tower Hamlets Council is open and transparent about its activities*' just over half agreed (52 per cent) and 11 per cent disagreed. The remainder said they neither agreed nor disagreed (33 per cent) or they didn't know (4 per cent).

Table 2: Views about trust and transparency, Tower Hamlets, 2016 (new questions)

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Tower Hamlets Council is **open and transparent** about its activities?	%	How much do you **trust** Tower Hamlets Council?	%
Definitely agree	3	A great deal	7
Tend to agree	48	A fair amount	65
Neither agree nor disagree	33	Not very much	20
Tend to disagree	8	Not at all	3
Definitely disagree	3	Don't know	5
Don't know	4		
All agree	*52*	*A great deal/a fair amount*	*72*
All disagree	*11*	*Not very much/not at all*	*23*

Source: Westco Trading, Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey (sample size 1,100)

Satisfaction with services

Service satisfaction ratings are monitored for 18 different service areas. Residents were asked*: 'I would like to ask you about local services in this area. I would like your opinion of these services even if you yourself have not had direct experience of them. I would like to ask you your opinion of…?'* Then, respondents were asked to rate each service on a 7 point scale: *excellent, very good, good, average, poor, very poor, extremely poor*[1].

Two different measures are presented:

- **'All resident' ratings:** these relate to general perceptions about services from all residents, regardless of whether they use the service or not. These cover 13 services and are monitored for universal services and services used by a significant proportion of residents (ie more than one third of the sample).

- **User ratings**: these provide views of service users and are monitored for 10 services. These offer a more informed assessment of services for non-universal services. For five service areas *all resident* and *user* ratings are both reported.

[1] Note: to avoid order effects, the order of the answer scale was reversed for half the sample, and the order of the list of services was randomised at each interview.

Service ratings

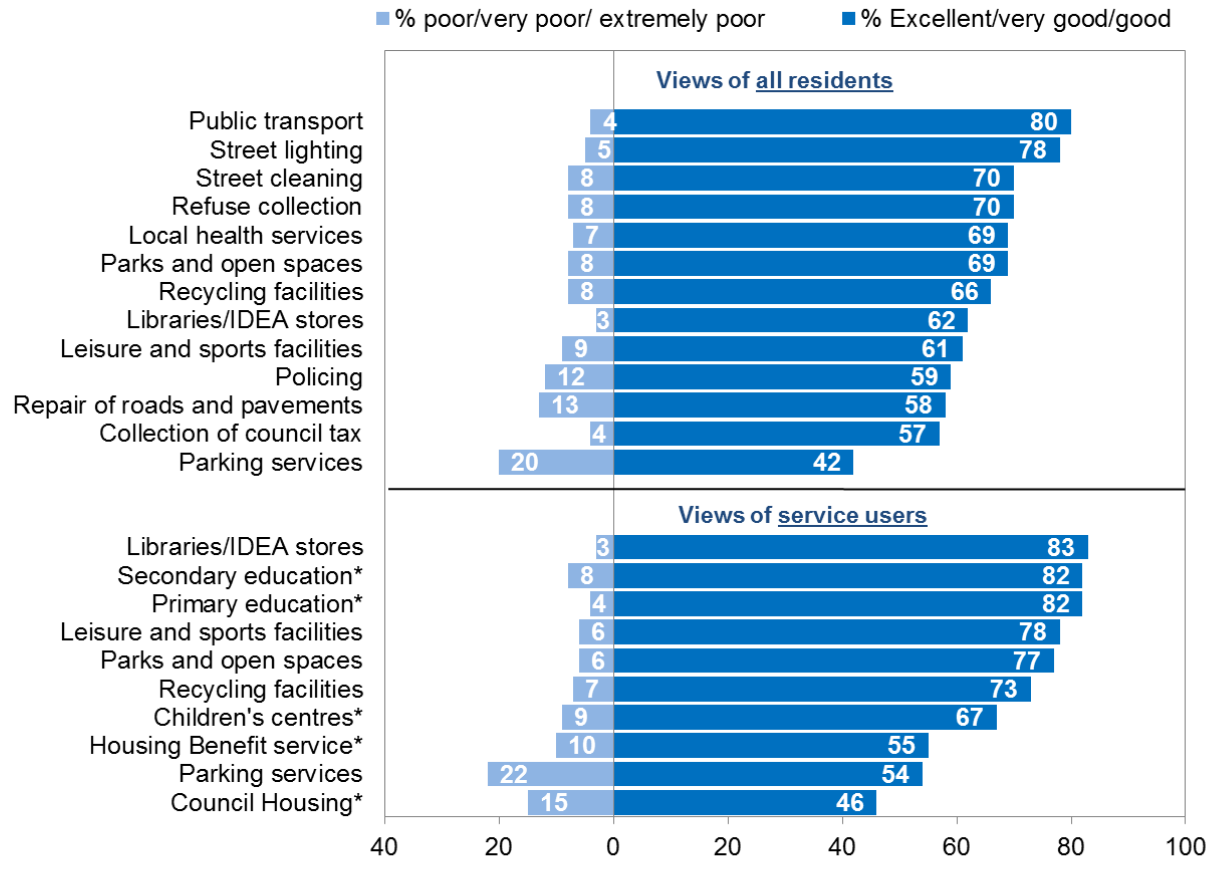
Public transport remains the most highly rated service area, rated positively (good, very good or excellent) by 80 per cent of residents, closely followed by street lighting (78 per cent). Refuse collection, street cleaning, parks and open spaces, and local health services, also attract high ratings: more than two thirds of residents rate these services positively.

As figure 2 illustrates, most services attract a high positive net rating (where the percentage rating the service as good to excellent well outweighs the percentage rating it as poor). The main exception is parking services where opinion is a bit more divided.

The services which attract the highest user satisfaction ratings are: Idea Stores and libraries (83 per cent); and primary and secondary education (both 82 per cent).

All resident and *user* ratings are both reported for five service areas: Idea Stores and libraries; parks and open spaces; leisure and sports facilities; recycling and parking services. In all cases, those who use these services rate the service more highly compared with the population generally.

Figure 2: Service ratings: all residents and users, Tower Hamlets, 2016



Source: Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey 2016, Westco Trading
** Denotes small sample size, and larger confidence intervals.*

Service ratings: trend data

Table 3 shows how service ratings have changed over the last ten years. Half of the 18 services monitored have seen an improvement in service ratings this year while no service area saw a decline in ratings. Indeed, the size of the rise in ratings is quite pronounced for some services: five saw rises of 10 percentage points or more: parking services; leisure and sports facilities; road and pavement repairs, street cleaning and policing. Indeed, several services have reached a new historical high.

Interpreting change data and potential discontinuities

However, some caution is required when interpreting changes over the last year. Given the change in the survey contractor, it is possible that some of the changes observed here may be reflecting differences between the surveys, as well as real changes in perceptions. While the question wording and design is identical to before, discontinuities are still possible.

Table 3: Service satisfaction ratings, Tower Hamlets, 2007-2016

	% of all respondents rating service good, very good or excellent										*Change over year**		*Sample size (2016)*
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016			
Views of all residents													
Public transport	65	69	65	67	72	74	78	76	82	**80**	-2	-	*1100*
Street lighting	61	64	61	64	66	67	67	70	69	**78**	**9**	⇧	*1100*
Refuse collection	67	66	66	66	68	67	65	62	65	**70**	**5**	⇧	*1100*
Street cleaning	54	51	59	62	60	59	59	55	58	**70**	**12**	⇧	*1100*
Parks and open spaces	50	54	53	61	60	60	60	61	64	**69**	**5**	⇧	*1100*
Local health services	51	59	65	65	68	66	63	59	60	**69**	**9**	⇧	*1100*
Recycling facilities	66	67	66	65	68	63	64	61	64	**66**	2	-	*1100*
Libraries/idea stores	54	55	55	59	58	58	62	61	63	**62**	-1	-	*1100*
Leisure & sports facilities	43	46	45	47	47	44	49	48	50	**61**	**11**	⇧	*1100*
Policing	46	39	41	47	50	46	49	50	49	**59**	**10**	⇧	*1100*
Road/pavement repairs	40	41	37	38	39	41	40	43	45	**58**	**13**	⇧	*1100*
Collection of council tax	54	50	55	53	57	57	62	53	60	**57**	-3	-	*1100*
Parking Services	23	25	23	25	30	26	25	29	28	**42**	**14**	⇧	*1100*
Views of service users													
Libraries/idea stores	71	72	76	81	76	77	81	79	79	**83**	4	-	*528*
Primary education**	69	73	69	77	71	70	74	72	75	**82**	7	-	*175*
Secondary education**	63	62	65	64	55	64	69	65	75	**82**	7	-	*126*
Leisure & sports facilities	60	61	65	71	61	61	66	63	64	**78**	**14**	⇧	*508*
Parks and open spaces	60	63	65	66	63	65	66	66	70	**77**	**7**	⇧	*809*
Recycling facilities	71	71	74	72	72	68	71	67	70	**73**	3	-	*741*
Children's centres**	-	-	-	82	72	64	77	72	73	**67**	-6	-	*118*
Housing Benefit service**	58	59	64	66	63	60	54	56	57	**55**	-2	-	*199*
Parking Services	27	29	28	28	34	30	29	38	35	**54**	**19**	⇧	*438*
Council Housing**	36	39	41	47	48	51	42	42	44	**46**	2	-	*334*

Source: Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey: Westco Trading (2016), TNS-BMRB (previous years).

Notes: 'All resident' ratings are provided for services used by more than one third of respondents. Services used by less then 10 per cent of the survey sample are excluded due to poor data reliability.

* All data are rounded to nearest percentage point. Statistically significant changes are denoted by arrows ⇧⇩.

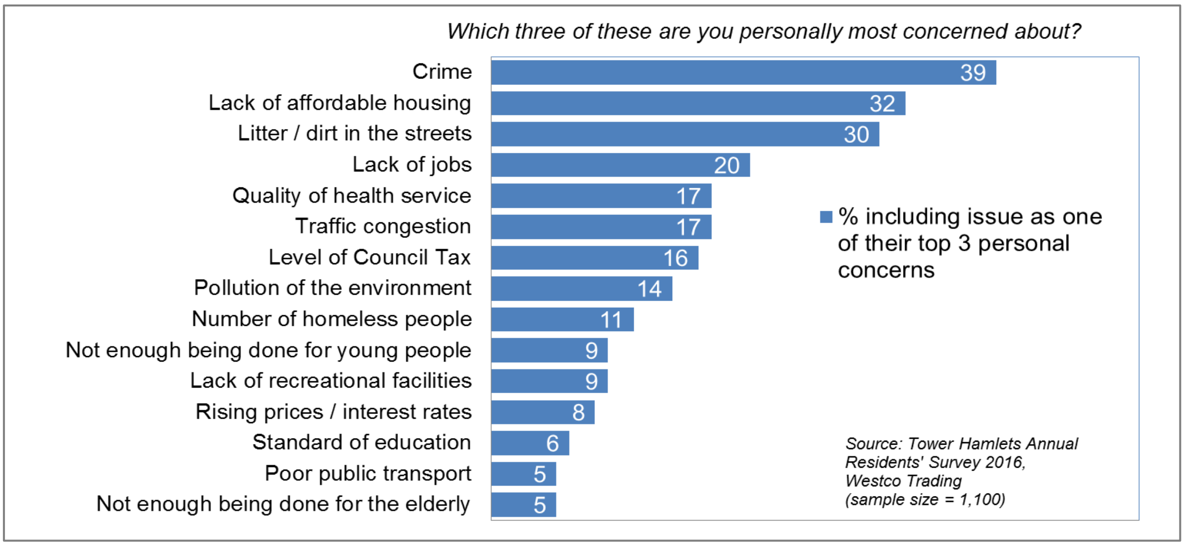
** Less than one third of the sample use these services, so confidence intervals attached to these data are larger than for other services (typically ± 6-9 percentage points).

Concerns and worries

Residents were presented with a list of 15 issues and asked to say which three (if any) were their top personal concerns. The most pressing resident concern was crime – cited by 39 per cent of residents, followed by lack of affordable housing (32 per cent) and litter/dirt in the street (30 per cent). Concern about lack of jobs is the fourth most cited concern mentioned by one in five residents. Residents were least worried about the standard of education, poor public transport, or not enough being done for the elderly (Figure 3).

This question was changed slightly in its design this year so trend data are not, strictly speaking, comparable. Appendix table A1 provides the historical data for context and details of the changes – the figures indicate that the top concerns identified below are broadly consistent with previous years.

Figure 3: Top personal concerns of residents, Tower Hamlets, 2016



Worries about public spending cuts

Residents were also asked a question to gauge the level of concern about public spending cuts. The question posed was: *'Thinking about the next year, how worried are you that you or your family will suffer directly from cuts in spending on public services such as health, education or welfare benefits?'* In response, 60 per cent of residents said they were very or fairly worried about cuts in spending, down 7 points from last year.

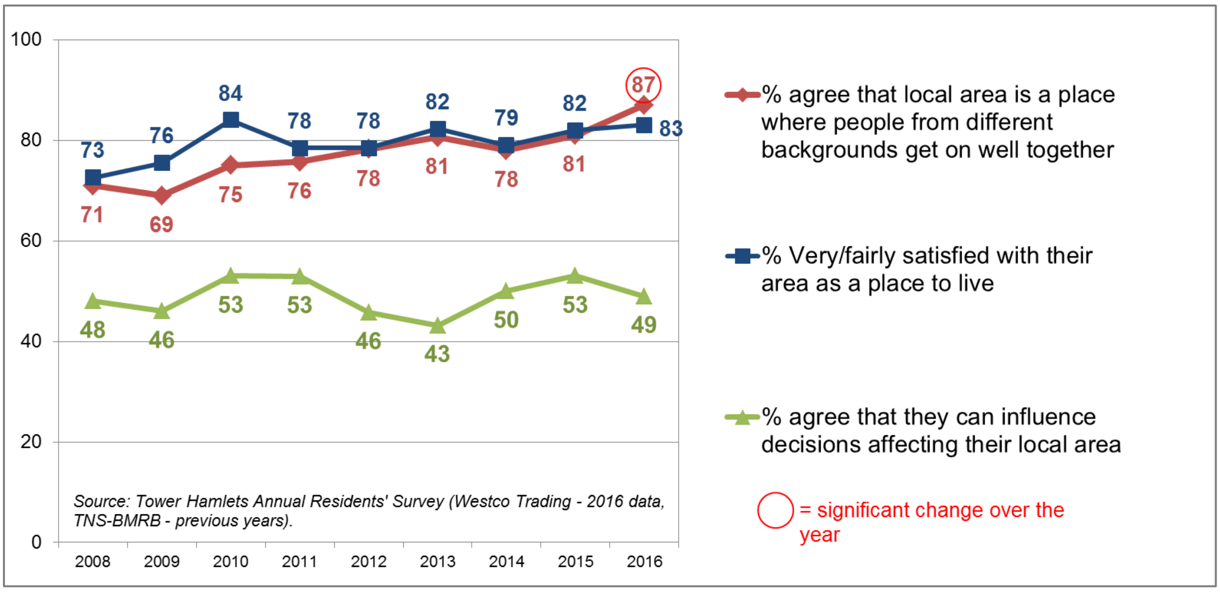
Cohesion and community

Views about the area remain positive: 83 per cent said they are satisfied with their local area as a place to live – similar to previous years.

The majority of residents are positive about cohesion: 87 per cent of those surveyed agreed that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together – up 6 points on last year, and a new historical high (Figure 4).

Views about the extent to which residents feel they can influence decisions remain mixed. Around half of all respondents (49 per cent) felt they could influence decisions affecting their local area – similar to ratings for the last two years.

Figure 4 Views about the area, cohesion and influencing decisions, Tower Hamlets, 2008 to 2016



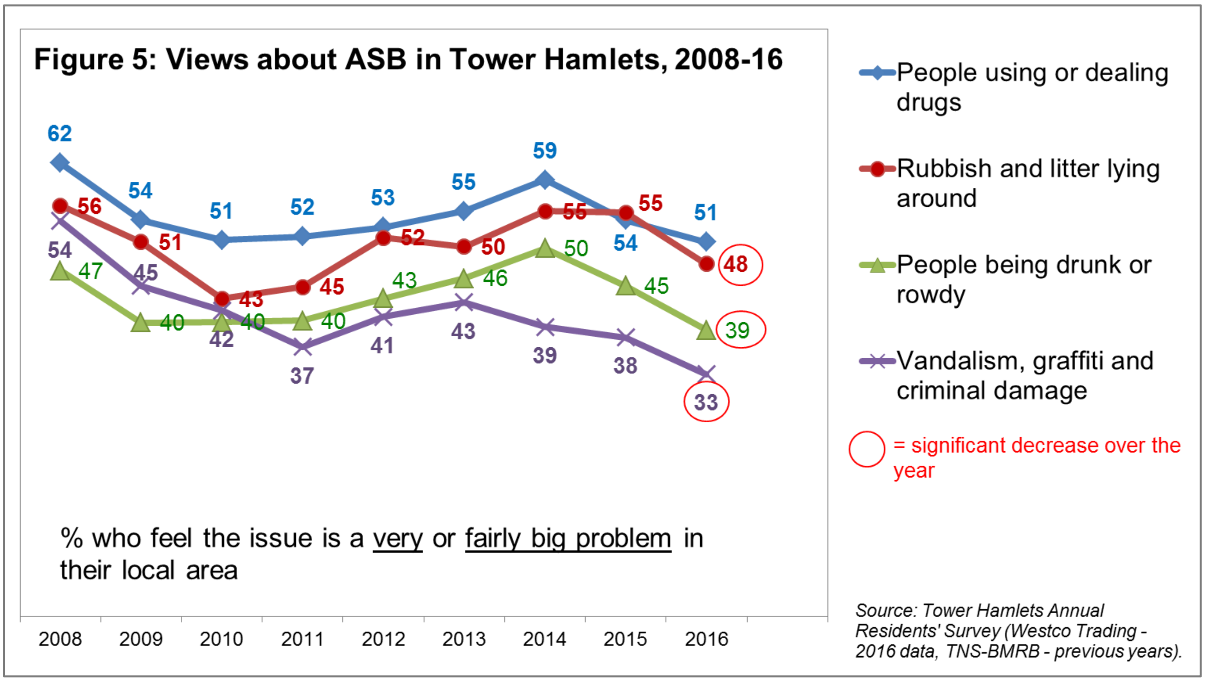


Figure 5: Views about ASB in Tower Hamlets, 2008-16

Views about anti-social behaviour

Figure 5 shows trends in resident perceptions around four different types of anti-social behaviour (ASB). Levels of concern about ASB problems have fallen for three out of the four areas monitored, continuing last year's downward trend:

- 48 per cent felt rubbish or litter was a 'fairly' or 'very' big problem in their local area – down 7 points from last year;
- 39 per cent felt people being drunk or rowdy was a problem (down 6 points);
- 33 per cent felt vandalism, graffiti and criminal damage was a problem, down 5 points on last year – and a historical low.

Around half (51 per cent) of those surveyed felt that people using or dealing drugs was a big problem in their local area – similar to last year's level (54 per cent), but well below the percentage recorded in 2014 (59 per cent).

Success in dealing with ASB

After the ASB questions, respondents were then asked *'How much would you agree or disagree that the police and other local public services are successfully dealing with these [ASB] issues in your local area'.* In response: 56 per cent agreed, 13 per cent disagreed and 30 per cent were ambivalent (they neither agreed nor disagreed, or didn't know). The proportion who disagreed has fallen by 7 points over the year, while the proportion who were ambivalent rose slightly.

Table 4: Views about success in dealing with ASB problems, Tower Hamlets, 2016

Agreement with the statement *'the police and other services are successfully dealing with these [ASB] issues in your local area'*	2014	2015	**2016**	*Change over year*
% agree (strongly/tend to)	51	54	**56**	2
% neither agree or disagree	25	24	**28**	4 ⇧
% disagree (strongly/tend to)	21	20	**13**	-7 ⇩
% don't know	3	2	**2**	0

Source: Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey: Westco Trading, 2016; TNS-BMRB, previous years.

Communication with the Council

Almost three quarters (72 per cent) of those surveyed had made contact with the Council over the last year. When asked about ease of contact, the majority (83 per cent) said they found it very or fairly easy to contact the Council (Table 5).

Telephone remains, by far, the most popular method of contact, used by 77 per cent of those who had contacted the Council over the last year. It also remains the most popular preferred future method of contact (72 per cent). Mobile phone use is increasing while use of landline is falling, and similar patterns are evident in terms of preferred methods for future contact.

Use of online methods of contact have been increasing: use of email, and the Council website, both increased by 8 points over the year. Similarly, preference for using both these methods in the future has increased.

The proportion who made contact by visiting a council office fell from 16 to 12 per cent over the year. Interest in this as a future method of contact also showed a fall (-4 points).

Preferred ways to get Council information

A new question was added to the survey to ascertain what sources of information residents would prefer to use to find out about the Council and its services (figure 6).

The results show a strong preference for both online and print sources. The two most popular sources were the Council website (44 per cent) and East End Life (41 per cent), followed by printed information provided by the Council (25 per cent).

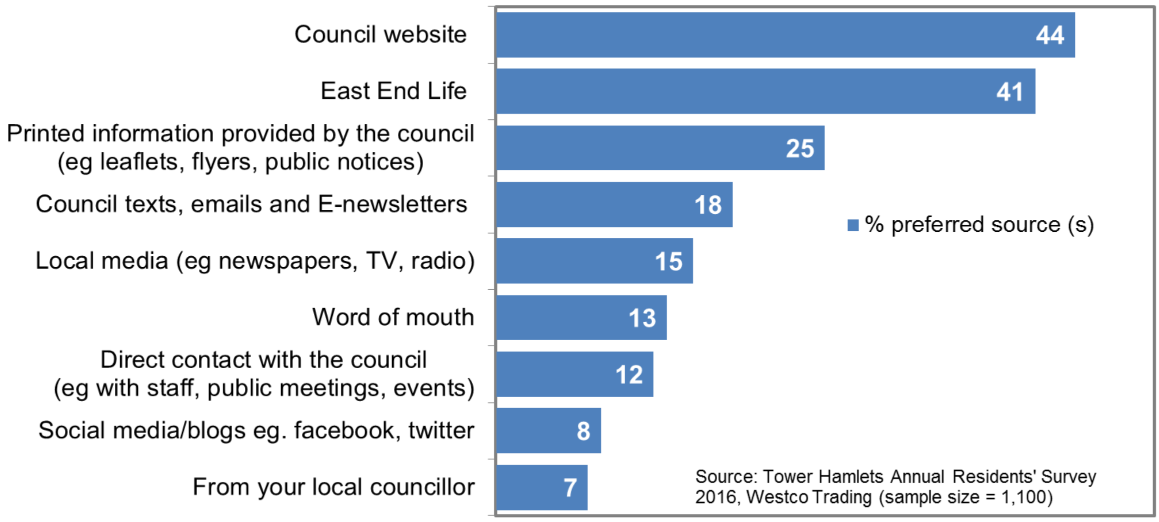
Table 5: Contacting the Council: current and preferred method of contact, Tower Hamlets, 2014-2016

	2014	2015	**2016**	Change over year	
If you have contacted the Council in the last year, which methods did you use? (base: those who had contacted Council)					
Telephone (any)	80	79	**77**	-2	-
Telephone - Landline	*65*	*62*	***54***	-8	⇩
Telephone - Mobile	*22*	*26*	***32***	6	⇧
Email	16	15	**23**	8	⇧
Council Website	7	8	**16**	8	⇧
Visit To A Council Office	17	16	**12**	-4	⇩
Letter	6	6	**11**	5	⇧
If you need to contact the Council in future, what would be your preferred methods? (Base: all)					
Telephone (any)	73	75	**72**	-3	-
Telephone - landline	*57*	*56*	***48***	*-8*	⇩
Telephone - mobile	*24*	*29*	***33***	*4*	⇧
Email	23	24	**30**	6	⇧
Council website	6	8	**16**	8	⇧
Visit to a council office	13	14	**10**	-4	⇩
Letter	8	7	**8**	1	-
How easy did you find it to contact the Council (base: those who contacted Council)?					
Easy	-	-	***83***	-	
Not easy	-	-	***16***	-	

Source: Tower Hamlets Annual Residents Survey, Westco Trading, 2016); TNS-BMRB, previous years.
Notes: Only methods used by more than 2% of the population listed. Multiple responses possible, so percentages sum to more than 100%.
Sample size = 1,100 (of which, 795 had contacted the Council over the last year.

Figure 6: Preferred ways to get Council information, Tower Hamlets, 2016

Thinking about ways you get information about the Council, which of these sources of information would you prefer to use to find out about Tower Hamlets Council and the services it provides?, you can pick up to three'.



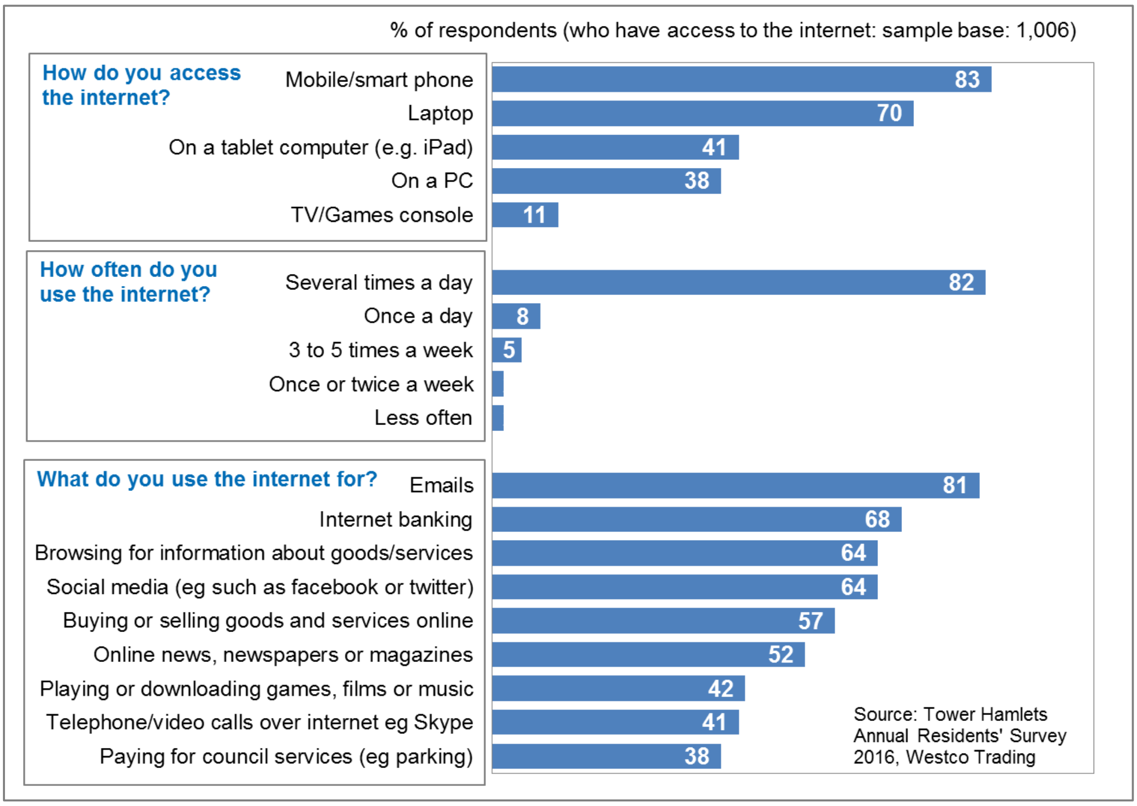
Internet access and use

The majority (92 per cent) of respondents said they had access to the internet, up 5 points on last year (87 per cent). Figure 7 shows how residents access the internet, how frequently, and what they use it for.

Of those who had access to the internet: the majority had access via a mobile/smart phone (83 per cent) and 70 per cent used a laptop to access the internet, while around four in ten had access via a tablet, or a PC.

Most said they accessed the internet at least once a day (90 per cent). The most popular online activities were email (81 per cent); internet banking (68 per cent), browsing for information about goods and services and use of social media (both 64 per cent). Of those with internet access, 38 per cent said they used the internet to pay for Council services online.

Figure 7: Internet access: mode, frequency and use, Tower Hamlets, 2016



Further information

This briefing was produced by the Council's Corporate Strategy and Equality Service. Information from previous surveys can be found on the Council's website at the following link:
http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgsl/851-900/867_consultation/annual_residents_survey.aspx

For queries about the survey, please contact the Council's Corporate Research Unit cru@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Table A1: Areas of personal concern, Tower Hamlets, 2007-2016

% including each issue among top 3 concerns	*Which three of these are you personally most concerned about? (up to 3 coded)*										
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change in question design	**2016**
Crime	50	55	47	46	42	42	41	31	34		**39**
Lack of affordable housing	24	23	17	21	22	21	26	29	32		**32**
Litter / dirt in the streets	22	26	27	19	23	24	26	27	33		**30**
Lack of jobs	21	19	22	26	30	31	35	23	20		**20**
Traffic congestion	15	18	15	16	13	13	12	14	15		**17**
Quality of health service	19	14	15	13	14	12	16	16	14		**17**
Level of Council Tax	28	24	24	22	16	17	19	15	14		**16**
Pollution of the environment	15	14	17	13	11	8	12	16	13		**14**
Number of homeless people	10	7	11	9	8	9	9	14	12		**11**
Lack of recreational facilities	10	10	9	9	9	8	10	10	9		**9**
Not enough being done for young people	*20*	*17*	*16*	*16*	*18*	*20*	*19*	*16*	*12*		***9***
Rising prices / interest rates	*10*	*11*	*12*	*9*	*17*	*14*	*21*	*16*	*16*		***8***
Standard of education	14	11	14	11	13	10	11	10	10		**6**
Not enough being done for the elderly	13	11	11	9	9	10	10	8	8		**5**
Poor public transport	10	8	11	8	8	5	5	6	4		**5**

Source: Tower Hamlets Annual Residents' Survey: Westco Trading (2016), TNS-BMRB (previous years).

Notes:

1. All data are rounded to nearest percentage point. Changes that are statistically significant are denoted by arrows.

2. Comparability issues: From 2007 to 2015, the categories in this question were put to all respondents except for: 'rising prices/interest rates' and 'not enough being done for young people', which were asked of half the sample each. Percentages for these categories were based on the proportion of the split sample that identified them as a concern. In 2016, the split coding was removed and the full list of 15 categories was put to the whole sample. While this provides a more accurate ranking of all 15 categories against each other, it means the most recent figures are no longer directly comparable with what has gone before, especially in relation to the split code categories. Specifically, rates may be marginally deflated compared with before, as people are ranking out of 15 not 14.