

3 Awareness

Summary	Oct-10	Jan-11	Jun-11
Know great deal/fair amount about what services council(s) provide in local area	-	-	60%
Well informed about services and benefits council provides	60%	54%	55%
Know great deal/fair amount about what local councillor does on my behalf	-	-	38%
Well informed about council's plans to deal with any proposed reductions to their budgets	-	33%	29%
Know great deal/fair amount about how council(s) makes decisions	-	-	27%
Know great deal/fair amount about the role of the council(s) Chief Executive	-	-	19%

A Council Tax bill should have been delivered to your household a couple of months ago. Do you remember if the amount of council tax your household pays went down, went up or stayed the same as the previous year?	Oct-10	Jan-11	Jun-11
Council tax stayed the same a couple of months ago	-	-	44%
Council tax went up a couple of months ago	-	-	33%
Don't know if council tax went up, down or stayed the same	-	-	21%
Council tax went down a couple of months ago	-	-	2%

Have you done any of the following in the last two to three months?	Oct-10	Jan-11	Jun-11
Read a local newspaper	80%	85%	80%
Read a magazine/newspaper produced by your local council(s)	60%	58%	55%
Spoke to or contacted a member of staff at the council	-	-	32%
Visited a local news website	24%	31%	31%
Visited your local council(s) website	30%	30%	30%
Spoke to or contacted your local councillor(s)	13%	15%	15%
Read council information on Facebook or other social media	-	13%	9%
None of these	8%	6%	9%

How often, if at all, do you read a local newspaper?	Oct-10	Jan-11	Jun-11
At least once a week	-	-	60%
Don't read at least once a week	-	-	40%

Summary	Oct-10	Jan-11	Jun-11
Government was viewed negatively by the media in last few months	-	-	58%
Local council(s) across the country were viewed negatively by the media in last few months	-	-	46%
My local council was viewed negatively by the media in last few months	-	-	29%

The question below is taken from two YouGov polls of 5-6 April 2011 and 15-16 March 2011 amongst c. 2,000 UK adults aged 18+. Please note the different methodologies involved. YouGov conduct their survey over the internet, the LGA/LGinsight poll was conducted by Populus over the telephone.

Local councils in many parts of Britain are cutting some of their services. Thinking about the area where you live, which of these statements comes closest to your view?	Mar-11 YouGov	Apr-11 YouGov	Jun-11
Central government is mainly responsible, because it is cutting sharply the money it gives to the council where I live	41%	45%	36%
Neither - I am not aware of significant cuts to services in my area	16%	14%	35%
My local council is mainly responsible, because it could achieve most of the savings it needs by cutting costs, without cutting services	33%	31%	25%

POLL HEADLINES

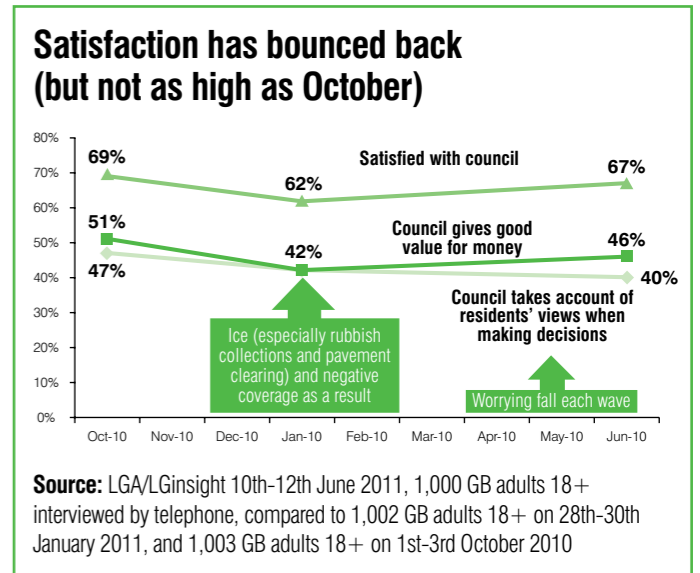
June 2011

What people really think about their council and what you should do about it

1 Don't believe the Daily Mail – only a minority of the public loathe their local council

Nearly seven in ten (67%) GB adults are satisfied with the job their local council is doing. This is an increase from January 2011 when problems in clearing ice from pavements and delayed rubbish collections dented the reputation of local government, but even then the majority (62%) was satisfied. Negative media coverage of local government has increased into 2011, but overall satisfaction is similar to October 2010. The worrying trend is that perceptions of value for money are down five-points (from 51% to 46%) and whether the council takes account of residents views when making decisions is down seven points (from 47% to 40%).

The reputation of local government is important as it should genuinely reflect that a council is doing a good job and trying to protect it should keep the organisation on its toes. An efficient and pro-active council with motivated staff and a happy customer base is likely to be cheaper to run than an inefficient, lethargic council with unmotivated staff and unhappy customers who don't care about their reputation. The original LGA local government Reputation Campaign was launched in 2005 to address common service problems and improve communications – leading to a hoped for improved reputation for local government. It worked but there is a long-way to go. At the time only 16% of GB adults said they spoke highly of their council, now 28% do. The number of people critical of their council is similar (30% vs 27%), with the remainder neutral or saying they don't know. Less people are now on the fence and neutral about local government, and the number speaking highly are on par with those critical.



This work has helped ensure that the majority (56%) of the British public trust their council to spend money wisely, rising to 91% among those who strongly agree their council offers good value for money. Among those who say they do not trust their council a quarter (25%) say they can see that they have wasted money locally, and 14% say they do not receive certain services (the question was an open text box and their verbatim comments were classified). Those councils who have a strong reputation are more likely to have an open and productive discussion over service changes with residents than those with a poor reputation.

2 If someone loathes their council it is probably because they have personally had a poor service, have experienced a council activity they think is wasteful, or think their council hasn't listened to them

Quality of services and personal experience drives council reputation with many judging with their eyes rather than believing negative media (unless they see evidence that supports the media line). Among those who say that their

council gives good value for money two in five (41%) say that it is because they provide good efficient services. Those who think their council does not offer good value for money talk about getting a poor return for their council tax (16%), that the

council is inefficient and should reduce staff (14%) or that it wastes money on unnecessary projects (12%) along with a long list of individual complaints (the question was an open text box). When asked **what councils should do to give local people better value for money one in six (16%) of GB adults suggest being more business like, professional and efficient** (again classified from an open text box). This rises to a quarter (22%) of those who strongly disagree that their council offers good value for money. A further 11% of all GB residents, and 21% of those who

strongly disagree that their council offers good value for money, think that their **council should listen more** to the public in order to deliver good value for money. Seven percent mention reducing senior pay and four percent council tax. These are important issues but not as important as **councils showing respect to their residents by listening and being business like and professional in their dealings**. This is a core behaviour of an organisation looking to enhance and protect its reputation.

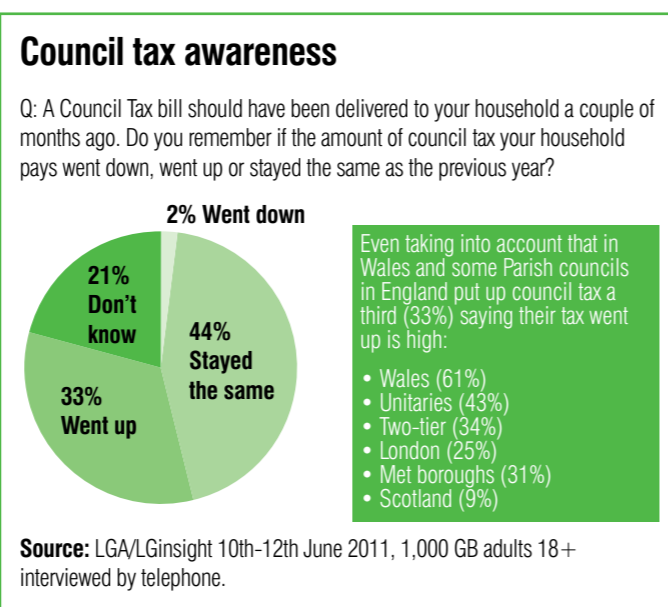
3 Councils should listen and engage with residents, providing them with timely information that proves how business like the council is (and from this a good reputation will follow)

People cannot listen to what councils have to say unless there is good communications. **Those residents who have seen a council publication are more likely to rate their council well as they are better informed.** But the content is more important than how it is delivered. Three in five (60%) of all residents say their know at least a fair amount about what services their council provides, but only 38% say the same about their knowledge of what local councillors do, 27% how the council makes decisions and 19% what the role of the Chief Executive is. Also as the chart shows **despite a national council tax freeze/reduction in England a third (33%) of all GB adults thought their council tax went up in April and 21% said they don't know.**

In all these cases the more aware people are of what their council and local councillors are doing and providing, along with awareness of a council tax freeze/reduction, the higher they rate their local authority. At present three quarters of residents (73%) say they have had some information direct from the council in the last few months (either a council publication, the council website or contact with a councillor/ staff member). **A quarter (23%) of GB adults have only had direct contact with their council through their council publication** (overall 55% of GB adults have seen a copy). Council communications has to improve knowledge not just of services, but of how decisions are made, what staff do and the role of councillors. **The reputation of local government is stronger than the negative media for those councils who are able to deliver and keep residents informed and engaged.** Their reputation will ebb away only if they do not listen to the concerns about service

Further information

The poll is a partnership between the LGA and LGinsight which are two separate organisations. The Local Government Association (LGA) is a voluntary lobbying organisation, as part of the Local Government Group (LGG), acting as the voice of the local government sector (www.lga.gov.uk). LGinsight is a new think tank of local government researchers who seek to challenge local government researchers to move beyond benchmarks to prove how their data can be used to deliver good decisions and positive outcomes (www.lgcomms.org.uk/resources/lginsight). The full report for this poll can be found via their websites.



delivery and efficiency raised in this survey. Being business like is not to statically deliver the same services in the same way, but to respond to change in a professional manner. It is likely that the minority of the public concerned about value for money will grow as services change and decisions become tougher. **Local government has to act to ensure that any fear of the impact of negative media they have does not become a self-fulfilling prophesy.** The majority of the public trust their council and now is the time to show what this trust is well placed.

Populus carried out the survey discussed in this poll briefing. They conducted it by telephone among 1,000 GB adults aged 18 and over between 11th-12th June 2011. Telephone numbers used to contact people were randomly generated to ensure a representative spread of responses with quotas set, and data weighted to, the known profile of the population. If you wish to discuss the findings please contact Kate Hills at the LGA (kate.hills@local.gov.uk, 020 7664 3274) or Neil Wholey, Chair of LGinsight (nwholey@westminster.gov.uk, 020 7641 3317)

POLL TOPLINE FINDINGS June 2011

These are the headline findings from a poll of 1,000 GB adults aged 18+ interviewed by telephone by Populus between 10th and 12th of June 2011. The results are compared to previous Populus survey findings from 28th and 30st January 2011 amongst 1,002 GB adults aged 18+, and the first survey which was carried out in October 2010 amongst 1,003 GB adults aged 18+. The full findings and question wording are available separately in the summary report. This report also include a break down on key questions by authority type, region and other demographics.

The questionnaire started with the following preamble "I would like to ask you some questions about your local council. If you live in an area with more than one council please think about the way in which they deliver services to you overall. This would include parish, district and county councils. We are doing this to keep the survey simple as it is part of a national study. "

1 Reputation measures

Summary	Oct-10	Jan-11	Jun-11
Satisfaction with the way you local council(s) runs things	69%	62%	67%
Trust local council(s) a great deal/fair amount to spend money wisely	-	-	56%
Agree council is efficient and well run	-	-	47%
Agree council(s) give local people good value for money	51%	42%	46%
Agree council(s) take account of residents' views when making decisions	47%	42%	40%
Speak highly of council(s)	-	-	28%

2 Top three answers from comments in survey – classified from comments

Why do you say that about value for money?	What, if anything, do you think has given you that opinion about trusting the council to spend money?	What should your local council(s) do to give local people better value for money in future?
<i>Among those who think good value for money</i>	<i>Among those who think poor value for money</i>	<i>Among those who trust their council</i>
<i>Among those who do not trust their council</i>	<i>Among all GB adults</i>	
Good/efficient services/everything run well (41%)	Poor VFM/ services are poor in return for amount of Council Tax paid (16%)	Experience over the years/personal observations (13%)
They are doing a good job/their best with the resources available to them (12%)	Council are inefficient/ should reduce staff/ management (14%)	Can see they wasted money locally (25%)
Good refuse collection service (11%)	The council waste money/waste money on unnecessary projects (12%)	Don't get the services I need (14%)
		Local newspapers (9%)
		Local newspapers (10%)
		Be more business like/ efficient/cut costs/ spend wisely (16%)
		Should listen to the public/find out what the public wants/have more public meetings (11%)
		Improve customer care/how they respond to queries (7%)