

The Mayor of Sutton Civic Function Consultation

Sutton Online Residents Panel Survey

February 2015

Key Findings

There are low levels of awareness about the Mayor, however more residents agree that having a mayor in Sutton is beneficial - compared to those who don't. The role of the Mayor is appreciated as a figurehead for the Council and community activity. From this survey there are options for consideration on how the Council's Civic Function might be developed. These include:

- Reducing spend on the Council's Civic Function to reflect current times of austerity;
- Modernising the Civic Function - With regards to activities, roles and duties, it is suggested that the voluntary, community and charity functions should continue to be supported, while ceremonial functions be reduced; and
- Improving communication in contemporary formats to help increase knowledge and awareness among residents as to the activities, roles and duties carried out by the Mayor.

Purpose

Sutton Council is currently conducting a review of its Civic Function. The Civic Function is the role of the Mayor and the support provided to the Mayor. This report forms part of the review.

In Sutton the role of the Mayor differs from that of an elected Mayor. Sutton's Mayor presides over Civic functions and social occasions as the ceremonial head of the Council; attending and representing the Council at community, charitable and faith events.

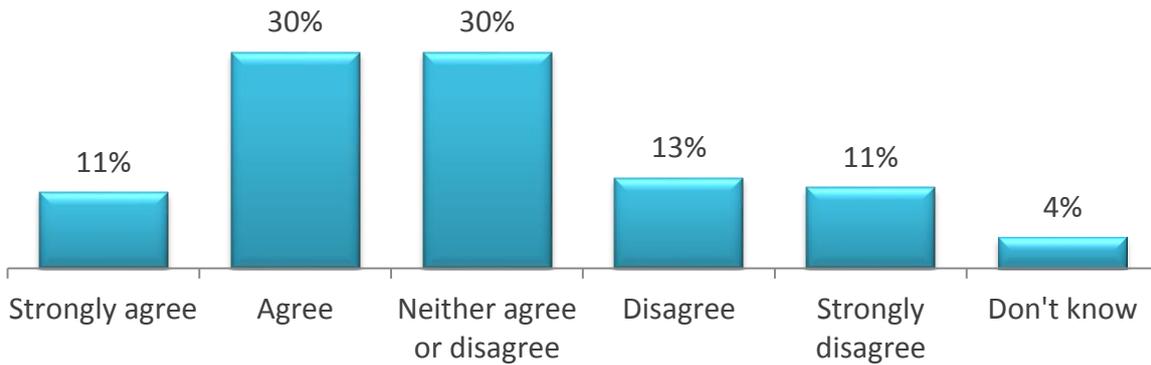
This short survey aimed to assess levels of knowledge and awareness of the role of the Mayor. The survey also aimed to get ideas and suggestions from local residents on how the Council's Civic Function might be developed.

Methodology

This online survey was circulated to Sutton's Online Residents Panel using the Council's Online Opinion Suite. To enable wider participation another survey was published to enable residents who were not registered on Sutton's Online Residents Panel to take part. A press release was issued to encourage participation. The survey took place between 9th January and 1st February, 2015. A total of 300 residents took part in the survey.

Findings

41% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that having a Mayor within Sutton is beneficial to the Borough and its residents (n = 299).



Agree	41%
Disagree	24%

While 41% agreed that Sutton should have a Mayor, 21% were not aware that Sutton has a Mayor who is the ceremonial lead for the Council. 20% said that they knew who the current Mayor of Sutton is.

20% said that they had seen or met the Mayor at a local event. From those who knew who the Mayor was, this increased to 61%.

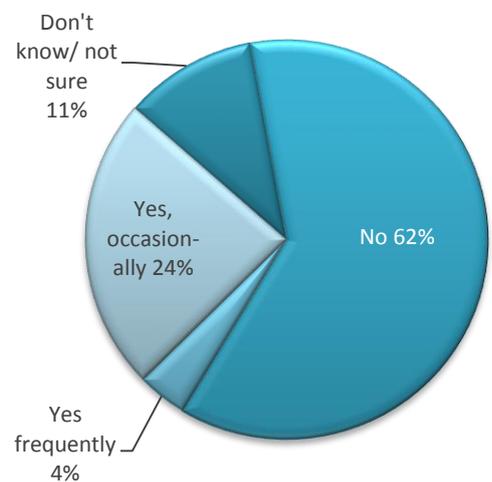
- 79% were aware that Sutton currently has a mayor who is the ceremonial lead for the Council (n = 298)
- 20% knew who the current Mayor of Sutton is (n = 298)
- During the past 12 months 20% have seen or met the Mayor at a local event (n = 297)

Media Coverage

During the past 12 months 62% had not seen or heard any media coverage of the Mayor of Sutton? (n = 299)

The low level of media coverage in relation to the Mayor was thought to have an impact on awareness. This was described in the open comments where one respondent said:

“Perhaps if there were more advance publicity as to when and where the mayor would be appearing in public, more local people would turn out to see him and support the council.”

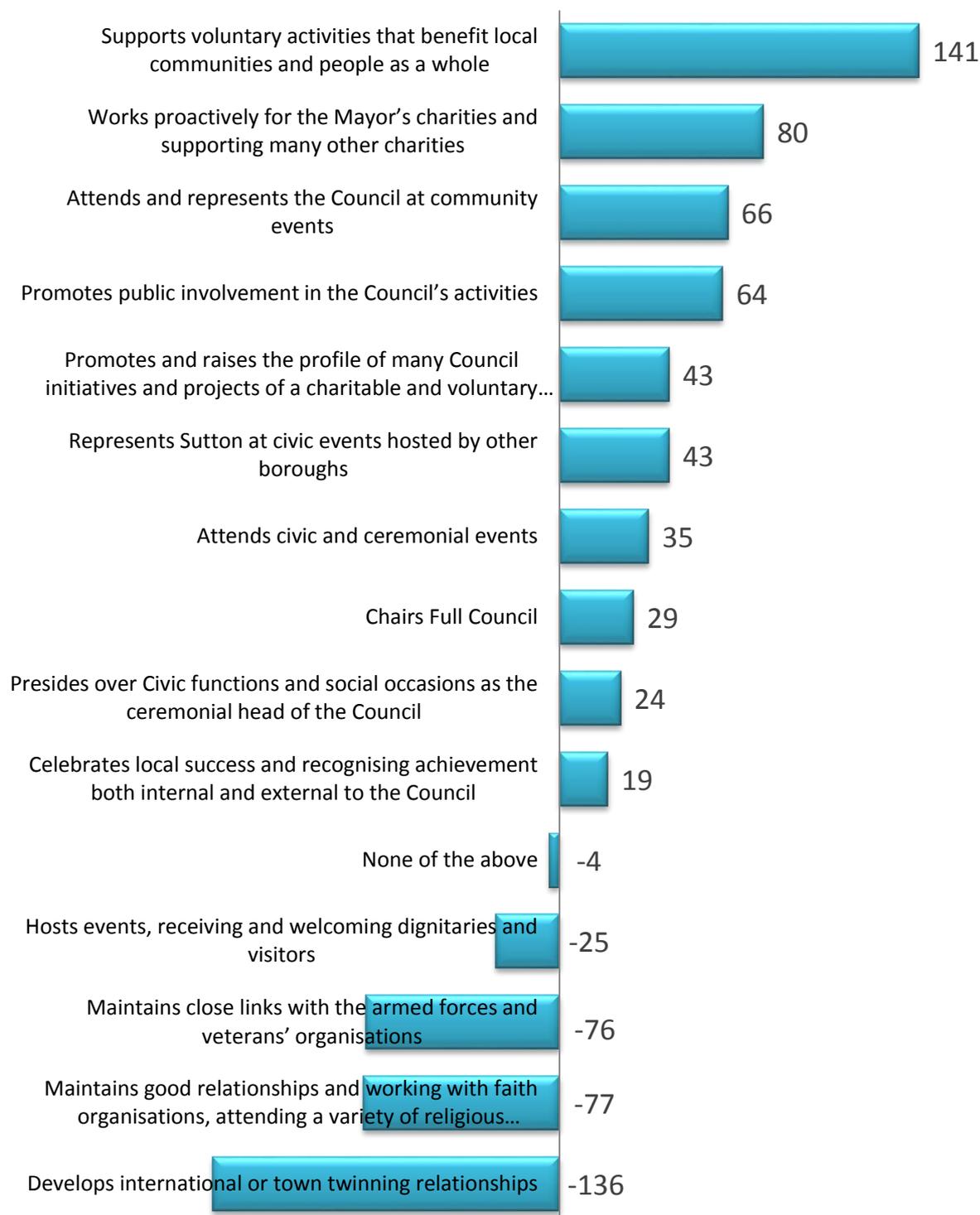


The Mayor carries out a variety of activities, roles and duties within the borough of Sutton. Respondents were presented with a list of activities, roles and duties and asked to select 4 or 5 which they thought were the MOST important and the LEAST important.

Taking into consideration the number of respondents who selected an option as the most important and deducting the number of respondents who selected that option as the least important provides a net score for each activity, role and duty. The chart below ranks each of

Appendix A

the activities, roles and duties from most important at the top to those ranked as least important at the bottom.



Respondents selected varying numbers of activities, below are the four activities, roles and duties ranked as the most and least important:

Most Important

- Supports voluntary activities that benefit local communities and people as a whole (Selected as most important by **52%** of all respondents)

- Works proactively for the Mayor's charities and supporting many other charities (Selected as most important by **38%** of all respondents)
- Attends and represents the Council at community events (Selected as most important by **35%** of all respondents)
- Promotes public involvement in the Council's activities (Selected as most important by **36%** of all respondents)

Least Important

- Develops international or town twinning relationships (Selected as least important by **56%** of all respondents)
- Maintains good relationships and working with faith organisations, attending a variety of religious occasions and making visits to groups and places of worship (Selected as least important by **42%** of all respondents)
- Maintains close links with the armed forces and veterans' organisations (Selected as least important by **37%** of all respondents)
- Hosts events, receiving and welcoming dignitaries and visitors (Selected as least important by **34%** of all respondents)

The full breakdown of activities, roles and duties by number of responses and the total percentage of respondents is provided in appendix A at page 8 of this report.

Further Comments

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any further comments regarding the Mayor or the Civic Function in general. 119 comments were made. Similar proportions of comments were in support of having a Mayor as comments made against having a Mayor. A consistent theme throughout the comments was the suggestions on how the Council's Civic Function could be developed. Suggested developments fell into three prominent themes:

1. Reducing the costs spent on the Mayor and Civic Function (35 respondents);
2. Making changes to the role of the Mayor and Civic Function (22 respondents); and
3. Improving communications to help raise awareness about the Mayor and Civic Function (20 respondents)

Examples of comments made are detailed below:

1. Reducing the Costs

In the current economic climate there were a number of suggestions in relation to reducing the Mayor and Civic Function budget. Some respondents felt that having a Mayor was “a waste of money in the current climate.” Others suggested that the costs should be reduced.

“A ceremonial role that is long past its sell by date. Waste of money.”

“The Mayor is an expensive figure head that we can well do without. The position has no power & is politically motivated & residents are paying, through council tax for something that is superfluous!”

It was suggested that council funding could be better spent:

“If it costs money, then why have a Mayor. The Council is hard strapped for cash, by cutting the Mayor, perhaps you will have money for something else.”

“The money spent on Mayoral type "duties" would be better spent on the roads or towards better policing of the area”

“The council should be run as a business. The ceremonial, mayoral role is out-dated and an unnecessary waste of money in this day and age, particularly when council's budgets are impossibly overstretched, forcing cuts in essential services.”

Others recognised the value of Sutton having a Mayor and Civic Function, but suggested that the costs should be reduced or provided at no cost.

“I believe that the office should be retained as purely ceremonial and traditional but at no cost whatsoever to the tax-payer”

“This is a ceremonial role. I presume you are trying to get rid of it. Scrap the Mayor's car and driver and keep the costume and the chain. That way a mayor can attend functions without costing the borough any money. Getting rid of the mayor completely would be damaging to the area's heritage....”

“Obviously in times of cutbacks the Mayoral role must be applied sensitively so as not to incur unnecessary costs and resulting bad

2. Making changes to the role

Suggested changes range from bringing the current function up to date to meet the needs of communities to abolishing the Mayoral position altogether and replacing with other 'community ambassadors' or Council representatives.

"Whilst not a great fan of the ceremonial stuff - it does give a distinctive edge. It could be time though to modernise the role of the "1st Citizen" whilst still doing a number of current tasks"

"Time is fast moving on and the idea of a Mayor opening a fete holds little attraction"

There is support that the Mayor should take a proactive role in Council activity. However there is a difference in opinion as to whether the Mayor should be elected or politically independent.

"I believe if a mayor is to exist they should be democratically elected and should have a defined job role along the lines of promoting local business, supporting local community efforts, acting as a liaison with other cities in UK and beyond, striving for better efficiencies in terms of our facilities and services."

"The Mayor is generally seen by residents as "the Council" but the practice has been to separate him/her from Council Initiatives - as these are seen as being the responsibility of the majority Party. Because many of such initiatives (if not all) are clearly for the benefit of the community, I don't see why the Mayor should not be involved in their promotion."

"The mayor should exercise ceremonial functions as a figurehead for the borough. He or she should be impartial and not undertake political functions or support specific charities."

"The mayor must not show any political tendencies. In a similar way the employees of the council must not show any political tendencies!"

It is suggested that local community ambassadors could take on the role of the Mayor, for example representing young people representing the community or other council representation.

"If we were looking at keeping the mayor role - A 'young mayor' for example may be more useful - focussed on sharing the voice of young people."

"The ceremonial role of Mayor is a luxury that in this economic climate is unnecessary. The Leader and Chief Executive of the council should be the faces of the council and represent it when required and as appropriate."

Appendix A

Awareness of Mayoral activities could be improved. 21% of respondents did not know that Sutton had a Mayor and this was reflected in the comments made.

"Don't think I even knew we had a mayor..."

"Find it rather odd that I had no idea what the mayor did"

It was thought that if there was further clarity about the activities, duties and roles of the Mayor then residents would better understand the role.

"The Mayor's role in council is not clear enough. He/she should have a short list of priorities for the year that should be clearly published and publicised during the year in office"

"It would be useful to know what the mayor does and also to be informed when he was attend something so that people can attend if they wish"

"Perhaps the role of the Mayor is not promoted enough - especially in influencing improvements within the community. Otherwise it is just a ceremonial position, which in the 21st century is no longer essential."

Respondents were keen to know more about the Mayor. Some said that as they did not receive a local newspaper they were not kept up to date with local activities. Others suggested that the local newspaper should not be relied upon and that the activities of the Mayor should be communicated in other, more contemporary formats.

"Since we no longer get local newspapers means that we are not made aware of what our mayor is doing."

"Since local papers are less used these days the Mayor should appear more on the internet on some regular Borough Web Page exclusive to Mayoral activities promoting the Borough, promoting Voluntary bodies in the Borough and the people who run/create them."

Appendix A

The Mayor carries out a variety of activities, roles and duties within the borough of Sutton. From the list below, which 4 or 5 do you think are the MOST important? (Please select 4 or 5 options)

Activities, Roles & Duties	Number of Responses	% of Respondents
Supports voluntary activities that benefit local communities and people as a whole	156	52%
Works proactively for the Mayor's charities and supporting many other charities	115	38%
Represents Sutton at civic events hosted by other boroughs	113	38%
Promotes and raises the profile of many Council initiatives and projects of a charitable and voluntary nature	113	38%
Chairs Full Council	110	37%
Promotes public involvement in the Council's activities	109	36%
Attends and represents the Council at community events	105	35%
Presides over Civic functions and social occasions as the ceremonial head of the Council	97	32%
Attends civic and ceremonial events	91	30%
Celebrates local success and recognising achievement both internal and external to the Council	79	26%
Hosts events, receiving and welcoming dignitaries and visitors	78	26%
Maintains good relationships and working with faith organisations, attending a variety of religious occasions and making visits to groups and places of worship	48	16%
Maintains close links with the armed forces and veterans' organisations	34	11%
Develops international or town twinning relationships	31	10%
None of the above	27	9%

Appendix A

The Mayor carries out a variety of activities, roles and duties within the borough of Sutton. From the list below, which 4 or 5 do you think are the LEAST important? (Please select 4 or 5 options)

Activities, Roles & Duties	Number of Responses	% of Respondents
Develops international or town twinning relationships	167	56%
Maintains good relationships and working with faith organisations, attending a variety of religious occasions and making visits to groups and places of worship	125	42%
Maintains close links with the armed forces and veterans' organisations	110	37%
Hosts events, receiving and welcoming dignitaries and visitors	103	34%
Chairs Full Council	81	27%
Presides over Civic functions and social occasions as the ceremonial head of the Council	73	24%
Represents Sutton at civic events hosted by other boroughs	70	23%
Celebrates local success and recognising achievement both internal and external to the Council	60	20%
Attends civic and ceremonial events	56	19%
Promotes public involvement in the Council's activities	45	15%
Attends and represents the Council at community events	39	13%
Works proactively for the Mayor's charities and supporting many other charities	35	12%
None of the above	31	10%
Promotes and raises the profile of many Council initiatives and projects of a charitable and voluntary nature	29	10%
Supports voluntary activities that benefit local communities and people as a whole	15	5%

Appendix B

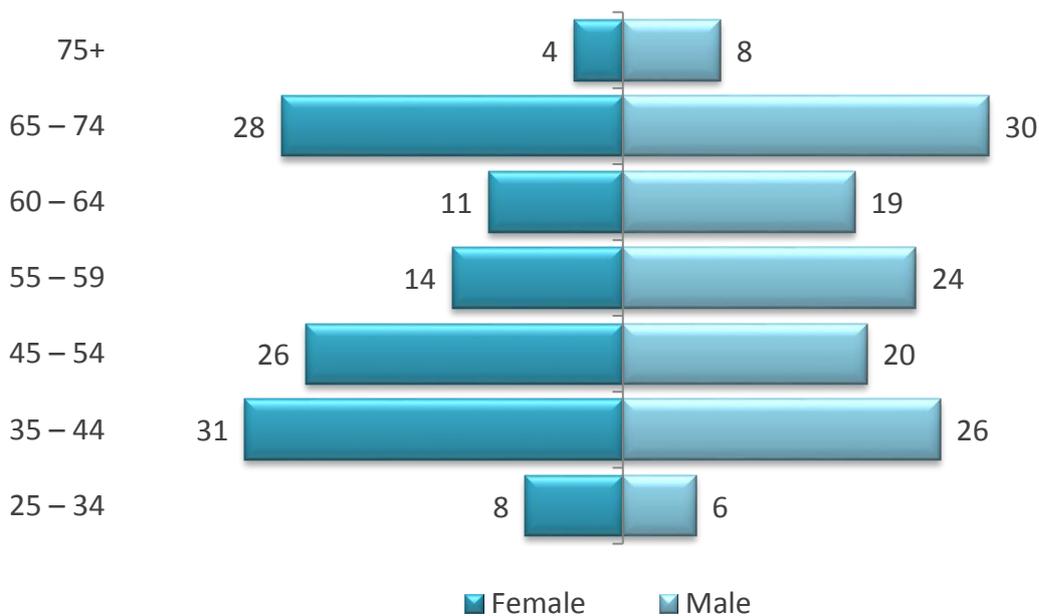
Demographic Information about Respondents

Demographic information is available in relation to 86% of the overall sample (n=259). In some cases not all demographic information has been provided. The number of respondents for each demographic group has been provided.

From the demographic information we have:

- Slightly more males (52.1%) than females (47.9%) took part
- Respondents aged 65 – 74 years old (23.0%) and aged 35 – 44 years old (22.3%) account for the largest proportion of responses
- 13% of respondents have their day to day activities limited
- 95.7% are White or White British
- 38.6% work full time, while 26.8% are retired
- 52.4% of respondents owned their home outright (including leasehold)

Gender and Age

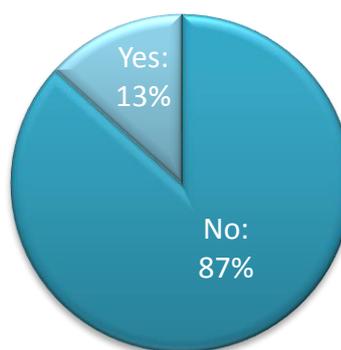


Gender (n=257), Age (n=256)

Ethnicity

	Number of Respondents	% of Known Respondents
White or White British	243	95.7%
Asian or Asian British	6	2.4%
Black or Black British	2	0.8%
Other Ethnic Group	2	0.8%
Any other Mixed/ multiple ethnic background	1	0.4%

Ethnicity (n=254)

Day to Day Activities Limited

Day to Day Activities Limited (n=241)

Employment Status

	Number of Respondents	% of Known Respondents
Working - Full-time (30+ hrs/wk)	100	38.6%
Retired	74	28.6%
Working - Part-time (8-29 hrs/wk)	34	13.1%
Self-employed	16	6.2%
Not working - retired	11	4.2%
Voluntary work	6	2.3%
Other	4	1.5%
Permanently sick/ disabled	3	1.2%
Full-time carer	2	0.8%
Housewife/ husband	2	0.8%
Not working - looking after house/children	2	0.8%
Unemployed but not registered	2	0.8%
Not Answered	1	0.4%
Registered unemployed (Job seeker's allowance)	1	0.4%
Unemployed	1	0.4%

Employment Status (n=259)

Tenure

	Number of Respondents	% of Known Respondents
Owned outright (including leasehold)	133	52.4%
Buying on a mortgage	93	36.6%
Rented from private landlord	12	4.7%
Rented from Council/ Sutton Housing Partnership	7	2.8%
Rented from housing association	5	2.0%
Other	4	1.6%

Tenure (n=254)

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