

Member Wellbeing Survey

1. Introduction

After a request from the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services (CIRS) Scrutiny Committee, a member wellbeing survey was created and ran from 8th December 2020 to 4th January 2021.

At the Member Development Steering Group meeting of 4th February 2021, Councillors agreed to repeat the survey before the end of the 2017-2021 term and before the 2021 local elections. The survey was repeated and ran from 14th April to 28th April 2021.

The repeated survey asked the same five questions as the original survey:

1. Which of the following describes how you currently feel?
2. What are you doing to support your overall health and wellbeing?
3. How well supported by DCC do you feel at this time?
4. What one thing could the Council do to support you better at this time?
5. In the spirit of celebrating what has worked well, is there anything that you would like to share that has helped at this time?

However, an additional question was asked in order to help officers in preparation for the upcoming induction programme:

6. What can we do to support new Member's wellbeing as part of the induction programme?

Questions 1, 2 and 3 were multiple choice answers while 4, 5 and 6 were open questions where respondents could input their own answers.

More than a third of Councillors (22 out of 60, 36.6%) responded to this survey, compared to 17 Councillors (28.3%) responding to the original survey.

2. Highlights

- Majority of respondents continue to feel positive and are currently feeling 'ok' or 'good'.
- All respondents are doing something to support their health and wellbeing with exercise and keeping in contact with family and friends being the most popular options. Respondents are doing more to support their health and wellbeing compared to the previous survey.
- Large majority of respondents do feel 'Extremely' or 'Somewhat' well supported by DCC, with no respondents feeling not well supported.
- Majority of respondents did not suggest something the council could do to support them better at the time of taking the survey.
- Some individual responses did show some extra support could be given and targeted to individual need.

3. Positives

Overall, the majority of Councillors responding to the survey continue to feel positive, supported by DCC and are actively ensuring they are supporting their own health and wellbeing.

At the time of taking the survey, the majority of respondents felt positive about how they currently feel (18 out of 22). As shown in Figure 1, 59% of the respondents to Question 1 stated 'I am good and feel positive' and 23% stated "I feel ok and hopeful". Additionally, 9% of respondents stated "I am ok, but concerned" which was a neutral answer understanding both positives and concerns.

In comparison, to the previous survey, the results are almost identical. Previously 59% of respondents stated, "I am good and feel positive" and 23% stated "I feel ok and hopeful".

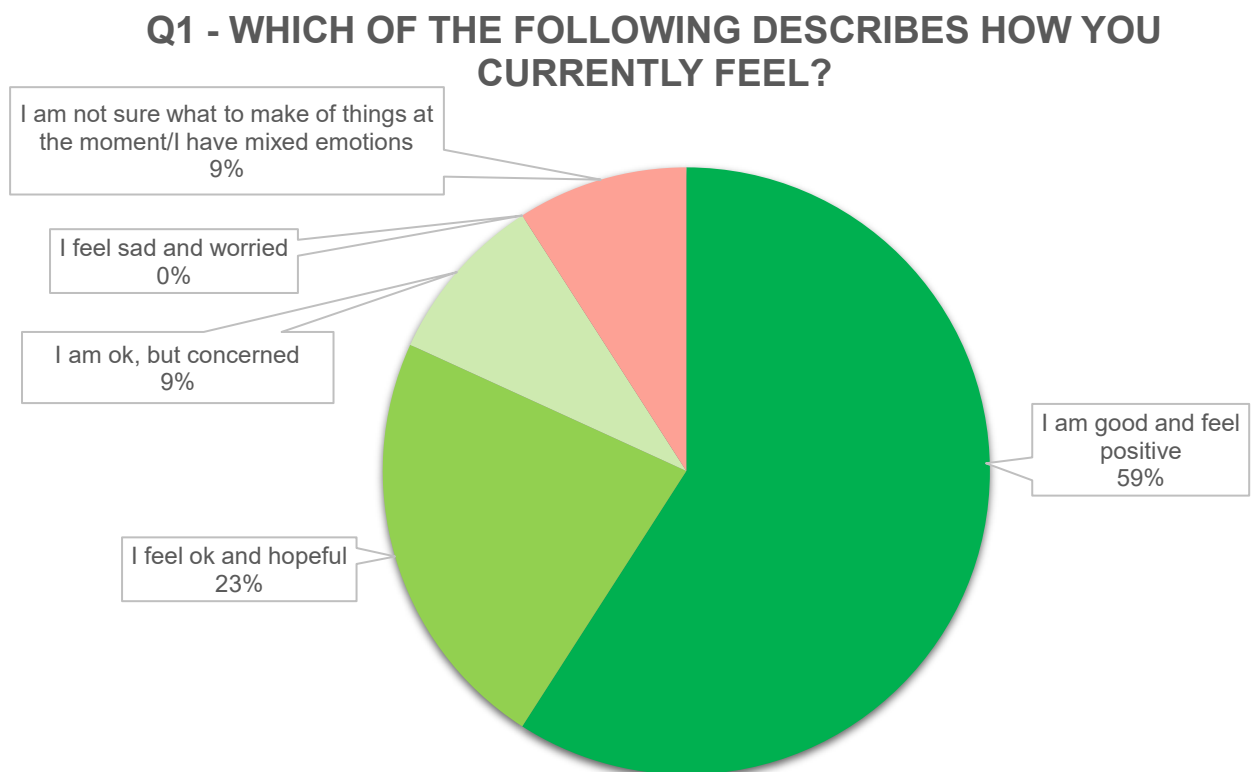


Figure 1: Pie chart showing the responses to Question 1 – Which of the following describes how you currently feel?

Q2 - WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO SUPPORT YOUR OVERALL HEALTH AND WELLBEING?

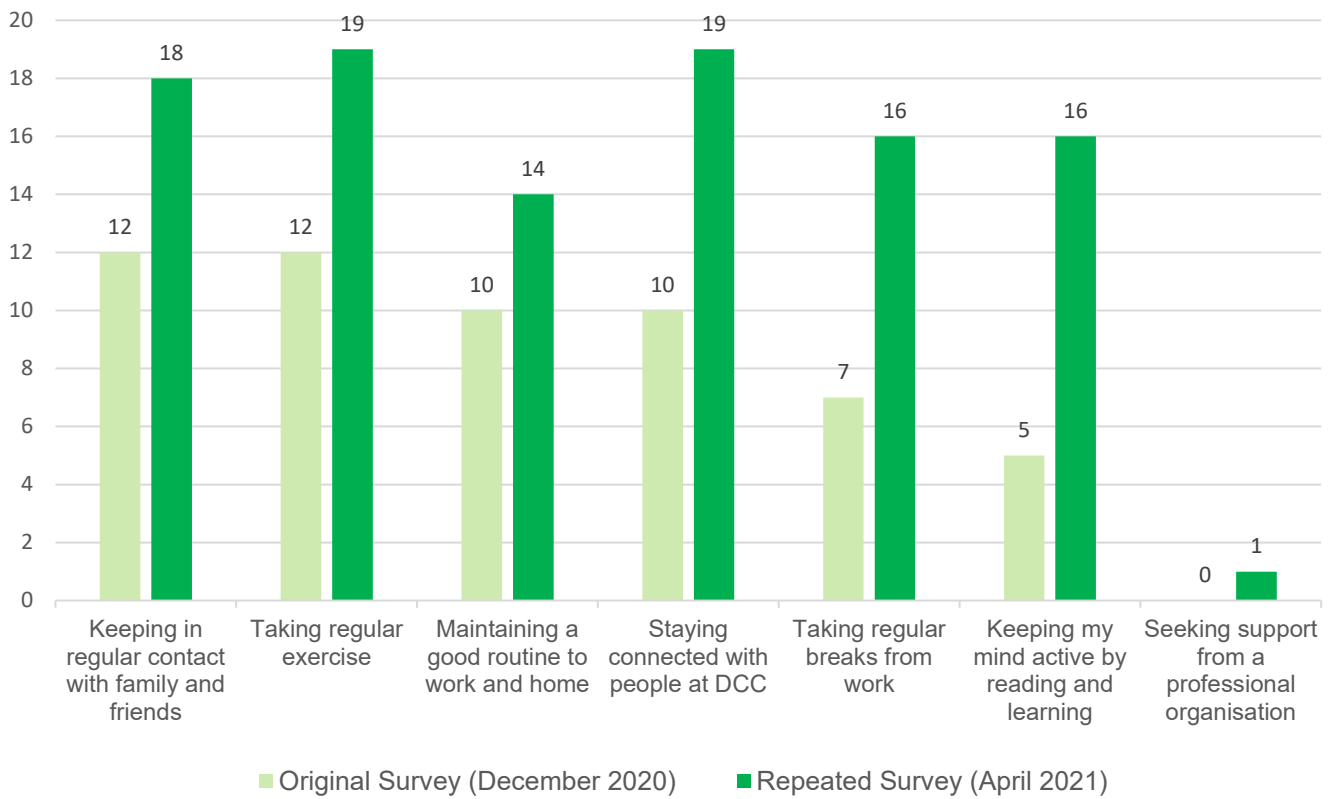


Figure 2: Bar chart showing the responses to Question 2: “What are you doing to support your overall health and wellbeing?” from the original survey and the repeated survey.

Like the previous survey, the overall positive response to Question 1 may be evidenced by the number of respondents who are taking individual steps to support their overall health and wellbeing. All respondents in Question 2 stated they were doing something to support their health and wellbeing.

Respondents could choose as many options as applied to them and this meant 103 responses were received in total with many respondents picking multiple options. In comparison to the 56 responses to the previous survey, it indicates Councillors are doing more to support their wellbeing than previously with all responses being picked as an option more frequently.

Both surveys show that respondents are highlighting the importance of keeping in contact with others and taking regular exercise as the most popular ways to support their wellbeing, making up 54% of responses. Figure 2 shows the responses from the repeated survey in April 2021 with the previous survey’s results shown as a comparison. As show in Figure 2, “Taking regular exercise” and “Staying connect with people at DCC” were the most chosen options (19 each) followed closely by “Keeping in regular contact with family and friends” (18). This is broadly similar to the most popular options in the original survey.

While all options received more responses due to the increase in number of Councillors taking the survey, their change in comparison to the previous survey was not uniform. As shown in Figure 2, “Taking regular breaks from work” and “Keeping my mind active from reading and learning” had larger increases in responses, more than doubling their responses, compared to “Maintaining a good routine to work and home” which had a smaller increase.

Furthermore, respondents felt well supported by DCC at this time, with more respondents feeling “Extremely well” or “Somewhat well” supported. As shown in Figure 3, the original survey (inner ring) compared to the repeated survey (outer ring) shows no respondent felt “Somewhat not well” or “Extremely not well” supported in April 2021 and more respondents felt supported in some way. 82% of respondents felt supported in April 2021 compared to 71% in December 2020.

Q3 - HOW WELL SUPPORTED BY DCC DO YOU FEEL AT THIS TIME?

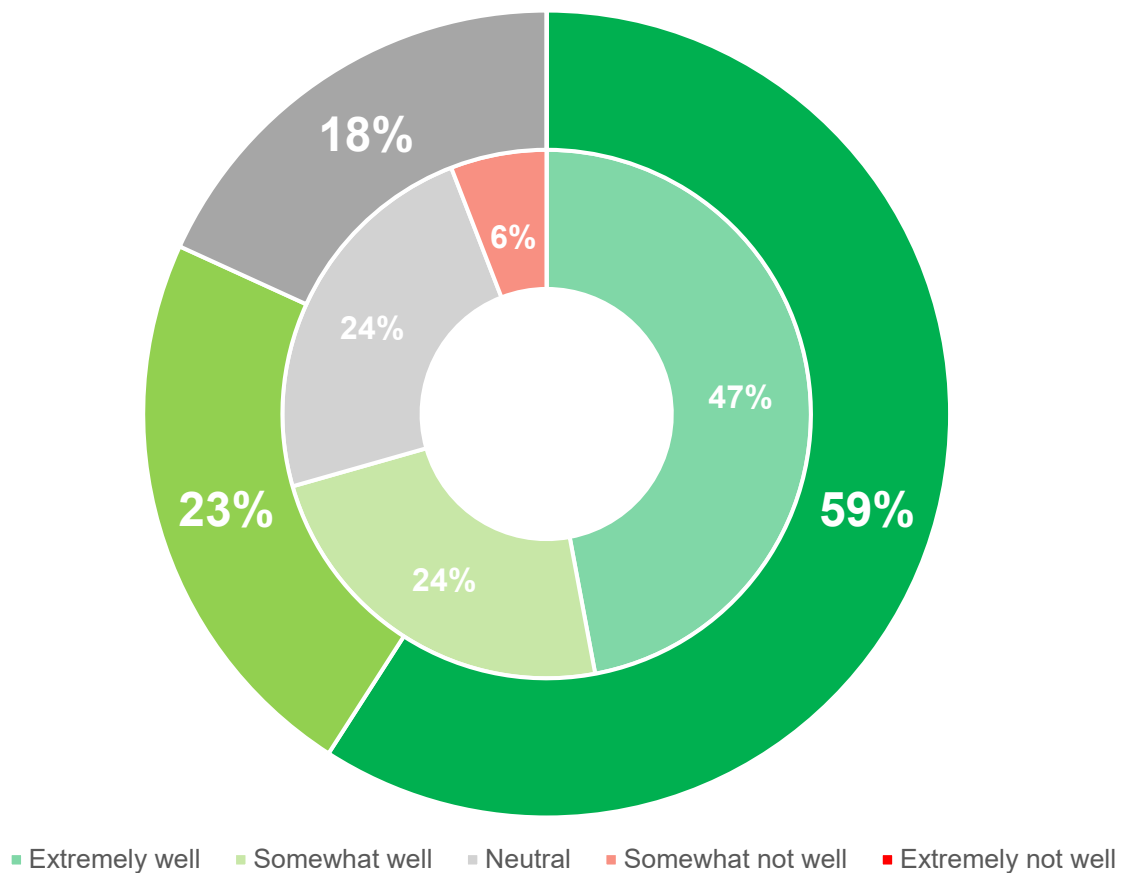


Figure 3: Doughnut chart showing the responses to Question 3: “How well supported by DCC do you feel at this time?” from the original survey (inner ring) and the repeated survey (outer ring).

Finally, Question 5 asked respondents in “the spirit of celebrating what has worked well” to share what has helped them during this time. 22 responses were given, with some respondents offering multiple suggestions. A selection of the responses is shown in the graphics below.

Categorised into similar responses, the council’s IT provision including the ability to have remote meetings and the use of MS Teams received the most mentions (8) with respondents highlighting how it had helped them to carry out their role as a councillor. Respondents highlighted the benefits of remote meetings which meant “**less driving**” to meetings, meetings were “**less time consuming**” and meant more time could be spent on other tasks such as helping residents.

In addition, respondents stated communications with DCC Officers has helped them. 5 respondents commented on the ease of being able to contact officers. Respondents stated that “**Council officers have been responsive**”, “**officers are always kind and helpful**” and officers they have spoken to “**deal with my queries quickly and efficiently**”.

WHAT HAS HELPED AT THIS TIME?

“Knowing that colleagues (and, by that I mean staff as well as members (and, cross-party)) are always at hand”

“Virtual meetings, been wonderful. Much less driving, more time to devote to residents and having the facility to set up meetings with residents virtually. Excellent member support and a great IT team”

“The ability to contact someone to advise you who or what department to get help from”

“Teams has been a success”

“Officers are always kind and helpful”

“As I live on my own I am in a very good bubble with a family opposite”

4. Concerns

While the majority of respondents did feel positive and supported, there were some respondents who did not feel the same.

For example, as shown in Figure 1, 2 respondents did not feel positive and picked “I am not sure what to make of things at the moment/I have mixed emotions” as their feeling at the time of taking the survey. This is an increase of 1 respondent compared to the previous survey.

In addition, as shown in Figure 2, 1 respondent indicated they are seeking support from a professional organisation to support their overall health and wellbeing. This is an increase of 1 compared to the previous survey.

Finally, 1 respondent to Question 5 indicated they were receiving professional wellbeing support which shows that some Councillors might be struggling and may require extra support to discuss their personal issues and concerns with their role.

5. Can we be supporting Councillors better?

Question 4 asked for respondents to suggest one thing the Council could do to support them further. The responses to this question have been categorised and shown in Figure 5. There were 21 responses to Question 4, with 1 respondent offering two suggested improvements. The plurality of respondents (11/21) did not offer a suggestion to what the DCC could do to support them better and their responses commented similar statements such as “nothing”, “I have all the support I need”, “I’m fine” and “nothing in particular”.

However, there were still some respondents who did offer some suggested improvements relating to their individual needs and experiences. 3 responses relate to communication with Councillors and how we are currently working as an organisation. 2 respondents asked for all officers to ensure emails are answered more promptly while 1 respondent felt working at home has led to delayed decision making and a “lack of corporate working” which needed addressing.

Finally, as can be seen in Figure 5, respondents offered a range of individual responses to the question such as keeping virtual meetings in some capacity, advice on how to cope with workloads, ensuring there is somewhere where councillors can go to get support. While they are individual responses, there is a common theme that councillors have large workloads and were looking for support to reduce the pressures on themselves.

Q4 - WHAT ONE THING COULD THE COUNCIL DO TO SUPPORT YOU BETTER AT THIS TIME?



Figure 5: Graph showing the responses and frequency of responses to Question 4 – What one thing could the council do to support you better at this time?

6. Induction and support for new Members

Question 6 was the only question asked on the repeated survey that did not appear on the original survey. Question 6 asked in anticipation of the local elections and the expectation that some Councillors would retire or not return: “what we can do to support new Member’s wellbeing as part of the induction programme?”.

Respondents offered a range of suggestions which were built into the induction programme for new Members. Details of these are shown below, grouped into similar suggestions

Suggestions from respondents	How these were built into the Induction programme
<p><u>Information given to Councillors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining their role and responsibilities • Give Councillors the opportunities to attend meetings • Ensure new Councillors are not over-burdened • A directory of who does what at DCC • A website of resources for Councillors on who to contact for different services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome to Devon Seminar gave an overview of the County and Council. • County Council Meetings Procedures briefing gave an overview of the roles, responsibilities, and framework of how we make decisions. • Induction programme lasting over 6 months to not overburden Members with information immediately after the election. • Chief Officers and Heads of Service asked to create videos of themselves and their teams/services. • Member’s Area on Sharepoint acts as a directory of who’s who and resources for Councillors to access. • All Councillors are invited to all induction sessions (except Committee specific training).
<p>Members Services Team offer -acting as a point of contact in the first instance for any queries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Members Services Officers (as part of wider Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team) acting as initial points of contact
<p>Empowering Members to ask questions – “no question is a stupid question”.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny induction session included effective questioning tips and examples to empower Members. • Scrutiny Special Advisors offer Key Lines of Enquiry for Members to take forward.
<p>Member Mentoring/Buddy Scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraged within the political groups • Scheme progressing with expressions of interest and matching up of Members.
<p>Fostering relationships with each other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of breakout rooms in induction sessions to help Members introduce each other. • Ensuring breakout rooms included both new and returning Members to foster relationships and share experiences.

<p><u>Individual support and wellbeing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering support on health and wellbeing • Advice on how to cope with workload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing support networks available to Members circulated and signposted to Members • Bulletin sent to Members detailing the support available to them.
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7. Action Points from the Member Wellbeing Survey

Suggestion	Action	Agency
This survey was carried out at the end of the term, and therefore Councillors responding to the survey have now changed. Some respondents are no longer Councillors and some new Councillors have not had the opportunity to inform us on their wellbeing	Repeating the survey in the near future ensures the results are up to date and relevant for our current Councillors.	Member Development Steering Group decision Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team to carry out.
Whilst the majority of Councillors are positive and feel supported, some respondents indicated they may require some extra support.	Identification of and subsequent targeted support for any individual Councillor who may not feel supported or positive in their role.	Member Development Officers (potentially through Personal Development Interviews). Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team (Members Services Officers)

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce and Digital Transformation:
Councillor Andrew Saywell

Contact for Enquiries:

- Camilla de Bernhardt Lane (01392 383143)
- Charlie Fisher (01392 383691)

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
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