



To: Leadership Board

On: 03 December 2025

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Resident Research

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council undertook research with Renfrewshire residents in summer 2025 to measure residents' views on council services and help inform future decision making.
 - 1.2 This paper summarises the purpose of this research, the methodology used, and the key findings.
 - 1.3 An update on the Consultation and Engagement Policy approved at board in February this year is also provided.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are requested to:
 - note the contents of the report including the key findings and the evaluation report in the appendices.
 - note the research findings will be used by the Council and community planning partners alongside other community and citizen engagement feedback and insight to inform future strategies and plans, including the development of budget proposals.
 - note an action plan linked to learnings and future consultation and engagement activities will be reported to Leadership Board in February 2026 as part of the Corporate Improvement Plan progress report.
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3. Background

- 3.1 Aligned with the Council's ongoing programme of self-assessment to learn and improve, it was agreed a Resident Research survey should be undertaken to highlight our ongoing commitment to improving our dialogue with residents. This also

aligns with the new Consultation and Engagement Policy which was approved by members at Leadership Board in February 2025.

- 3.2 The purpose of the resident research exercise was to:
- measure perceptions of and satisfaction with Council services
 - inform planning and decision-making in relation to budget decisions
 - benchmark against results from the Scottish Household Survey (2023)
 - access new information, ideas and suggestions
 - support the introduction of the new Consultation and Engagement Policy
- 3.3 It is the intention that this piece of work will be used to build on the knowledge and insight gathered from existing consultation and engagement exercises. For example, Local Partnerships, Tenants and Residents Associations, Renfrewshire Youth Voice, YouDecide, Celebrating Renfrewshire and subject-specific consultation and engagement such as the transport strategy and the Local Development Plan.
- 3.4 External support from a market research agency was commissioned following a procurement exercise to conduct the fieldwork and analysis on our behalf over a four-month period between May and August 2025.

4. Methodology

- 4.1 A hybrid research methodology was used to gain extensive feedback from a representative sample of the Renfrewshire population.
- 4.2 A question set was developed into a survey by the Agency, based on the Scottish Household Survey but augmented with questions to help inform future planning and budget decisions.
- 4.3 The Agency conducted the fieldwork with a sample chosen as representative of the Renfrewshire population. In total, 1,016 individual fieldwork interviews were completed by telephone or face-to-face (interview-led) between 2 May – 11 June 2025.
- 4.4 The interview-led (telephone or face-to-face) survey was conducted across all areas of Renfrewshire. The sample size was recommended by the Agency to ensure the results were reliable for the whole area and included a pro-rata spread of interviews across each ward. This means we can be confident that the findings are accurate within a small margin of error (about plus or minus 3%). That level of accuracy is based on standard research methods and provides 95% confidence in the results.
- 4.5 Survey respondents were checked to ensure they matched the overall population of Renfrewshire - both in terms of who took part and their location. Postcodes provided by residents were used to identify which Council ward they live in and where they ranked in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Interviews were also spread evenly across each Council ward, so every area was properly represented.
- 4.6 The same survey was made available online to ensure all Renfrewshire residents had an opportunity to participate in the research. Hard copies of the survey were also made available in Renfrewshire Libraries. In total, 1,029 survey responses were completed online between 2 May – 11 June 2025. It was reported by the Agency that while this provided all residents with an opportunity to take part, it is worth noting the

self-completion methodology was not demographically representative of the Renfrewshire population. They also reported the results may be affected by the self-selection bias - where individuals with stronger opinions, particularly negative ones, are more likely to respond. For this reason, the results are reported separately from the interview-led survey sample, which was designed to be representative.

- 4.7 To complement the survey fieldwork, interviewees were invited to register an interest in participating in follow-up focus groups. Six focus groups were then conducted with residents to explore their perceptions and attitudes in more depth between 19 – 27 August 2025.

5. Interview-led survey findings

- 5.1 The profile of the respondents for the telephone and face-to-face survey can be broken down as follows:

- Almost 6 in 10 (**57%**) survey respondents were female, **40%** were male and **3%** said they would prefer not to say. **1%** of respondents said they consider themselves to be trans, or have a trans history, **94%** said they did not and **5%** said they would prefer not to say.
- **10%** of survey respondents were aged 16-34, **57%** were aged 35-64 and **30%** were aged 65 and over.
- **19%** of respondents reported having a disability.
- Analysis of the profile for those who provided information on tenure and postcode revealed that respondents were broadly representative across Ward, SIMD and tenure. A full breakdown of the profile of respondents can be found in Appendix 1.

- 5.2 The majority of respondents (**93%**) rate Renfrewshire as a Very or Fairly Good place to live. **95%** rate their neighbourhood as a Very or Fairly Good place to live. This is in line with Scottish Household Survey (2023) results for Scotland overall and Renfrewshire, where (**95%**) also stated that their neighbourhood was a very or fairly good place to live.

When considering a range of statements about their neighbourhood:

- **86%** agree 'this is a neighbourhood where people are kind to each other'.
- **88%** agree 'this is a neighbourhood I feel proud to belong to'.
- **81%** agree 'this is a clean and tidy neighbourhood'.
- **90%** agree 'this is a safe neighbourhood'.

- 5.3 Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with various statements about how Renfrewshire Council is performing. % figure shows the percentage of respondents who strongly agree and tend to agree.

- **62%** agree Renfrewshire Council is good at letting local people know about what services it provides.
- **61%** agree Renfrewshire Council provides high quality services.
- **58%** agree Renfrewshire Council designs its services around the needs of the people who use them.

- **54%** agree Renfrewshire Council is good at letting local people know how well it is performing.
- **54%** agree Renfrewshire Council does the best it can with the money available.
- **53%** agree Renfrewshire Council is addressing the key issues affecting the quality of life in my local neighbourhood.
- **44%** agree Renfrewshire Council is good at listening to local people's views before it takes decisions.

The remaining % is split into neither/nor, disagree and strongly disagree and no opinion.

5.4 Respondents were asked how often they use various Council and partner services. % figure shows the percentage of respondents who use that service at least once a month.

- Parks, gardens and open spaces (**62%**)
- Household waste recycling centres (**46%**)
- Swimming pools, football pitches and leisure centres (**40%**)
- Children's play areas (**35%**)
- Local schools and nurseries (**33%**)
- Libraries - including services (**23%**)
- Community centres, halls and facilities. Including Paisley Town Hall, Johnstone Town Hall, Paisley Arts Centre (**18%**).
- Museums and galleries (**15%**)
- Care services (**10%**)

5.5 Respondents were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with various public services provided in Renfrewshire. % figure shows the percentage of respondents who were Very or Fairly Satisfied (excluding respondents with no opinion). By removing 'no opinion' responses, we focus only on those who have experience with the service and can give meaningful feedback:

- Local schools and nurseries (**94%**)
- Children's play areas (**89%**)
- Parks, gardens and open spaces (**88%**)
- Libraries (**88%**)
- Household Waste Recycling Centres (**87%**)
- Community centres, halls and facilities (**85%**)
- Swimming pools, football pitches and leisure centres (**84%**)
- Museums and galleries (**84%**)
- Care services (**75%**)
- Refuse collection (**73%**)
- Street cleaning (**64%**)
- Roads maintenance (**39%**)

5.6 It was explained to respondents that the Council may need to take a different approach to help balance its budget in the future. They were then asked how strongly they agree or disagree that the Council should look at doing a range of things. % figure shows the percentage of respondents who Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the statements:

- Renfrewshire Council could make better use of its buildings and properties **(82%)**
- Renfrewshire Council could target resources to areas and people with the greatest need **(81%)**
- Renfrewshire Council could deliver services in new ways **(64%)**
- Renfrewshire Council could identify services it could stop providing that are not legally required **(46%)**
- Renfrewshire Council could introduce charges for some services **(33%)**

5.7 Respondents were asked to rank services according to how essential they are as Council priorities. The following agreed these services were Absolutely Essential/Very important (excluding don't know responses):

- Support older people **(97%)**
- Maintain roads, pavements, open spaces and public places **(96%)**
- Support vulnerable people **(96%)**
- Support the health and wellbeing of children and families through early intervention **(95%)**
- Provide community safety services **(88%)**
- Invest in school buildings and our learning estate **(86%)**
- Support people into employment, training or further education **(86%)**
- Support libraries, community facilities, sports and leisure facilities **(79%)**
- Support local businesses **(77%)**
- Support cultural activities, arts, museums and events **(62%)**
- Support tourism and the visitor economy **(62%)**
- Invest in measure to achieve Net Zero for Renfrewshire **(49%)**

5.8 To help inform our wider Fairer Renfrewshire programme, respondents were asked how well their household is currently managing financially. **45%** of respondents say they are managing very well or quite well. **43%** said they were getting by alright and **5%** said they either don't manage very well, have some financial difficulties or are in deep financial trouble. **0.1%** said they are in deep financial trouble. More than **7%** of respondents answered that they didn't know or preferred not to say.

5.9 The use of the Scottish Household Survey questions in the survey provides an opportunity to benchmark our performance against several key indicators nationally and locally with a larger sample size. When compared to the Scottish Household Survey (SHS) 2023, the resident survey provides a more locally representative picture and shows that residents generally feel more positive about their neighbourhoods and Council services than the national average. These findings offer a strong foundation for future planning and contributes to the programme of work to strengthen the Council's approach to performance scrutiny.

5.10 A copy of the Renfrewshire Resident Survey 2025 analysis report prepared by the Agency is included in Appendix 1.

6. Online survey findings

6.1 The profile of the respondents for the online survey can be broken down as follows:

- **64%** of survey respondents were female, **31%** were male and **5%** said they would prefer not to say. **0.4%** of respondents said they consider themselves to be trans, or have a trans history, **96%** said they did not and **4%** said they would prefer not to say.
- **14%** of survey respondents were aged 16-34, **67%** were aged 35-64 and **17%** were aged 65 and over. **2.3%** preferred not to disclose their age.
- **20%** of respondents reporting having a disability.
- A breakdown of the profile of respondents for the online survey can be found in Appendix 2.

As mentioned above, it is important to note that while good representation was achieved across Renfrewshire for both surveys, the online survey results are heavily skewed in some geographical areas and the sample is not representative.

6.2 The majority of respondents (**77%**) rate Renfrewshire as a Very or Fairly Good place to live. **81%** rate their neighbourhood as a Very or Fairly Good place to live.

When considering a range of statements about their neighbourhood:

- **73%** agree 'this is a neighbourhood where people are kind to each other'.
- **62%** agree 'this is a neighbourhood I feel proud to belong to'.
- **47%** agree 'this is a clean and tidy neighbourhood'.
- **64%** agree 'this is a safe neighbourhood'.

6.3 Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with various statements about how Renfrewshire Council is performing. % figure shows the percentage of respondents who strongly agree and tend to agree.

- **21%** agree Renfrewshire Council is good at letting local people know about what services it provides.
- **19%** agree Renfrewshire Council provides high quality services.
- **18%** agree Renfrewshire Council does the best it can with the money available.
- **14%** agree Renfrewshire Council is good at letting local people know how well it is performing.
- **12%** agree Renfrewshire Council designs its services around the needs of the people who use them.
- **11%** agree Renfrewshire Council is addressing the key issues affecting the quality of life in my local neighbourhood.
- **9%** agree Renfrewshire Council is good at listening to local people's views before it takes decisions.

6.4 Respondents were asked how often they use various Council and partner services. % figure shows the percentage of respondents who use that service at least once a month:

- Parks, gardens and open spaces (**81%**)
- Household Waste Recycling Centres (**68%**)

- Swimming pools, football pitches and leisure centres (**44%**)
- Children's play areas (**37%**)
- Local schools and nurseries (**36%**)
- Libraries (including services) (**30%**)
- Community centres, halls and facilities (**20%**)
- Museums and galleries (**9%**)
- Care services (**7%**)

6.5 Respondents were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with various public services provided in Renfrewshire. % figure shows the percentage of respondents who were Very or Fairly Satisfied (excluding respondents with no opinion). By removing 'no opinion' responses, we focus only on those who have experience with the service and can give meaningful feedback:

- Libraries (**66%**)
- Household Waste Recycling Centres (**61%**)
- Community centres, halls and facilities (**57%**)
- Local schools and nurseries (**52%**)
- Children's play areas (**52%**)
- Parks, gardens and open spaces (**50%**)
- Museums and galleries (**47%**)
- Swimming pools, football pitches and leisure centres (**46%**)
- Refuse collection (**41%**)
- Care services (**20%**)
- Street cleaning (**19%**)
- Roads maintenance (**10%**)

6.6 It was explained to respondents that the Council may need to take a different approach to help balance its budget in the future. They were then asked how strongly they agree or disagree that the Council should look at doing a range of things. % figure shows the percentage of respondents who Strongly Agreed or Agreed with the statements:

- Renfrewshire Council could make better use of its buildings and properties (**75%**)
- Renfrewshire Council could deliver services in new ways (**55%**)
- Renfrewshire Council could target resources to areas and people with the greatest need (**55%**)
- Renfrewshire Council could identify services it could stop providing that are not legally required (**29%**)
- Renfrewshire Council could introduce charges for some services (**21%**)

6.7 Respondents were asked to rank services according to how essential they are as Council priorities. The following agreed these services were Absolutely Essential/Very important:

- Maintain roads, pavements, open spaces and public places (**95%**)
- Support older people (**90%**)
- Invest in school buildings and our learning estate (**82%**)
- Support the health and wellbeing of children and families (**77%**)
- Provide community safety services (**74%**)
- Support people into employment, training or further education (**73%**)

- Support vulnerable people (**69%**)
 - Support libraries, community, sports and leisure facilities (**68%**)
 - Support local businesses (**66%**)
 - Support cultural activities, arts, museums and events (**43%**)
 - Support tourism and the visitor economy (**37%**)
 - Invest in measure to achieve Net Zero for Renfrewshire (**28%**)
- 6.8 To help inform our wider Fairer Renfrewshire programme, respondents were asked how well their household is currently managing financially. **34%** of respondents say they are managing very well or quite well. **44%** said they were getting by alright and **17%** said they either don't manage very well, have some financial difficulties or are in deep financial trouble. More than **5%** of respondents answered that they didn't know or preferred not to say.
- 6.9 A copy of the online survey results prepared by the Agency is included in Appendix 2.
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7. Focus groups

- 7.1 A small number (37) of Renfrewshire residents were recruited from the larger survey sample and invited to participate in focus groups which were designed to explore key themes from the survey in more depth. While smaller in size, these groups provided rich, qualitative insights that complement the survey's quantitative data. The discussions provide further insight from residents which will help to add context and further understanding from people with lived-experience.
- 7.2 Participants were from a range of backgrounds and areas across Renfrewshire. Participants ranged in age from 30s - 70s. Council tenants and owner-occupiers participated, and a range of single people, older couples, families with children and people with a disability participated. Four groups met in-person and two groups met online.
- 7.3 It is the intention to organise additional focus groups with children and young people, disabled residents and the lived-experience panel to help build on further understanding.
- 7.4 Two groups focused on **Budget Principles**; two groups focused on **Council Priorities**; and two groups focused on **Place and Neighbourhood**. Two cross-cutting themes were discussed at all six focus groups – **Listening to Residents** and **Improving Transparency and Communication**.
- 7.5 **Budget Principles** groups discussed: the Council making better use of its buildings and assets; introducing charges for some services; how resources should be targeted; new ways to deliver some services; and whether the Council should stop providing some services.
- 7.6 Participants had mixed views but generally expressed a willingness to pay for some non-essential or discretionary services provided the charge was 'reasonable', the service was 'high-quality' and the money raised was 'invested locally'. Examples where participants would be willing to pay included for museums and cultural activities, library services, leisure activities, venue hire and parking. It was generally expressed that some services such as general refuse collection, school/education

services and care services should always be free at point-of-use, but some aspects or elements (for example, a 'meals on wheels' service for older adults) could be means-tested. In general, there was strong support for means-testing and targeting resources to those with greatest need. Participants also expressed a desire for transparency in how charges are set and how the money raised from charges is spent.

- 7.7 Participants were generally unsure of which services the council is legally required to provide. It was discussed that local communities, charities, third sector organisations, housing associations and social enterprises could help deliver some of these discretionary services that are not legally required. There was strong support for community involvement in maintaining parks and open spaces and organising local events – with support from the Council to apply for funding, develop leadership skills and help to build capacity.
- 7.8 There was strong support for the principle of targeting resources to those in the greatest need – this is seen as a fair and necessary approach, especially in the context of limited budgets. Participants suggested there should be an emphasis on balance and inclusivity – targeting should not mean neglecting others or prioritising one group or area at the expense of others. The elderly, people with a disability, those on low incomes (and children from low-income households), and unpaid carers were consistently identified as the top priority for support. It was felt important that support should go beyond geographical area-based deprivation, as children and adults in perceived 'more affluent' areas may still face hardship and the fact that their needs aren't always 'visible'.
- 7.9 Participants offered several practical and creative ideas to deliver services in new ways. There was strong support for expanding online access to services, while ensuring that no-one is digitally excluded. Community-led initiatives, volunteering and community ownership should all be encouraged and supported. More use of schools, libraries and town halls as community hubs and venues for services and information was also supported.
- 7.10 **Council Priorities** groups talked about where the Council gets its funding from and how it must make decisions each year about how that money is spent. They also discussed that the Council must make sure its budget is balanced. Each participant was given tokens which they used to identify their highest priorities. They were required to allocate one token to each priority and then allocate an additional token to any priority as they saw fit.

The allocation process identified priorities in this order:

Maintain roads, pavements, open spaces and public places	49
Support vulnerable people	39
Support older people	32
Support libraries, community and sports & leisure facilities	29
Support the health and wellbeing of children and families	28
Support local businesses	27
Support cultural activities, arts, museums and events	27
Support people into training, employment and education	26
Invest in our school buildings and learning estate	23
Support tourism and the visitor economy	22
Community safety services	19
Invest in measures to achieve Net Zero for Renfrewshire	16

These priorities were also ranked highly in the quantitative research.

- 7.11 Participants discussed their priorities in more detail. Participants prioritise the general environment around them and how this looks and feels. They want to live somewhere they can take pride in and believe this is influenced by quality of roads, pavements, open spaces, public places and buildings. There is a strong desire to use schools, libraries and community facilities to build community connections.
- 7.12 It was considered essential that services for vulnerable people are joined-up and have effective communication, for example, care services link with the police and social work to ensure the safety of vulnerable people. The risk of loneliness and isolation for older people was highlighted. Providing a safe environment for children and families with early interventions and a focus on emotional and social wellbeing was considered essential.
- 7.13 Participants did not dismiss Net Zero and environmental priorities - but these were seen as longer-term goals that shouldn't detract from immediate needs which were believed to be a greater priority.
- 7.14 **Place and Neighbourhood** groups discussed that, overall, they consider living in Renfrewshire as positive. The majority have actively chosen Renfrewshire as a place to live, in some cases having previously lived elsewhere, and in some cases, participants choose to commute to work in another area but enjoy living in Renfrewshire.
- 7.15 Positives identified by participants include: excellent transport links; nice surroundings; a rich history; a strong sense of community; the quality of organised cultural events; and the quality of local facilities.
- 7.16 Areas where improvements were identified by participants include: a lack of facilities or activities for younger people; neighbourhood appearance, influenced by street cleanliness and on-street parking; limited public transport options in rural areas; and the 'decline of the High Street', particularly in Paisley.
- 7.17 The cleanliness and maintenance of neighbourhoods; easy access to open areas, spaces and places; attractive town centres with option to shop local; and feeling safe in a neighbourhood or town centre, were all identified as factors which impact on resident's quality of life.
- 7.18 Participants discussed how they perceive Council services in their place and neighbourhood. Care services for elderly people, people with a disability and families in need of support are perceived as very important. Local schools are perceived to perform well academically, with acknowledgement that schools face many challenges. Parks and play areas, libraries and sports & leisure facilities are valued by residents and generally good in Renfrewshire, with residents wanting to see these maintained in good quality. Road maintenance, street cleanliness and refuse collection services are all considered crucial.
- 7.19 Across all six groups, participants discussed how the Council could improve transparency, keeping residents informed and listening:

- Contacting the Council directly should be as easy and accessible as possible, especially for those who find it difficult to do so online. Contact with individual officers and teams is valued and rated as good.
- Information about 'how the Council is performing' should be made easily available, online and offline.
- Residents want to be kept informed about decisions made, with proactive outreach from councillors and officers, and visible outcomes from residents' feedback.
- Residents want to participate in decision-making and have input into how things are done, with support from the Council to encourage participation.
- The Council should use multiple communications channels to keep residents informed, online and offline.

7.20 A copy of the final focus group insights prepared by the Agency is included in Appendix 3.

8. Council's approach to Consultation and Engagement

- 8.1 The resident research survey was a key piece of work undertaken to improve the Council's dialogue with local people and refresh the approach to community consultation and engagement. This action is included within the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan.
- 8.2 In addition to this, the Leadership Board approved a new Consultation and Engagement policy in February 2025. This built on existing best practice and established standards and guidance for all elements of conducting public engagement.
- 8.3 Following this, an officer to support this workstream was appointed and is now in post. An officer governance structure has also been established to support monitoring, evaluation and sharing of best practice across the organisation as follows:
- **Consultation and Engagement Coordination Group (CECG)** to provide high-level scrutiny and assurance, as previously outlined in the Leadership Board meeting in February 2025. The CECG also monitors the impact of consultation activity, including evaluating how consultation activities have influenced decision making, policy development and service planning.
 - **Consultation and Engagement Advisory Group (CEAG)** acts as a 'community of practice' providing training, sharing best practice, coordinating a consultation calendar, and embedding consistency of approach across the organisation.
- 8.4 Related activities are underway or planned for the coming months including:
- The development and launch of a consultation and engagement toolkit to support officers across the organisation and to ensure consistency of quality.
 - A rapid review and triage of upcoming activities and plans that would or should involve consultation and engagement, to ensure support is offered throughout the process.

- Linked to the above, development of a consultation calendar and mapping exercise (working with the CEAG) to help avoid significant overlap of consultation and engagement activities and any duplication.
- Delivering comprehensive training across the organisation on the consultation and engagement policy, including best practice examples, equalities and ethical guidance, data and information security considerations etc.
- Develop potential options for a citizen's panel approach to further explore the issues and suggestions raised in the resident research survey and focus groups.

9. Next steps

- 9.1 A comprehensive engagement plan has been produced to ensure the results of the resident survey are shared with residents, staff and elected members in a clear, transparent and accessible way.
- 9.2 An action plan will be developed that sets out how we will respond to learnings and insight from the resident research findings. This will ensure residents' feedback is used to shape future strategies and plans and supports our ongoing commitment to improving how we engage with our residents and communities.
- 9.3 The action plan will be reported in February 2026 as part of the planned report to Leadership Board on the progress of the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan. An update on the Consultation and Engagement Policy will also be reported back at this time. In addition to this, ongoing progress reports on the Consultation and Engagement Policy will be incorporated into the established six-monthly Council Plan updates.

Implications of the Report

1. Financial – A budget of £30,000 was allocated to deliver the Resident Research Survey 2025.
2. HR & Organisational Development – none
3. Community/Council Planning – our commitment to refreshing our approach to community consultation and engagement is included within the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan. Research findings will be used by the Council and community planning partners to inform future strategies and plans.
4. Legal - none
5. Property/Assets – none
6. Information Technology - none
7. Equality and Human Rights – there are no negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individual's human rights arising from the recommendations contained in the report, as the report is for noting only.
8. Health and Safety - none
9. Procurement – none

10. Risk – none
11. Privacy Impact – none
12. COSLA Policy Position – none
13. Climate Risk – none
14. Children's Rights - in order to reflect the views of Renfrewshire's children and young people bespoke focus groups are being planned to ensure we have reflected their experiences of living in Renfrewshire.

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