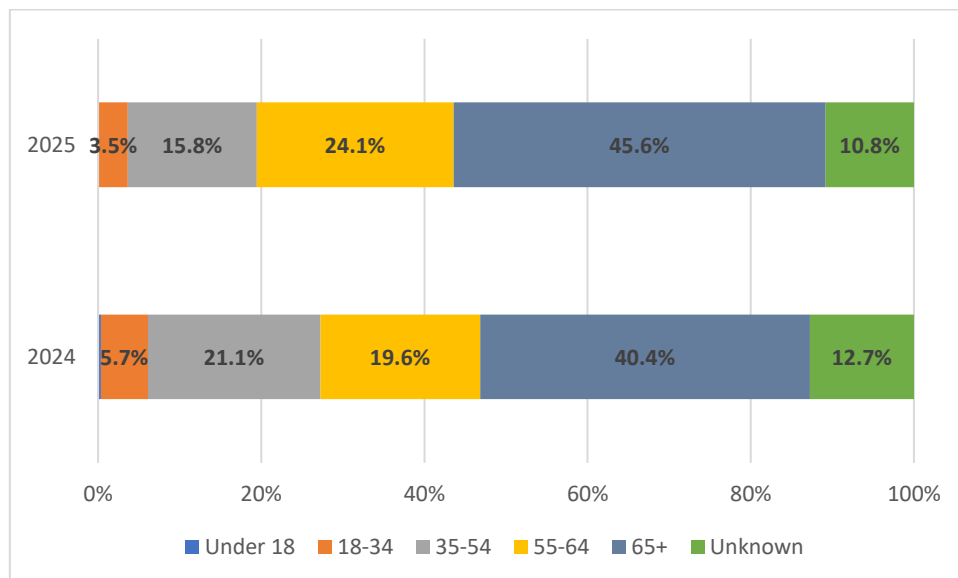


Malvern Hills District Council – 2025 Residents’ Survey Summary results



There were 1,810 responses to the 2025 Malvern Hills Residents’ Survey, which is our best response rate ever. As the chart below shows, there had been a small improvement in the younger age groups in 2024 compared with previous years. Despite continuing with the same engagement activities in 2025, fewer younger people responded this year (3.5% under 34) and there was an increase in the proportion of respondents who were 55 and above.

Results were, as usual, weighted for age to adjust for the discrepancy between respondents’ ages and the district’s population.



Based on the overall response rates, the confidence level for year on year change in results in 2025 is 2.3%. Therefore, where results are directly comparable to previous years, only changes of 2.3 percentage points or more can be considered as statistically significant. Where individual questions have smaller response rates the confidence level is likely to be higher.

KEY HEADLINES:

- Last year’s residents’ survey (2024) saw results across the board that had decreased since 2023 or stayed at similar levels. This followed a number of years where MHDC’s results had continued to improve post Covid in a manner that was not in line with the national picture. Satisfaction with councils across the board was seen to increase during the pandemic, including for other local councils and nationally, as recorded by the Local Government Association in its residents’ poll, and since 2020, nationally results had begun to fall back to pre-pandemic levels. Results for Malvern Hills had continued to rise year on year. The 2024 residents’ survey results finally showed a general return to pre-Covid levels for Malvern Hills.
- In 2025, the overall picture for Malvern Hills is either improved results from 2024 levels, or very similar results. The tables below give the headline results for tracking questions showing the change between 2024 and 2025.
- In addition to 55% of respondents rating the council as ‘good’ or ‘very good’, a further 35% said they feel the council is ‘fair’ (90% overall rating ‘fair’ or above, compared with 86% in 2024).

	2025	2024	2023	Change vs 2024
% satisfied with how MHDC runs things	65.1	61.4	64.9	+3.7
% agree that MHDC provides VFM	45.8	44.5	46.2	+1.3
% agree that MHDC acts on concerns of residents	65.2	60.6	64.4	+4.6
% agree MHDC keeps residents informed	64.6	61.3	68.8	+3.3
% rate MHDC as good or very good	54.8	51.4	56.3	+3.4

- With the exception of one, all community safety perceptions have either remained at similar levels to the previous year (five out of 11) or improved (also five out of 11).
- The extent to which residents agree that their 'local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together' is the only area in the whole survey where views have worsened since 2024 (70.5% in 2025 and 73.0% in 2024). This may reflect the picture of tensions nationally.
- In terms of antisocial behaviour, there has been no worsening on any measure from 2024 to 2025. The area of antisocial behaviour that residents feel is the biggest issue in the district is 'people using or dealing drugs', which 32% of respondents saw as a problem. This has taken over from 'rubbish and litter lying around', which has been considered the biggest issue in a number of previous years. This now stands at 30%.

SERVICE SATISFACTION:

- Satisfaction with service areas gives a very positive picture overall. No service areas have seen a fall in satisfaction from 2024. Seven (64%) have seen an increase, and the remaining four (36%) have seen no change from last year.

% satisfied for services used or experienced in the last year	2025	2024	2023	Change vs 2024
Community safety	82.3	79.8	81.7	+2.5
Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit	66.4	64.7	70.5	+1.7
Dealing with fly-tipping	75.9	61.2	71.1	+14.7
Freedom Leisure sports & leisure provision	76.6	77.6	82.6	-1.0
Housing support services	65.8	57.0	63.3	+8.8
Malvern Theatres	93.3	89.5	92.1	+3.8
Parks and open spaces	94.2	90.7	92.0	+3.5
Planning and Building Control	50.3	43.3	47.0	+7.0
Street cleaning	76.5	75.2	77.8	+1.3
Waste and recycling	90.1	88.5	92.1	+1.6
Worcestershire Regulatory Services	76.1	69.7	78.9	+6.4

- As well as improvements in perceptions of the majority of council services, a number of areas have recorded extremely high levels of satisfaction; including Parks and Open Spaces (94%), Malvern Theatres (93%), Waste and Recycling (90%), and Community Safety (82%). With the exception of Waste & Recycling, satisfaction is the highest it has been for these services since before 2023.
- For the first time in 2025, where respondents said they were 'fairly' or 'very' dissatisfied with a council service, they were asked to go on to explain the reason for their response. See 'Thematic Analysis' below for more findings.

COMPARISON WITH NATIONAL CONTEXT:

In the past, although not directly comparable due to methodological differences, the LGA's residents' satisfaction poll has been used to provide some context for the results of the MHDC's Annual Residents' Survey. However, due to capacity and cost this has not been completed since October 2024. A 2025 survey has recently been undertaken, although results won't be available until the middle of January. These polls are usually carried out three times a year by telephone on a representative sample of 1,000 adults (18+) across the country.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS:

As above, for the first time in 2025, residents who said they were dissatisfied with council services were given the opportunity to free type the reason they had made that judgement. This provides an opportunity to identify where issues may lie, and the option to take action if appropriate.

One further free text question was asked towards the end of the survey, which related to the residents' perceptions of the council overall; "How do you rate Malvern Hills District Council?". Following the selection of one of five ratings (very good, good, fair, poor, very poor), respondents could go on to provide a reason for their rating. This question is asked every year as a survey tracking question.

COUNCIL SERVICES:

The numbers of residents who had used each council services varied significantly, from just 165 having experience of housing support services, to 1,601 having used waste and recycling services. For every service area rated, the majority (ie 50% or more) were happy with their experience.

The top issues for residents dissatisfied with council services are listed for each area below.

Community Safety:

18% of the 348 respondents who had used the community safety service said they were dissatisfied with their experience. Of these, 49 went on to provide reasons for their rating.

The most common reason for resident dissatisfaction is a growing concern about safety generally, rather than about the council's service specifically, which is due to a lack of visible policing and slow responses to incidents, including for neighbourhood nuisance issues (mentioned 20 times).

Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit:

34% of the 866 respondents who had used the Council Tax and/or Council Tax benefit service said they were dissatisfied with their experience. Of these, 158 went on to provide reasons for their rating.

Dissatisfied residents overwhelmingly feel that Council Tax is too high for the level and quality of services they receive (mentioned more than 70 times). Many state they see little to no visible benefit from what they pay, other than basic bin collection, that Council Tax is unaffordable and that there is limited support for low-income or single-occupant households.

Dealing with fly-tipping:

24% of the 376 respondents who had used the fly-tipping service said they were dissatisfied with their experience. Of these, 39 went on to provide reasons for their rating.

The few respondents who were dissatisfied report that fly tipping, abandoned waste, and general littering are an issue across the area (more than 25 mentions), and that it's getting worse.

Freedom Leisure sports and leisure facilities:

23% of the 636 respondents who had used Freedom Leisure sports and leisure facilities said they were dissatisfied with their experience. Of these, 84 went on to provide reasons for their rating.

The comments of dissatisfied residents describe dissatisfaction with local leisure and sports facilities, particularly Malvern Splash. They report poor cleanliness and hygiene (more than 20 mentions), at Malvern Splash, including dirty, smelly changing rooms, persistent lack of cleaning staff, and the pool being grubby/filthy or unsafe, and high costs and concerns about affordability (more than 20 mentions). They say the cost is too expensive for families, children, pensioners and residents with disabilities, especially as the facilities are outdated and of poor quality. With prices increasing, people say it is not worth the money.

Housing Support Services:

34% of the 165 respondents who had used the housing support service said they were dissatisfied with their experience. Of these, 24 went on to provide reasons for their rating.

The comments of the very small number of dissatisfied residents who shared their views report poor communication and feeling that they are not listened to (9 mentions) by housing support services, including slow replies or no follow-up, and also raised perceived poor performance of Housing Associations (Platform Housing), including failure to handle complaints, repairs, or property issues (9 mentions).

Malvern Theatres:

7% of the 1,251 respondents who had used Malvern Theatres said they were dissatisfied with their experience. Of these, 75 went on to provide reasons for their rating.

The comments of the small number of dissatisfied residents focus overwhelmingly on high prices, saying the theatre is too expensive (more than 35 mentions). This includes the booking fee, cinema and bar prices. Dissatisfied residents think it prices out locals, pensioners, families and low-income residents. There are also a number who feel the Levelling Up funding and extensions are a waste of funds and an expensive, unnecessary redevelopment (more than 20 mentions), which benefit only a small proportion of residents ignoring other community needs.

Parks and open spaces:

6% of the 1,420 respondents who had used the district's parks and open spaces said they were dissatisfied with their experience. Of these, 60 went on to provide reasons for their rating.

The small number of residents who are dissatisfied are unhappy with the condition, safety, accessibility, and management of local parks and open spaces. A number of parks are described as dirty, poorly maintained, unsafe, or neglected (more than 20 mentions), with broken equipment, graffiti, dog fouling, lack of bins/benches, and dangerous or unusable paths. These views are set alongside 94% of respondents who are very or fairly satisfied with the district's parks and open spaces.

Planning and Building Control:

50% of the 608 respondents who had used the Planning and Building Control service said they were dissatisfied with their experience. Of these, 247 went on to provide reasons for their rating.

For the dissatisfied residents, the majority have concerns about overdevelopment and too many houses being built (more than 90 mentions), particularly without, what they consider to be, adequate infrastructure and the impact on local communities. Others are not satisfied with the service they receive from the council, including that views are ignored (more than 60 mentions) and that communication is poor or staff are unresponsive (more than 50 mentions).

Street cleaning:

24% of the 1,104 respondents who had experienced the street cleaning service said they were dissatisfied with their experience. Of these, 180 went on to provide reasons for their rating.

The majority of dissatisfaction comes from residents who feel that street cleaning and sweeping in their area is insufficient, with the service sometimes considered infrequent and at other times non-existent (more than 80 mentions), particularly in residential areas and on rural areas. Often respondents said that the lack of street cleaning leads to blocked drains and gutters resulting in flooding (more than 70 mentioned), or that leaves/debris left on pavements or roads present slip hazards (more than 60 mentions).

Waste and Recycling:

10% of the 1,601 respondents who had experienced the waste and recycling service said they were dissatisfied with their experience. Of these, 105 went on to provide reasons for their rating.

Where residents were dissatisfied with the service, the main issue is that they do not think fortnightly collections are frequent enough (more than 50 mentions) and think the service should return to weekly. They worry about smell, rats and maggots. A number say that they are unhappy that the council does not offer a food waste service (more than 25 mentions), although this will become a statutory service from 2026/27. There is scepticism that recycling is dealt with correctly and properly recycled, and that more separation is needed (more than 40 mentions), and some residents in rural areas are unhappy that they cannot access wheelie bins and are therefore not able to recycle glass at the kerbside (20+ mentions). A number of residents said they are not happy with the tips in the district, mentioning limited opening and issues with traffic (more than 30 mentions).

These views are set alongside 90% of respondents who are very or fairly satisfied with the council's waste and recycling service.

Worcestershire Regulatory Services (environmental health and licensing):

24% of the 253 respondents who had used Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) said they were dissatisfied with their experience. Of these, 39 went on to provide reasons for their rating.

For the small number of respondents who provided a reason for their dissatisfaction with WRS, the main issue was poor responsiveness or a lack of action from the service (more than 15 mentions). A number of responses talked about the service being 'useless'.

RATE THE COUNCIL:

After providing a rating for the council on a five point scale between 'very good' and 'very poor', residents were asked to explain the reason for their rating. Of the 1,659 residents that gave a rating, 763 went on to explain their answer, with many of the responses covering more than one issue / service area. General themes from the results are shown in a wordcloud below.



Satisfaction with the council:

The vast majority of respondents were generally happy with the services provided by the council, which reflects the 55% who said they rated the council as 'good' or 'very good', and the additional 35% who rated the council as 'fair', although many also said there is 'room for improvement' and identified some issues to work on.

A number of residents stated how pleased they are with the waste service provided by the council, which they deem to be efficient, with polite and helpful crews, and a significant number mentioned that the council does what it can within budget, resource and other restrictions. Parks, open spaces and the theatres are often cited as positives, and many residents appreciate living in a clean, safe and pleasant areas. Residents generally

appreciate the MHDC magazine and regular email updates. In some cases, councillors were cited as being helpful and proactive.

Dissatisfaction with the council:

Planning Services:

Residents most frequently raised frustrations and dissatisfaction with Planning services, despite there being an increase in satisfaction for the service area overall. There were a wide range of issues raised, including the planning team being difficult to contact, slow to act and not listening, the SWDPR being delayed and worries about the 5 year land supply, concerns about over building, with a perceived lack of supporting infrastructure.

These are the same issues that have been raised in previous years, including the concerns about new developments being agreed without appropriate infrastructure being put in place, or being reliant on existing facilities in villages that are already inadequate.

Inequalities:

As in previous years (when this has also been themed as 'isolation'), a significant number of residents raised concerns around 'inequalities'. In previous years this had largely been a view of geographical inequalities, with the council's focus being on Great Malvern, which means that anyone not living in the town is disadvantaged. More recently, this view of geography still prevails but has been widened, perhaps because of the increase in the number of responses, including from slightly younger age groups, and now includes a lot of comments about other groups of residents also being disadvantaged compared with affluent, white, middle classed, retirees. There are also concerns about social isolation, with few bus services and other facilities outside of the main town.

Cost / Value for Money:

A number of residents did not feel that the council provides good value for money; that Council Tax is too expensive for the services provided, especially for residents in rural areas who are not able to access the main towns where they perceive services to be disproportionately focused. Some felt that the council spends residents' money on the wrong things, including the Theatres' funding, and, in agreement with the 'Inequalities' theme above, that rural areas are left out. Some residents say Council Tax is "eye-watering" or "extortionate" for the level of service provided.

Streets / greenspace / parking:

A number of residents expressed dissatisfaction with street cleaning and maintenance of greenspaces, including hedges and dog poo, although many also highly rated the waste and street cleaning service. Some want a food waste collection/more quickly, with others in rural areas unhappy that they still have cherry sacks rather than wheeled bins, especially when they pay their Council Tax and see other big lorries driving down their lanes. There were a number of other comments about dog poo.

Communication / Customer Service:

As in previous years, some residents say it is difficult to contact the council, including officers not being in the office, that residents don't always get a timely response to their queries, or that responses are not useful/rude. This also included a number of residents complaining that there is a lack of information being provided about what the council does / is doing.

Dissatisfaction with other organisations:

As in previous years, a large proportion of the comments about the rating residents had given to MHDC related to services/functions that are not district responsibilities. This linked with comments in other themes relating to residents not knowing enough about what the

council does, sometimes due to being provided with a lack of information (see 'customer service' above). Predominantly these were issues relating to **county council** functions, including road works, pavement repairs, pot holes, school parking, street lighting, traffic calming measures and care homes, and the **police**, which included illegal parking/blocking access, enforcement of speed restrictions, and dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour.

There were also a number of comments about road/pedestrian safety, which primarily covered issues with access to pavements for elderly residents, pushchairs and wheelchair users due to overhanging hedges from private gardens and the poor condition of pavements. There were also comments about antisocial behaviour, which was primarily speeding related, including dealing with boy racers.

Young people:

The issue of young people and teenagers was brought up a number of times by residents, with residents talking about a need for more activities for teenagers, more support, including public transport to prevent isolation for rural young people, and more affordable homes and jobs so that young people can stay in the district.

The other issues raised most often by residents included councillors, where some residents see some members as self serving and power driven. There's also a notable thread on concerns around the governance of Malvern Hills Trust within the comments.

Next Steps:

The overall results from the survey have been shared with Overview & Scrutiny and Executive Committees as part of the Quarter 3 Performance Report. Senior Management Team and Heads of Service will then take account of results and views in Service Planning for 2026/27, and for service improvements as required.