

## RESIDENT INSIGHT 2022

### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 In order to gather resident and community insight, a representative survey of the district's residents to be undertaken in line with national best practice.
- 1.2 The survey to be undertaken between 1 September and 31 October 2022 and will enable the council to understand and respond to changing resident needs, make improvements to our services and baseline our current performance.

### 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 According to the Local Government Association, resident insight is vital for councils wanting to understand their communities, improve their services and direct their resources at the issues that matter the most. This is increasingly important as councils try to balance reduced budgets with greater responsibilities as community leaders and shapers of place.
- 2.2 Additionally, the challenging context within which the council operates is continually changing. These challenges and issues are both broad and specific in their nature including meeting new demands and expectations, financial sustainability, responsiveness to change, changes in resident behaviour, protecting reputations, remaining relevant, and maintaining trust. To understand and meet these challenges, using robust insight and conducting meaningful engagement with residents will be more important than ever to inform decision making.
- 2.3 The council are keen to continue understanding their residents, particularly monitoring changes in behaviours, perceptions, expectations, and needs over time. By meaningfully reaching and engaging and gathering robust and insightful data, this guides an informed approach to decision-making, policy development and service delivery.
- 2.4 This report sets out a proposal to work with the Insight Officer at Havant Borough Council to conduct an initial residents' survey and provide an opportunity to better understand what our communities think and offer valuable insight to inform service delivery, both now and into the future, including the building blocks for the next Corporate Plan.

### 3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The council has not proactively sought the wider views of its residents for a number of years and although effective consultation is undertaken out on many service-specific issues and initiatives, these do not inform the overall strategic direction of, or satisfaction with the council.
- 3.2 The recent 2020 LGA review of the council's communications noted that: *"Evaluation and insight are a crucial part of a modern, strategic communications function and will allow the council to assess the impact of its work and demonstrate its success. An approach to resident engagement and consultation to ensure that residents are informed and (are) listened to in regard to upcoming changes to council services and major projects."*

- 3.3 In its Corporate Plan the council is committed to putting the community first and providing excellence in services to our residents monitored through the level of customer satisfaction. To deliver on this there is a need to regularly monitor this level of satisfaction in a meaningful and representative way through a resident's survey, along with identifying the impact of significant changes to service delivery.
- 3.4 Proactively gathering customer insight will help inform service design by better understanding, and meeting, customer and resident needs and supporting business improvement initiatives to be prioritised on the impact and opportunities for designing solutions. The future vision for the council and the next corporate plan will also be better informed by a detailed understanding of the views of our residents with this work establishing:
- a coordinated centralised insight programme linked to the corporate plan leading to an understanding of the views and preferences of our residents to inform the council's decision making and service planning.
  - involved and informed residents and stakeholders
  - continuous improvement and predicting future trends and opportunities

#### **4. SURVEY APPROACH**

- 4.1 The expertise of the Insight Officer at Havant Borough Council has supported the initial proposal to conduct a resident insight survey of the New Forest and would provide ongoing partnership support to deliver a resident survey.
- 4.2 A quantitative telephone survey would be conducted to ensure robust and reliable results that are representative of the population. It will be carried out with 750 residents, and quotas will be in place to ensure representative samples based on ward, gender, age and work status. This is in line with good practice both in terms of the approach and the validity of the output data. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.
- 4.3 Telephone surveys will enable the council to gather a representative sample based on demographics (including ward), which will provide reliability and confidence in the results. There will be the ability to reach those less likely to engage or take part, unlike self-selecting methodologies such as online or postal surveys, and this method gives each resident an equal chance of being chosen to take part, as opposed to only interviewing the first people we come across.
- 4.4 Costs for telephone and face-to-face options are broadly similar, but due to the geographical make-up of the area, a telephone approach will be better suited to reach residents living in rural locations.
- 4.5 Telephone surveys guarantee that answers will be provided to all questions asked, and, as a result of the specialised skills of telephone and face-to-face interviews, surveys can remain engaging for longer and therefore more insight can be collected.

#### **5. NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1 If the recommended approach is adopted, a fieldwork provider would need to be procured to administer interviewers to conduct the telephone interviews. The procurement process would be undertaken by the council; however, the insight consultant would support the technical research expertise during this process, including supporting the initiation meeting with the selected provider.

5.2 The insight consultant will support the drafting of the resident insight survey, which could have questions which fall under the following categories:

- Reputation metrics, such as satisfaction, feeling informed, trust, and value for money
- Satisfaction with services
- Areas of importance and concern for residents
- Customer contact and communications
- Behaviour and demographics

Appendix 1 provides an example of standardised questions that will allow us to benchmark results against other local authorities.

5.3 It will be key to design the questionnaire itself in a way that baselines our current performance, enabling us to compare our results annually and collect trend data over time. Close management of the survey design and consultation will be required so that the questions remain focused, do not lead respondents, are non-biased, and inform and deliver against corporate objectives. Consequently, input into the question design would need to be limited, although the nature of the questions asked will be informed by Cabinet.

5.4 The insight consultant will support on the management of the fieldwork provider and will ask that interim results are provided by the fieldwork provider in order to ensure sample quotas are being filled, to monitor interim findings and to ensure fieldwork is being completed on time.

5.5 At the end of fieldwork, the provider will process the data and normally provide raw data, analysis, and the contact details of residents who have expressed an interest in taking part in further research such as resident panels or focus groups (if permission is given).

5.6 The insight consultant would provide support with the analysis of the survey results, and findings would be reported in a way that would enable the council to identify opportunities to improve its services

5.7 Whilst this survey will be a standalone piece of work initially, the expectation is that the results will inform further work in the future. As outlined above, the survey is being set up in a way which will allow us to repeat it periodically should the council decide to do so, which will give the biggest benefit in terms of being able to monitor changing resident behaviours, needs, and response to our services.

## 6. **TIMESCALES**

6.1 Indicative timescales are detailed below (telephone survey, 750 sample). The aim is for the survey to commence 1 September 2022, with initial results available from December.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Procurement of fieldwork provider	July 2022
Draft and agree resident survey questionnaire	July 2022
Set up of fieldwork	August 2022

Fieldwork (for a sample of 750)	1 <sup>st</sup> September – 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2022
Data checks and analysis	November 2022
Reporting	December 2022

## **7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The methodology outlined above will enable the council to seek out views from groups that are usually less likely to engage or provide feedback to the council. The data and insight provided will contribute to measuring and targeting services to all segments of the district's population. The output data can be analysed based on a number of demographics, which will help the council to identify any gaps in meeting the needs of all resident groups.
- 7.2 The use of telephone surveys – rather than alternative methodologies – will make it easier for rurally isolated residents to be engaged.
- 7.3 The research will contribute to the council's aims of having information available in an accessible format, as groups who require this information will be included within the survey. As part of the fieldwork provider procurement, the council will request that different accessibility requirements are met, such as ensuring that those interviewing residents have access to text-to-speech or other facilities to enable people with hearing impairments to be included.
- 7.4 The research will also provide us with insight regarding the barriers that people might face when accessing our services and information.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Surveys will be carried out by telephone, eliminating the need for any paper-based surveys or documentation, and removing the need for car journeys during the fieldwork.
- 8.2 The survey will ask residents about their attitudes to the environment, including the climate and nature emergency, providing valuable insight into local attitudes.
- 8.3 As part of the procurement process, the council will ask the suppliers how they address sustainability as part of their business practices.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Indicative costs for procurement support, delivery of fieldwork (including identifying representative samples and undertaking 750 telephone surveys), questionnaire design, and statistical analysis total £25k.
- 9.2 These costs will be met within the Council's 2022/23 budget, which included a one-off sum for initiatives aligned to corporate plan priorities, including resident insight.

## **10. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS**

- 10.1 The pandemic, the rising cost of living, new technological advances and the climate and nature emergency are just a few of the things that are impacting how we live our

lives. With these changes, the services residents need from the Council, how they need to be delivered, and the way residents want to access them will also evolve. This report sets out one of the ways that the Council can ensure that the next Corporate Plan responds to these changes and how its implementation can be benchmarked in the future to ensure the services the Council provides in the future meet our residents needs and are accessible to all. I support the recommendations.

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**NFDC Resident Survey – LGA Benchmarking Questions**

Reputation Questions  Benchmark against LGA “Are you being served?” national quarterly benchmarking, telephone survey, 1,000 sample	<b>Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?</b> <i>Very satisfied – Very dissatisfied scale answer options</i>
	<b>Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way New Forest District Council runs things?</b> <i>Very satisfied – Very dissatisfied scale answer options</i>
	<b>To what extent do you agree or disagree that New Forest District Council provides value for money?</b> <i>Strongly agree – strongly disagree scale answer options</i>
	<b>To what extent do you think New Forest District Council acts on the concerns of local residents?</b> <i>A great deal – not at all scale answer options</i>
	<b>Overall, how well informed do you think New Forest District Council keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides?</b> <i>Very well informed – not well informed at all scale answer options</i>
	<b>How much do you trust New Forest District Council?</b> <i>A great deal – not at all scale answer options</i>