CORPORATE AFFAIRS AND LOCAL ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 19TH JANUARY 2023

PORTFOLIO: LEADER'S

RESIDENT INSIGHT

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 That the Panel supports:

The next steps as outlined within the report;

A two-yearly resident survey going forward; and

Sharing findings and anonymised data with our partners.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The context within which local authorities operate has altered drastically in a very short space of time, due to national/societal events and changes such as Brexit, COVID-19, devolution, and financial pressures. These challenges and issues are both broad and specific in their nature including meeting new demands and expectations, servicing new client groups, financial sustainability, responsiveness to change, changing resident behaviours, protecting reputations, remaining relevant and maintaining trust.

2.2 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.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 New Forest District Council (NFDC) 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 intelligent approach to inform decision-making, policy development and service delivery. This paper outlines the key findings from the recent resident insight survey undertaken.

4. METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

4.1 The resident insight survey conducted 760 interviews with residents aged 18+ years. LGA best practice advises that resident surveys should have a minimum sample size of 500 residents, representative of the local population.

4.2 Representative sample quotas were set based on the population profile of NFDC by gender, age, working status and an equal split of interviews per ward. The sample achieved very closely matches the population profile, meaning minimal statistical weighting was applied and providing reliability in the results. The breakdown of the sample achieved can be found at Appendix 1.

4.3 As NFDC's resident survey has a larger sample than the minimum guidance, and minimal weighting was applied to ensure the sample is representative, it has a narrower confidence interval when conducting statistical analysis. This means that if every New Forest resident was asked the survey questions, the results would be very similar to the survey findings.

4.4 The resident insight survey used a quantitative methodology of telephone (613 interviews) and face-to-face (147) interviews. A mixed method enabled a targeted sampling approach, particularly for younger populations who are less likely to take part in telephone interviews.

4.5 Fieldwork was undertaken by a procured third-party supplier and was conducted between 8 September and 24 November 2022.

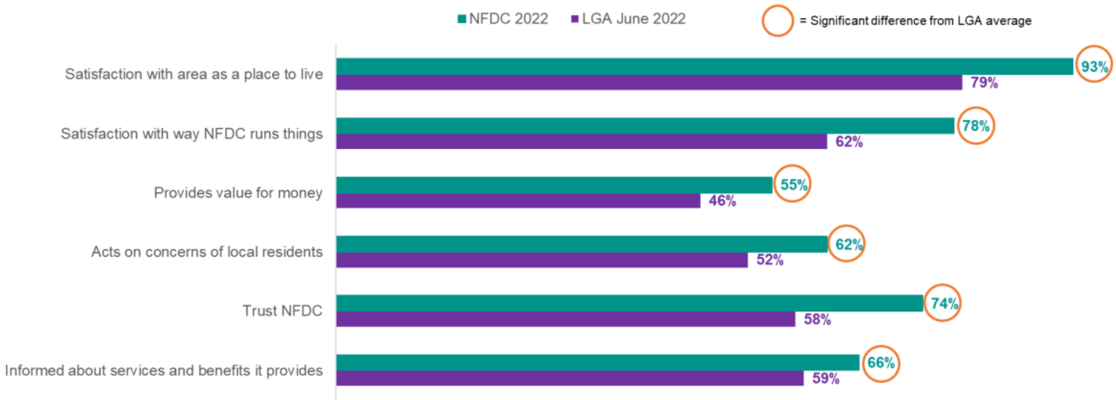
4.6 The questionnaire was designed by NFDC officers in consultation with EMT and Cabinet.

5. KEY FINDINGS

5.1 This section of the paper outlines the key findings from NFDC's resident insight survey. Where applicable, findings have been benchmarked against national data indicators. Some of these findings are also summarised in Appendix 2.

5.2 Reputation

Across all reputation metrics, **NFDC scored significantly higher than the LGA average**. The breakdown of results can be found in the graph below.

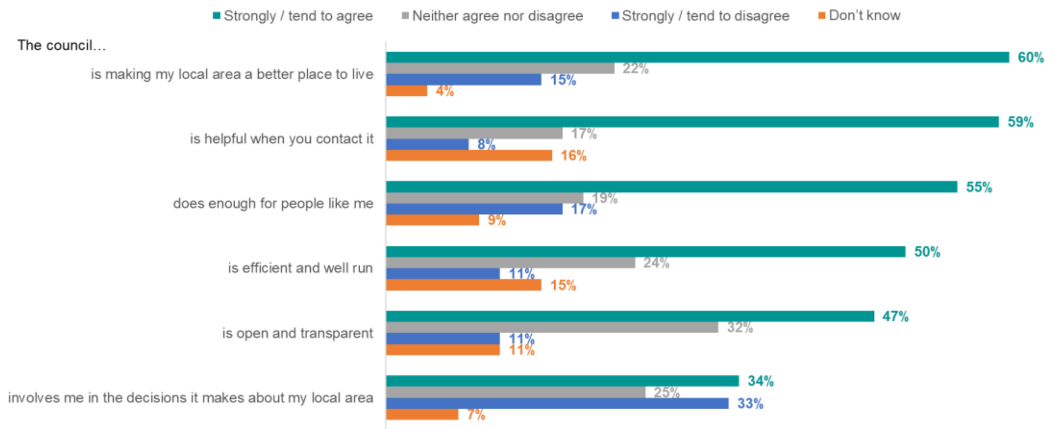


For some of the reputation metrics, there are proportions of the sample that provide a neutral/don't know answer rather than a negative response, particularly satisfaction with the way NFDC runs things (16%), value for money (28%), and acts on concerns of local residents (17%). This is also the case on other questions in the survey, particularly image metrics and advocacy.

For those who provide a neutral/don't know response, they are more likely to feel less involved in the decisions NFDC makes, and perhaps a key driver to consider when looking to convert these residents to positive sentiment.

5.3 Image

Image metrics are equally encouraging, and the breakdown of results can be found in the graph below.



5.4 **Advocacy**

Advocacy metrics indicated that **37% of residents speak highly of the council** whilst 47% have no views or responded, “don’t know”. Of this 47%, they are more likely to feel that the council does not involve them in the decisions it makes about the local area than those who speak highly of the council.

5.5 **Involved in local decisions**

This metric is a **key influencer on reputation, image, and advocacy metrics**, particularly influencing neutral/don’t know responses. Those who do not feel involved in the decisions NFDC makes about the local area are more likely to be aged 65+ years, live in affluent areas (rank IMD 5), have lived in the New Forest for 20+ years, are owner occupiers, less likely to have children living at home, and of AB social grade (see Appendix 3).

5.6 **Service satisfaction**

Residents were asked to rate satisfaction with universal services (waste and recycling collection, street sweeping / cleaning, council tax services) and NFDC services they have used in the last 12 months. Service satisfaction was favourable, and **the top-rated services were registering to vote (96%), community recycling banks (90%), garden waste collection (88%), health and leisure centres (87%) and waste and recycling services (83%).**

Waste and recycling collection was also ranked as **the most valued service** by residents (51% chose this service.)

5.7 **Internet use**

Over **9 in 10 residents (93%) cite they personally use the internet** at home or outside of work, which is in line with the Ofcom national indicator (also 93%.) NFDC residents are **significantly more likely** than the Ofcom national average to look online for public service information (NFDC 84%, Ofcom 64%), complete Government processes online (NFDC 82%, Ofcom 51%) and pay online for council tax or other local council services (NFDC 52%, Ofcom 43%).

5.8 **Customer contact**

Just over half (52%) of residents have **contacted NFDC in the last 12 months**. Of these, 37% did so regarding an enquiry or problem, 15% to make a payment, and 27% regarding a particular service to use or access.

The **most common contact method** across all three contact types was telephone (70% for those contacting about an enquiry or problem, 43% to make a payment and 60% regarding a particular service). This was followed by email for those contacting about an enquiry or problem or regarding a particular service (25% and 34% respectively) and automated payment for those making a payment (30%).

Across all three contact types, residents reported **high levels of ease of contact** (82% found it very / fairly easy to contact about an enquiry or problem, 92% to make a payment and 84% regarding a particular service.)

Residents were asked what their **preferred contact method** would be for the future, and telephone was cited as the preferred method when contacting about an enquiry or problem (60%) or regarding a particular service to use or access (47%). This may be due to it being the most used contact method now. Automated payment was the preferred method (46%) for making future payments.

5.9 Community safety

Nearly all residents (96%) report feeling **very or fairly safe in their local area**. Around three-quarters (73%) of residents' report feeling very or fairly safe after dark.

Nearly a quarter (24%) of residents reported that their quality of life is affected a great deal / a fair amount by **fear of crime**. They are more likely to be female, aged 65+ years, live in urban areas, have lived in the New Forest for 20+ years, owner occupiers, do not have children living at home and of AB social grade.

5.10 Climate

Three quarters (75%) of residents' report feeling **very or somewhat worried about the impact of climate change.**

Residents were also asked what steps they have taken in the last 12 months to benefit the environment or address climate change. **Most (91%) reported using less energy at home**, although 57% of those stated that this was not for the benefit of the environment, and it could be reasonably inferred that this is more likely due to the current energy crisis. Nearly two-thirds (61%) also reported making fewer journeys by car, van, or motorcycle, although 36% of those stated that this was not for the benefit of the environment. Nearly four in ten (38%) reported investing in energy saving measures such as loft insulation, and 26% stated that although something they have not done in the last 12 months, they would be willing to. One-quarter (25%) of residents reported buying electricity from a green supplier or generating their own energy, and 38% reported that although this is not something they have done in the last 12 months, they would be willing to.

5.11 Environment

When asked about the **protection and preservation of the environment** in the New Forest, the top things most important to residents were protection and preservation of woodland and forests (27%), less or better control of litter (24%), and rare/vulnerable species of animals, birds, fish, or insects (22%).

5.12 Recycling

Just over four-fifths (81%) of residents report it is very easy / easy to recycle. **Two-thirds (66%) of residents feel that NFDC could do more to encourage households to recycle more** including the ability to recycle more or a wider range of items (40%), more information (about what to recycle 18% and how to recycle 13%) and receptacles (provision of wheelie bins 18% and more bags for recycling 11%).

5.13 **Community**

NFDC scored significantly higher than the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) benchmark indicators for community metrics as follows: My local area is a place where people get on well together (NFDC 89%, DCMS 83%), My neighbourhood is changing for the better (NFDC 41%, DCMS 16%), I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood (NFDC 89%, DCMS 65%). I like the area I live in also ranked at 95%, although this is not asked in DCMS indicators.

5.14 **Civic action**

Just over two-fifths (44%) of residents' report spending a great deal / a fair amount of time **helping their community** or local area in the last 12 months. The most common activity undertaken was organising or helping to run a community activity or event (34%) followed by keeping the local area tidy (28%).

Just over three-fifths (62%) of residents report they are very or fairly interested in taking part in activities that help improve their community or neighbourhood in the future. The top activities they would be most interested in are organising or helping to run a community activity or event (32%) and keeping the local area tidy (27%). Those who are more likely to be interested are female, aged 35-54 or 65+, economically active, live in urban areas, AB social grade, and owner occupiers.

5.15 **Household finances**

Nearly two-thirds (62%) of residents report their financial situation in the last 12 months getting a little or a lot worse. Although 59% report their financial position as very or relatively comfortable, **34% report they are just about managing**. Of those who report they are just about managing, they are more likely to be female, economically active, live in urban areas, and owner occupiers. This will be important to continue monitoring as the cost-of-living crisis may deepen.

Residents were also asked if they have concerns paying for various household bills or other costs. Half (50%) reported concerns paying for home energy bills, 41% reported concerns paying for fuel for their vehicle and 41% reported concerns for paying for food/groceries. Just over one-third (34%) reported no concerns paying household costs or bills.

5.16 **Health and Wellbeing**

Seven in ten (70%) of residents report their health as very good / good, 19% as fair and 10% as poor / very poor.

Across wellbeing metrics, **NFDC scored significantly higher** than the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) benchmark indicators. Residents were significantly more likely to hardly ever / never lack companionship (NFDC 82%, DCMS 56%), feel left out (NFDC 85%, DCMS 54%) and feel isolated from others (NFDC 87%, DCMS 53%).

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 This resident survey provides reliable and robust data, and used alongside other sources of corporate data, will continually support the effective delivery of political goals and strategic commitments.

6.2 There is an opportunity now to analyse this data further and move people with neutral views to more fixed positions through increased understanding of these groups.

7. NEXT STEPS

7.1 The survey information puts us in a good position to start shaping future service design, delivery and strategic objectives. This includes:

i. Informing and mapping the development of the corporate plan priorities

ii. Informing and mapping the development of the budget over the course of the financial cycle

iii. Informing and mapping the development of sub-strategies, policy, and service priorities/delivery (such as regeneration, environment, community safety and community development). This also includes understanding, and therefore targeted delivery, of vulnerable or in-need customers or communities

iv. Provide baseline data to support the transformation programme (including digital behaviours, channel shift and customer experience) and monitor over time

v. Performance monitoring (particularly satisfaction and perception metrics) to allow for measurable progress of policy or service delivery and benchmark for improvement

vi. Inform Communications and Engagement strategy/delivery, particularly micro-targeting audiences dependent on their needs, channel usage and views

7.2 Working with the Executive Management Team and service managers, an action plan will be developed to realise the benefits of this data and enable implementation of the next steps outlined above.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Resident Survey output will inform the Transformation Programme in terms of service design and delivery, which will ultimately result in financial benefits.

9. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The data will help inform the strategic community safety plan and priorities by getting a better understanding of the communities most likely to be impacted by crime or the fear of crime.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The data will help inform the climate and nature emergency action plan by understanding residents’ views on the impact of climate change and environmental issues.

11. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The president survey ensured a representative sample was used which reflected the age gender and economic status of residents. In addition, a disability quota was monitored to ensure that this group was represented. Other demographical information was gathered, including ethnicity, income and housing status.

For further information contact:

Rebecca Drummond
Elections and Business Improvement Service Manager
Rebecca.Drummond@nfdc.gov.uk

Sheryl Parry
Business Improvement Project Manager
Sheryl.Parry@nfdc.gov.uk

Caroline Harvey
Insight Manager
Havant Borough Council

Background Papers:

Resident Insight 2022, Cabinet 6 July 2022

APPENDIX 1

Total sample		Quota target %	Sample Achieved %
Age	18-24	7%	7%
	25-34	11%	12%
	35-54	28%	25%
	55-64	18%	19%
	65+	36%	38%
Gender	Male	48%	46%
	Female	52%	54%
Working Status	Economically active	54%	53%
	Economically inactive	46%	47%

APPENDIX 2

TO FOLLOW

APPENDIX 3

SOCIAL GRADE	DESCRIPTION
AB	Higher and intermediate managerial roles, administrative or professional occupations.
C1	Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial roles, administrative or professional occupations.
C2	Skilled manual workers.
DE	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers; State pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only.