Nottinghamshire County Council

Report to Policy Committee

5 March 2014

Agenda Item: 5

REPORT OF THE LEADER

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ANNUAL RESIDENTS' SATISFACTION SURVEY 2013 FINDINGS

Purpose of the Report

1. To present the findings from the 2013 Nottinghamshire Annual Residents' Satisfaction Survey and consider actions arising and future arrangements for the survey.

Information and Advice

2. At its meeting on 20 June 2012, Policy Committee agreed to establish an annual satisfaction survey for the County Council, not just to measure headline satisfaction, but to explore residents' views about the Council, its services and the local area. Prior to 2012 different methodologies had been used to measure satisfaction and as such comparisons had to be treated with caution due to the differences in the data collection. Results from previous surveys are detailed in a background paper for information.

3. The information gained from the annual satisfaction survey helps the Council to understand the views and priorities of local residents. Understanding residents' views is a key element of assessing the effectiveness of an authority and alongside cost provides a key set of performance information. As well as measuring headline satisfaction, the survey also provides data on several key performance indicators including public perceptions of value for money. The survey is also important for local accountability and ensures that informed decisions and comparisons with other local authorities can be made.

4. In July 2013 the Council commissioned an independent research company, Enventure Research, to carry out its second annual satisfaction (tracker) survey. As in 2012, the 2013 Nottinghamshire Annual Residents' Satisfaction Survey used face-to-face interviews with residents, who are representative of the Nottinghamshire population. Face-to-face interviews were the selected methodology as this allows people to fully express their real views in a personable way. Face-to-face interviews also have an unrivalled reputation for producing robust population based samples which stand up to scrutiny. The survey took place during October 2013.

5. Local based quota sampling techniques were used to achieve a representative sample of the Nottinghamshire population (circa 785,000 based on the Census 2011 data). Quotas were set based on district, gender, age, working status and ethnicity as well as disability and ward classification.

6. The brief was to undertake a minimum of 150 face-to-face interviews in each of the seven districts, making a total county sample size of 1,050; in practice more interviews were conducted and a sample size of 1,202 was achieved. This response rate has achieved a 95% confidence interval meaning the results are accurate to approximately +/- 3%.

7. This survey cost £13,796, with the Council contributing £6,796 and the remainder being funded by partners (Broxtowe Borough Council, Bassetlaw District Council and Nottinghamshire's Police and Crime Commissioner). The survey also contained additional bespoke questions as requested from partners.

8. The results for Nottinghamshire County Council are made up from an amalgamation of the seven district scores.

Summary of key findings from the 2013 annual residents' satisfaction survey

9. The report captures local people's views, experiences and perceptions and includes tables and charts broken down by geographical areas, and demographic subgroups including age, gender and working status. Although satisfaction during 2013 has fallen slightly, overall the survey results remain fairly positive for Nottinghamshire and compare well with other councils, especially around overall satisfaction and value for money (key driver of satisfaction) and both exceed the 2012/13 strategic plan targets. Even with the current challenges, the vast majority of residents are positive on key indicators of general satisfaction.

10. In order to understand how levels of satisfaction and perceptions have changed, comparisons have been made with the 2012 survey results, the most recent baseline for performance reporting, using the same methodology.

Council satisfaction

- The Council's satisfaction rating has decreased 5 percentage points since 2012 to 58% satisfied. This is above the Ipsos MORI average (taken from the 2013 national Survey - 45% satisfied) and exceeds the 2012/13 Strategic Plan target (47%).
  A major influence on satisfaction with the County Council is feeling it provides value for money. Just over two in five (43%) of respondents *agree* that the County Council provides them with value for money, compared to only a quarter (26%) that *disagree*. This is a slight decrease of 4 percentage points since 2012. Again this is above the Ipsos MORI average (34% agree) and goes beyond the 2012/13 Strategic Plan target (25%).

Local decision making

- Respondents in Nottinghamshire were asked the extent to which they agree/disagree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area. A total of 28% *agree* they can influence decisions affecting their local area. This represents a decrease of 8 percentage points since 2012 (36%). There is no up-to-date national average figure available for this indicator.

Perceptions of the local area

- Just under four in five (79%) of Nottinghamshire respondents are *satisfied* with their local area as a place to live (their local area was defined as the area within 15-20 minutes walking distance from their home). Although satisfaction with local area has

fallen from 84% to 79%, this still remains in line with the latest available national average (80% in 2011).
Respondents were also asked the extent to which they agree or disagree that their local area is one where people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together. Almost three in five (57%) agree that people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together in Nottinghamshire. This is a slight decrease of one percentage point since 2012.

Information provision

- Whether people in Nottinghamshire feel informed or not appears to influence their attitudes to various aspects of the local area and local public services. In Nottinghamshire, 51% of respondents *feel informed* about the services and benefits provided by the Council. Although this represents a decrease of 11 percentage points since 2012, is still in line with the Ipsos MORI average of 51%.

Community safety

- Perceptions of crime and safety are often central to whether residents see an area as a good place to live or not. In Nottinghamshire, although most (94%) of respondents *feel safe during the day* (just one percentage point decrease from 2012), just under three-quarters (74%) *feel safe outside at night* (constant with the rating in 2012). A total of 88% of respondents *feel safe at home alone at night*, representing a slight decrease of two percentage points since 2012.

Helping out and getting involved

- The proportion of respondents who volunteer regularly in Nottinghamshire (participate in voluntary unpaid activities in a typical week) is just over one in seven (15%). This is an *increase* of one percentage point since 2012 (14%).

New draft Strategic Plan

- The vast majority of respondents agree with the three core values and five priorities set out in the draft Strategic Plan. Treating people fairly was the core value that the highest proportion of respondents agreed with (91%).

Response to findings

11. There are a number of key areas of work that need to be progressed based on the findings of the 2013 annual residents' satisfaction survey. This work includes mapping of activity that may have contributed to high/low levels of satisfaction across the Council, looking at links to cost and quality of service and other available data and future comparisons with other local authorities through improved benchmarking as part of the Council's Strategic Management Framework approach. This work is underway.

12. Tracking changes in satisfaction alongside questions on other related issues about residents' local areas can provide valuable information on what is driving resident perceptions and therefore what the Council can do to better serve their local communities. Many additional factors will influence resident views of councils at a local level, including local demographics. It is important therefore that these results are seen as part of a wider approach to understanding and responding to local communities at a local level.

13. Research by the Local Government Association shows perceived value for money has the strongest correlation with overall satisfaction. Councils whose residents feel they receive good value for money are the most popular, and those who score badly on value for money are the least popular. One of the strongest drivers of 'perceived value for money' and a primary driver of resident satisfaction with councils, is effective information about council services. Councils whose residents feel well informed about services are the most popular and vice versa. Other key drivers of satisfaction are perceptions of the overall quality of services, and treating all types of people fairly, and taking residents' views into account – research suggests that these measures link into perceptions of trust and fairness and also highly correlate with the overall satisfaction rating for a council.

14. Keeping residents informed about any changes in services is important and council publications play a key role in this. Although the rating 'How well informed Nottinghamshire County Council keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides' has shown the biggest fall (this has dropped by 11 percentage points from 62% in 2012 to 51% in 2013) it is still in line with the Ipsos MORI average (51%). Previous MORI research has shown that the most frequently cited (and also most preferred) channels of council information tend to be council publications. The County Council is in the process of introducing three new publications aimed at 'Older People', 'Families', and 'All Residents'. These publications will replace County News (the Council's newspaper) which ceased production in June/July 2013. The Council has also introduced 'email me' (the County Council's new email marketing system) this allows members of the public to subscribe with their email address to receive messages from the Council about the subjects that interest them; so far 18,585 users are subscribed with this number growing every day as 'email me' is publicised and becomes more widely known.

15. Consistent use of the Council's corporate identity (brand) is important for recognition of the Council. It enables people to recognise council services, access them and shows public accountability. It also plays an important part in contributing to overall satisfaction with the council. An audit of the Council's corporate brand was carried out in December 2013. This showed that just over 50% of people surveyed recognised the correct Council's logo compared to 33% in the previous year.

16. It is crucial that individual councils have the best possible tools to manage their performance and drive their own improvement. As part of the Strategic Management Framework the Council is reviewing the tools available to it, including making use of the new Local Government Association LG Inform database - as a mechanism for benchmarking our resident satisfaction data with other councils. This is a free online service which allows anyone in the public sector to access, compare and analyse data, and present their findings. Although this database is still in development more councils are starting to use it.

17. The next annual satisfaction survey is due to be undertaken in October 2014. The questions asked as part of this survey will be refreshed to ensure that they are appropriate to inform progress against the Council's new Strategic Plan – which includes core values of 'Treating people fairly', 'Value for Money' and 'Working together' and comparable to previous surveys. Progress embedding the Council's values will be managed through the annual delivery plan which supports the Strategic Plan. The Survey's use as part of this plan and as a tool for evaluating quality within the Council's service plans will be explored as part of the relevant performance management processes.

Other Options Considered

18. The cost of the survey (£13,796) with the Council's contributing £6,796, is considered good value for money (with other comparable surveys costing in excess of £20,000, as established through the tender process) and it provides important information on residents' views about the Council, services and the local area.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

19. The information gained through the 2013 Nottinghamshire Annual Residents' Satisfaction helps the Council to understand the views and priorities of local residents and will be taken into account when decisions are made about Council plans and services.

Statutory and Policy Implications

20. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended:

1) the results of the 2013 Nottinghamshire Annual Residents' Satisfaction Survey are noted

2) the results are used to inform development of the Council's service and delivery plans

3) further analysis, as detailed in the report, be undertaken and reported to Members in six months' time

4) the County Council continues with an Annual Residents' Satisfaction Survey in future years.

Councillor Alan Rhodes
Leader of the County Council

For any enquiries about this report, please contact:
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Constitutional Comments [SLB 17/02/2014]

1. Policy Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Financial Comments [NR 19/02/2014]

2. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents
Contextual and comparative data from previous surveys
Final report (excluding Partners' data)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected
ALL