



Policy and Resources Committee - 8 November 2010

East Northamptonshire Residents' Panel

Summary

The current contract for the East Northamptonshire Residents' Panel ends on 31 March 2011. This report sets out options for the future of the panel and asks Members to consider these and give approval to retender for a new contract with a reduction to two surveys per year.

Attachment(s)

Appendix 1: List of Performance Indicators measured using the Residents' Panel

Appendix 2: Options for Consultation

Appendix 3: Equalities Impact Assessment

1.0 Background

- 1.1 All councils have a statutory duty to consult with their residents. In 2003, following acknowledgement that East Northamptonshire Council (ENC) needed to consult more effectively with its communities, a Public Consultation Strategy Working Party was set up to look at consultation with residents (Strategy Committee 22 September 2003, Minute 161 refers).
- 1.2 This Working Party, which included Councillors John Richardson, Michelle Goring and Colin Wright, proposed that a Residents' Panel for the district should be set up as part of ENC's commitment to more effective consultation. The Working Group looked at various options, including that of managing a panel in house, and decided the most cost-effective method was to commission an external contractor to set up, recruit and manage the panel.
- 1.3 Following approval of a growth bid to the Resources Committee (16 February 2004, Min. 346), approval to procure the contract was given by the Strategy Committee (14 June 2004, Min 68) along with adoption of a Public Involvement and Consultation Strategy for the Council.
- 1.4 The first panel was set up by the original contractor in 2004 and four surveys were carried out. The contract was retendered in October 2007, and a completely new panel recruited by the new contractor. This current contract comes to an end in March 2011.

2.0 About the Residents' Panel

- 2.1 The East Northamptonshire Residents' Panel is made up of around 900 people, aged over 18 who are broadly representative of the local population by age, gender, disability, ethnicity and ward area. However we know from experience that we receive few responses to surveys from residents aged under 25 years, especially young men, and that most respondents are from the older age groups.
- 2.2 The panel is currently managed on the Council's behalf by an independent research company, QA Research, based in York. The company designs and mails out the questionnaires and analyses and reports the survey results to ensure confidentiality and independence.
- 2.3 As well as all members being used for full surveys, smaller target groups can be recruited from panel members for more in-depth research and for quick email or telephone surveys.

- 2.4 The panel provides an opportunity to have meaningful consultation with residents that is broadly representative of views across the district, and which gives reliable data for use by services.
- 2.5 Response rates for the panel surveys have been very high for a panel of this type, typically over 80%, which has made it a cost effective way of consulting residents compared to other methods such as one-off surveys.
- 2.6 Various other methods of consulting residents have been tried in that past including using Nene Valley News, with variable success in terms of response rates.

3.0 Use of the Residents' Panel

- 3.1 A total of 8 full surveys have been carried out on the council's behalf since October 2007, when the current panel was recruited. Themes and topics have included:
- Satisfaction with the waste service (2 surveys)
 - Your council in the community
 - Knowledge of our customers
 - A safer & healthier East Northamptonshire
 - Quality of life
 - Satisfaction with services
 - Information on council tax spending
 - Provision of activities for young people
 - The built environment, satisfaction with the district's market towns and tourism
 - Feeling safe
 - Influencing decision-making
 - Information on council services
 - Value for money, overall satisfaction with the council and the services it provides
 - How residents get their information on services and their preferences

As well as these surveys, in depth consultation to inform the new waste contract was also carried out, including a full postal/online survey and 4 focus groups run by the contractor for the Council.

- 3.2 The Residents Panel has also been used to measure a number of Performance Indicators for the Council. A list of these is attached at **Appendix 1**.

4.0 Costs

- 4.1 The original growth funding was subsequently incorporated into the council's budget to facilitate the management and co-ordination of consultation corporately, including the establishment and maintenance of the East Northamptonshire Residents Panel. This budget currently stands at £35,000 per year.
- 4.2 This budget is currently used for Residents' Panel maintenance and 3 full surveys per year. It also funded the annual Place Survey costs in partnership with other Northamptonshire councils, which Members will be aware has now been discontinued.

4.3 Current panel basic annual costs:

3 full surveys per year @ average cost of £7,500, including online versions:	£22,500
Annual panel management fee:	£ 1,100
Printing & distribution of annual Panel Newsletter	<u>£ 250</u>
Annual total:	£23,850

The cost of each survey depends on the number of questions – the more questions included, the more a survey will cost.

- 4.4 A limited number of addition surveys can also be carried out as required, for example the Waste Contract consultation, and paid for separately by the relevant service area.
- 4.5 On top of these annual costs there needs to be regular refreshment of the panel, usually every 3 years, at an extra cost of around £7,500. Members should also bear in mind that if following any retender a different contractor is appointed, then a fresh panel would need to be recruited. The cost of recruiting the current panel was around £11,000 in 2007.

5.0 Statutory duty to consult

- 5.1 Despite the demise of the national Place Survey councils still have a statutory duty to consult with residents. Since April 2009, all councils and some other public bodies have had a legal Duty to Inform, Consult and Involve (Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007). This Duty recognises the importance of listening to local people's views when making any decision on delivering services because by listening the Council can improve its services to better meet their needs. It means that the Council must consider providing information to, consulting with and involving local people in decisions about how it provides services. In doing this it must make sure that it reaches a range of local people affected by the change, including children and young people.
- 5.2 Without the Place Survey, and with no countywide alternative available currently, the Residents' Panel remains the only means left to the Council to enable demographically reliable consultation with residents to be carried out and satisfaction with the Council to be measured. However, it is recognised that in the current financial climate costs must be reduced, and so a range of options are laid out here for consideration.

6.0 Options

- 6.1 Options for the future of consultation are set out at **Appendix 2**.

7.0 Equalities impact assessment

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the impact of any decision to discontinue the Residents' Panel (**Appendix 3**). In summary, this shows that the cessation of the panel would have a medium to low impact on disabled people and those aged 65+ by reducing the opportunities to consult with these groups.

8.0 Recommendation:

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve Option 1: To retender for a new contract for the East Northamptonshire Residents' Panel with a reduction to two surveys per year.

Implications:		
Corporate Outcomes or Other Policy/Priority/Strategy		
Good Quality of Life	<input type="checkbox"/> Good Reputation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Good Value for Money	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High Quality Service Delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>
Effective Partnership Working	<input type="checkbox"/> Strong Community Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>
Effective Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge of our Customers and Communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Employees and Members with the Right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours		<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:		
Decision(s) would be outside the budget or policy framework and require full Council approval		<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial	There are no financial implications at this stage	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There will be financial implications – see paragraph	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is provision within existing budget	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure at a later date	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Decisions may have potential for income generation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk Management	An assessment has been carried out and there are no material risks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Material risks exist and these are recorded at Risk Register Reference - inherent risk score - residual risk score -	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff	There are no additional staffing implications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Additional staff will be required – see paragraph	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equalities and Human Rights	There will be no impact on equality (race, age, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation) or human rights implications	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There will be an impact on equality (see categories above) or human rights implications – see paragraph 7.1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Legal	Power: Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 Local Government Act 1972 Local Government Act 2000	
	Other considerations:	
Background Papers: None		
Person Originating Report: Janet Walls, Communications Manager 01832 742169 jwalls@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk		
Date: 15 October 2010		
CFO		MO
		CX

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 20)

Appendix 1.

Use of Residents' Panel to measure performance 2010-11

Performance measures

- % of respondents who consider abandoned or burnt out cars to be a fairly or very big problem
- % of respondents who are satisfied or better with ENC keeping public land clear of litter and refuse
- % of respondents who consider noisy neighbours or loud parties to be a very big or fairly big problem
- % of respondents who consider vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to vehicles to be a very big or fairly big problem
- Perceptions of anti-social behaviour
- Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police
- Perceptions of parents taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children in the area
- Perceptions that people in the area do not treat one another with respect and dignity
- Understanding of local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police
- Perceptions of drunk or rowdy behaviour as a problem
- Perceptions of drug use or drug dealing as a problem
- % of respondents who feel fairly or very safe in their local area during the day
- % of respondents who feel fairly or very safe in their local area after dark
- % of residents fairly or very satisfied with their local town centre area
- % Self-reported measure of people's overall health and wellbeing
- % of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together
- % General satisfaction with the local area
- % of people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood
- % recognition of ENC brand by Residents' Panel
- % of Residents' Panel fairly satisfied or better with the Council overall
- % of Residents' Panel who say they are very well or fairly well informed about services
- % residents citing the Website as main Council info source
- % of Residents' Panel agreeing they can influence decisions affecting their area
- % of Residents' Panel stating the Council provides good value for money
- % of respondents who are satisfied or better with ENC doorstep recycling

- % of respondents who are satisfied or better with ENC refuse collection
- % Civic participation in the local area
- % of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality
- % Participation in regular volunteering
- % of Residents' Panel satisfied or better with opportunities for participation in local decision-making
- % Agree fair treatment by local services
- % of Residents in the Residents Panel who participate in sport and active recreation

Appendix 2 – Options for ENC Consultation

Option	Impact	Risk	Cost	Annual saving
<p>1. Retender for further 2 year Panel contract with reduction in surveys to 2 per year.</p>	<p>Reduced opportunity to consult; each survey would have to include more questions leading to increased cost per survey.</p>	<p>A different contractor could be appointed, leading to extra costs for recruiting a new panel. Less regular contact with panel members could mean they lose interest. Longer surveys could mean reluctance to complete & a dip in response rates.</p>	<p>Estimated up front costs for new panel if a different contractor is appointed c£12,000</p> <p>Thereafter (or if current contractor is reappointed) c£16,500 per year based on current length of surveys – this would increase if surveys become longer.</p>	<p>Nil for first year if different contractor appointed.</p> <p>Otherwise estimated at c£7,500 per year based on length of current surveys (c29% saving).</p>
<p>2. Discontinue Panel when contract ends in March 2011 & return to commissioning individual consultation exercises as and when required.</p>	<p>Consultation would be less co-ordinated, with increased risk of consultation overload. If current PIs continue an alternative means of measuring needs to be found.</p>	<p>Respondents less likely to be demographically representative.</p>	<p>Example costs–</p> <p>1. 4 Waste Focus Groups:£6,993</p> <p>2. General Place-type survey to achieve 800 responses:£11,950</p> <p>3. Telephone survey to achieve 400 responses:£10,410</p> <p>To carry out 3 surveys per year (1 of each type) would cost c£29,353.</p> <p>Paid for from service budgets.</p>	<p>Nil if 3 surveys carried out a year.</p>

<p>3. In house managed panel</p>	<p>Existing communication channels can be used to recruit panel members, eg NVN, press releases etc. Time consuming & staff resource intensive; currently no staff to do this. As the panel requires refreshing recruitment procedures will need to be repeated. Will need to develop or buy in a database system for recording panel membership. Cost of appointing casual staff to input data ENC staff will have to do quality checks/random tests. Extra SNAP licences needed & training for staff.</p>	<p>High risk that without door knocking and face to face interviews take up will be low. As panel members will be known to the Council this may discourage participation. Self selected, so not representative – risk of skewed representation. Data will have to be analysed and reports written by officers - risk of bias.</p>	<p>Estimated costs (based on original work done by working party & with allowance of 1/3 for increase in costs since 2003): c£22,500, including staff time.</p>	<p>Nil if current contractor re-appointed. c£6000 saving against cost of appointing new contractor.</p>



RESIDENTS' PANEL - EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<p>1. Decision being taken:</p>	<p>Either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To continue Residents' Panel with reduction to 2 surveys per year 2. To discontinue the Residents' Panel & return to commissioning individual consultation exercises as and when required.
<p>2. Name and Job title / role of person completing Initial Screening:</p>	<p>Janet Walls Communications Manager</p>
<p>3. What is the main purpose of the Service or Policy under discussion?</p>	<p>The East Northamptonshire Residents' Panel is the council's main means of consulting with residents.</p>
<p>4. List the main activities of the Service or Policy under discussion</p>	<p>Main means of consultation with residents – 3 surveys annually to measure the perception performance indicators and service plan indicators, plus other questions as required. Themes have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction with the waste service (2 surveys) • Your council in the community • Knowledge of our customers • A safer & healthier East Northamptonshire • Quality of life • Satisfaction with services • Information on council tax spending • Provision of activities for young people • The built environment, satisfaction with the district's market towns and tourism • Feeling safe • Influencing decision-making • Information on council services • Value for money, overall satisfaction with the council and the services it provides • How residents get their information on services and their preferences

5. Who are the main beneficiaries of the Service or Policy under discussion?	The council – enables engagement with residents Residents – chance for representation Members – provides information to help inform decision
6. How is the success of the Service or Policy under discussion measured?	Rate of response to surveys – currently averages over 80%.
7. Are equality monitoring systems for the Service or Policy under discussion in place?	Yes, we can break down the membership and results of the Residents' Panel surveys under standard demographic profile.

Equality Group	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Reason
For both options being considered				
Gender:				
Women/Girls			√	
Men/Boys			√	
Transgender people			√	
Sexual Orientation:				
Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals			√	
Race/Ethnicity:				
White British people			√	
White non-British people (including Irish people)			√	

Equality Group	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Reason
Asian or Asian British people			√	
Black or Black British people			√	
People of mixed heritage			√	
Chinese people			√	
Travellers (Gypsy/Roma/Irish heritage)			√	
People from other ethnic groups			√	
People who do not have English as their first language			√	
Disability:				
There are currently 169 Residents' Panel members who consider themselves disabled – disability not known		√		Reduced opportunity for consultation with disabled people.
Age:				
Older People (60+)		√		Higher proportion of respondents to surveys are aged 60+.
Children and Young People (see guidance for definition)			√	
Religion/Belief:				
Christian			√	
Buddhist			√	
Hindu			√	
Jewish			√	
Muslim			√	
Sikh			√	

Equality Group	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Reason
Other religion (including holding no belief)			√	
Other Potentially Affected Groups				
Rural Isolation - People who live in rural areas e.g isolated geographically, lack of internet access			√	
Socio-economic Exclusion – e.g. people who are on benefits, have low educational attainment, single parents, people living in poor quality housing, people who have poor access to services, the unemployed or any combination of these and the other protected strands			√	
Any other potentially affected groups (<i>please specify</i>) Small local businesses (advertising)			√	
9. If you have indicated that there is a negative impact on any group:				
a) Is that impact against legislation?	No			
b) What is the level of impact?	Medium to low level of impact on enabling disabled & older age groups to have their say.			
10. Could you minimise or remove any negative impact that is of low significance?	Yes – could set up user groups to consult with. Also, NVN is considered a good way to reach 65+ population so is an alternative if retained..			

	Difficulty in reaching this age group increases if both were discontinued.
11. If there is no evidence that the decision promotes equality of opportunity or improved relations, could it be adapted so that it does?	N/A
Head of Service signature	
Date of Initial Screening:	13 October 2010

NOTE

If a negative impact has been highlighted and it is possibly discriminatory and not intended and/or of high impact you must complete a Full EIA.

If not, you should still consider if completing a Full EIA would be helpful in making a thorough assessment.

Full EIA Assessment Form

13. Decision being taken:	
14. Looking back at the Initial Screening Form, in what area(s) are there concerns that the decision being taken could have a negative impact? (✓ all that apply)	
Gender:	
Sexual orientation:	
Race/Ethnicity	
Disability:	✓
Age	✓
Religion/Belief	
Rural isolation	✓
Socio-economic exclusion	✓
Any other affected groups: Small local businesses	✓

15. Summarise the likely negative impacts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced access to all types of information, including from community groups and partners. • 1st 3 affected groups have less access to internet, so would have to buy a newspaper to get information. • Impact on feeling of inclusion in the life of the district for these groups. • Possible impact on small local businesses through reduced opportunities to advertise district-wide.
16. What consultation on this decision has already taken place with groups/individuals from equality target groups?	No specific consultation has been carried out on any decision regarding NVN, but the results of the Residents' Panel Survey April 2010 gave an indication on the value placed on NVN by specific groups of residents.
17. What does it indicate about the negative impact of this decision?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results show that NVN is valued, particularly by the older age groups. • 91% of all respondents said NVN was read by at least 1 – 2 people in their household & 72% said they read all or most of it. • 84% considered fortnightly publication was about right. • 68% rated NVN good or very good, 26% rated it average.
18. What consultation will be conducted/is planned on this decision with equality target groups?	No more planned at present, but further consultation may be needed depending on the decision taken.
19. Once this consultation activity has taken place, indicate the outcomes:	N/A
20. What consultation on this decision has already taken place with staff - including those that have, or will have direct experience of implementing the Policy?	PSTB with service reps and service managers. PSTB with 2 Members.
21. What does it indicate about the negative impact of this decision?	See Appendix 1 Options - impact.

22. What consultation will be conducted/is planned on this decision with staff?	Non further consultation planned.
23. Once this consultation activity has taken place, indicate the outcomes:	N/A
24. What relevant research/data/reports concerning the equality target groups have been used in the planning of this decision and what does it tell us about the negative impact?	None aware of.
25. What research concerning the equality target groups needs to be conducted in relation to this decision?	N/A
26. Once this has been carried out, what does it tell us about the negative impact?	N/A
27. If there are any research gaps, are there any experts/relevant groups that can be contacted to obtain views and evidence on the issues?	No, based on what we know already.
28. Once they have been contacted, what information have we found out?	N/A
29. Is it important that we conduct/commission specific research on this issue? Explain the research required:	N/A
30. If we need to conduct /commission research what are the likely timescales and resource implications / costs involved?	N/A
31. If you require further information, what will you do in the interim to address the negative impact?	N/A
32. List the changes that have been identified which will ensure that the negative impact is addressed:	None at this stage, depends on decision.

33. Have you introduced changes you planned, with any necessary training?	N/A at this stage.
34. Does everyone involved in implementing the decision know and understand what you have done?	Depending on decision, plan of communication will be drawn up.