

# **HOUSEHOLD SURVEY 2016/17**

## **Appendix 4**

### **Considerations & Future Improvements**

## **Context**

The level of response to the 2016/17 Household Survey looks to be by some way the best ever achieved by the Council, whilst also being at the lowest cost. The survey has undoubtedly been successful and provided a new level of insight for the Council. However the level of engagement with different demographics remains a challenge. There are opportunities therefore to:

- Assess whether this level should be the benchmark for future surveys of this nature, or whether the Council would want to extend (or reduce) the response.
- Explore ideas as to how a similar survey could be better communicated and promoted to gain wider engagement and achieve a further improvement in representation.
- Review the internal processes and relationship between service areas identifying topic areas for inclusion in the survey and the Corporate Information team; and that between Corporate Information and Communications in terms of promoting and supporting the survey.
- Determine opportunities and / or appropriateness to support and / or align with major surveys planned by partners.

The intention of the appendix is to act a “starter for ten” in identifying areas for discussion and subsequent actions as opposed to presenting a full solution at this stage. As such for each of the above bullets a number of potential discussion areas have been outlined below. These are not exhaustive lists and will undoubtedly be added to over the coming months.

## **Survey Response**

The Household Survey 2016/17 received 3,357 responses. It is likely that a second reminder email as the survey entered its final figure would have pushed the response rate to past 4,000. The question is therefore posed as to what level of response does the Council value for a survey such as this. Considerations might include:

- What is the Council's overall appetite for either reducing, maintaining, or increasing the scale of a survey response
- How frequently should the Survey be run – annually; or more regularly, perhaps six monthly? How is this balanced with avoiding resident overload?
- Opportunity for greater insight at core postcode area (eg NG34, LN4, 5, 6) and at individual ward level to identify differences and both opportunities and risks for service delivery. This in turn begs the question as to the Council's appetite for greater levels of insight.
- Implications on the analysis time required to process a further step change in response levels – linked to how quick a turnaround is required in the first instance
- Limited cost implications in terms of running the survey itself; the “seldom heard” are increasingly the digital natives of the 16-24 and 25-34 age groups.
- Range of questions to be asked, and particularly the number of free text options included
- Is there a risk of drowning in data as opposed to becoming rich with insight?

## **Expanding Engagement and Representation**

The 2016/17 Household Survey utilised both the Viewpoint Panel and the Garden Waste customer base (excluding those opting-out of additional contact by the Council). Whilst providing a base of some 14,000 residents these channels also have some built in biases:

- The Viewpoint Panel largely excludes any representation from the half of the district's population who are aged under 50.
- The Garden Waste scheme whilst reaching 13,000 residents again selects to some extent from a limited range of socio-economic groups, and is less likely to cover the younger demographics.

Both of these groups should continue to be valued however the range of engagement needs to be broadened.

### **Schools' opportunity**

The 16/17 survey contacted the joint sixth forms in the district after the survey commenced, but did elicit a proactive and supportive response from the Kesteven and Sleaford High Sixth Form (part of the Sleaford Joint Sixth Form). Leading on from this opportunities could include:

- Engagement with the joint sixth forms in the district should be expanded and formalised. In 2016/17 this was undertaken after the survey had been released and was largely reliant upon personal contacts. Improved planning and advance contact should yield a further step change in engagement with this youngest of our demographic groups
- Likewise this could be used as a model for promoting any future major survey through school (primary and secondary) newsletters, most of which are now electronic, to reach a wider and younger adult (eg parents) demographic.

### **Social Media**

- Review should also be given to how the survey is promoted through social media; this should include ensuring timing of social media posts coincides with those periods when we know our target groups are mostly likely to be using Social Media, as opposed to a time that is most convenient for Comms team.

### **Prize Draw**

- Was considered at a late stage prior to the release of this year's survey. Proper consideration could be given to the pros and cons of a prize draw as an incentive for completion along with the mechanics of how it would actually work and be administered.

### **Survey Name**

- On a more prosaic level the Council may wish to use term Residents' Survey as opposed to Household Survey. The current name can give the incorrect impression that only a single response per household is accepted, whereas in reality the Council is interested in gathering as many views from as wide a demographic mix as possible.

### **Businesses**

- Working with major employers in the district to promote the survey to their workforce.

## **Process**

There are a number of internal process improvements / elements that could be considered.

- Alignment of questions with the NK Plan Priorities; recognising that survey is likely to have a different focus whenever it is run
- Consideration as to structure and format of questions and how the information provided will be actually used – avoiding gathering data just for the sake of it
- Increased focus and alignment with the wider corporate communications' calendar; and referencing with other smaller surveys that may be planned to ensure a fully joined up approach
- Review of roles and responsibilities particularly between Corporate Information and Communications teams

## **Wider Partner Opportunities**

The Executive Summary highlighted the level of response to the NK Household Survey as compared with some recent key pan Lincolnshire surveys. The Council has demonstrated the potential reach that it can achieve and therefore consideration could be given to

- Liaising with key partners (NHS, Police, LCC in particular) to understand their major survey schedule
- For key surveys only (unlikely to be more than 3 or 4 in any year) consideration of
  - The Council using its customer databases to promote the survey
  - The Council aligning, where timing allows, to promote the survey alongside the Residents' Survey
  - The Council including any key question(s) from partner(s) as part of the Residents' Survey

Clearly there are many factors that would need to be considered including the risk of overloading residents, and additional data handling by the Council. However given the context and long term implication for the residents of the District of decisions arising from for example the consultation survey on proposals for a Mayoral Combined Authority, or that for the NHS Lincolnshire Sustainability and Transformation Plan; there are strong arguments for increased involvement and response rates for residents of NK.