

North Somerset Council

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE ORGANISATION POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE OF MEETING: 16 JULY 2020

SUBJECT OF REPORT: YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT – UPDATE AND CONSULTATION ANALYSIS

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: GEMMA DANDO, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT

KEY DECISION: NO

REASON:

Not for decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel to review the emerging results from the Your Neighbourhood consultation and engagement which ran from 13th February 2020 to 7th May 2020, including the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on the consultation and engagement process.
2. For Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel to consider the role of the panel in developing and shaping the strategies and service design which will lead on from the consultation results.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel received a report on 3rd March 2020 which contained details of the Your Neighbourhood consultation and engagement, which was running from 13th February 2020 to 7th May 2020.

The services being consulted on were as follows:

- i) Garden waste – to help the Council to shape the new garden waste collection service and options for home and community composting.
- ii) Leisure and sport centres – to help the council to understand the way North Somerset's leisure and sport centres are currently used and how people would like to see them used in the future.
- iii) Libraries – to help the council to understand what is important to people about library services and how we can ensure they are fit for the future.
- iv) Parks and open spaces - as the Council reviews the parks and open spaces maintenance contract, to help understand which parks and open spaces people use and how they would like to see them used in the future.

- v) Street cleansing - as the Council reviews the street cleaning contract, to help to shape how it will look in the future.

The Your Neighbourhood consultation and engagement was designed in a way that aimed to understand which services are most valued by local people, and to understand what opportunities there are to work in partnership locally to enhance what the council is able to offer.

The methodology for the consultation was to undertake a wide variety of consultation and engagement which included:

1. An online survey option which will be widely promoted to all stakeholders and within which everyone can have their say about the way they use and experience services.
2. Face-to-face engagement via public meetings and through Town and Parish Councils
3. Targeted additional engagement to encourage participation from people who may not usually engage with the council on consultations

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant effect on the ability for the full engagement to take place as part of the Your Neighbourhood consultation. Two drop-in sessions and two public meetings took place up until the 12th March, but after this date the council made the decision to cancel the rest of the planned face to face engagement, and the country went into lockdown on 20th March. The online consultation continued for the whole consultation period and 1992 people responded online.

Because there was a high level of responses from the online survey and some interesting feedback from the face to face engagement that did manage to take place, the council proposes to use the results received (and which are outlined in this report) in order to start the service strategy and development work as planned, and find ways of engaging with residents and stakeholders in the development phase, particularly where groups were not well represented in the consultation results.

This report highlights the emerging results from the Your Neighbourhood consultation and provides an outline of the service work to follow.

2. POLICY

This delivers emerging policies from within the Corporate Plan.

3. DETAILS

The Council is committed to working in partnership to help North Somerset to be a sustainable and fair place to live, work and visit. The council will work alongside residents, businesses, partners and other stakeholders to create a place where everyone has the opportunity to access quality education, jobs and housing.

The emerging corporate plan gives real emphasis to giving people the opportunity to work with the Council to shape the future of North Somerset and harness the great opportunity to achieve more for the people and place. At the beginning of 2020 the Council was looking in detail at how neighbourhood services are run and how it can ensure that they are fit for the future.

In order to develop the thinking and strategies for important neighbourhood services, the Council was keen to seek the views of stakeholders on how services are delivered and

where future priorities should be focussed – this was packaged together in the “Your Neighbourhood” consultation and engagement which was launched on 13th February 2020 for a 12-week consultation and engagement period.

One of the focusses of the consultation was to explore local ideas about how the council can work better with local people, local communities and other local stakeholders to make these valued services as efficient and sustainable as possible. For example, by pooling resources, creating delivery partnerships and taking advantage of income generating opportunities.

The intention of the consultation was twofold:

1. to gather quality information about local communities and their neighbourhood services, and use the information to inform the strategic, policy and delivery framework for those services.
2. to implement a new way of working with local councils, local communities, businesses and other stakeholders that is collaborative and which offers opportunities for people to influence what happens in their neighbourhoods.

The consultation did not manage to deliver in full against the aspirations due to the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown, particularly with regard to implementing a new way of working with local councils, communities and businesses through the engagement process. Council officers and local stakeholders were focussed on supporting the most vulnerable through lockdown and delivering essential local services and the resources allocated to the consultation and engagement were redeployed. However, the online survey remained in place and 1992 people responded to consultation – the majority of these were in the first 4 weeks before lockdown came into force.

Financial context

The Council has been under significant financial pressure in recent years – the population is growing, there are more people who are requiring support from essential council services for older people and children, and the money available from the government to support councils has significantly reduced. Despite the challenges, North Somerset has been able to find opportunities to continue to deliver quality services to residents.

The financial challenge is now even more challenging due to the cost to the Council of Covid-19. In order to continue to deliver some of the local, neighbourhood services that people value, they will need to be delivered in a very different way in the future. The council will need to work more alongside communities and volunteers, generate more income, create more partnerships, make services as efficient as possible and potentially reduce some of the things that are currently delivered.

Draft consultation results

Officers have analysed the numeric and multiple-choice options from all five strands of the consultation (Garden Waste, Leisure and Sports Centres, Libraries, Parks and Open Spaces, Street Cleansing). There were a lot of free-text responses which are still being analysed as this process can take a lot of time, and there were a number of opportunities throughout the consultations for people to write what they wanted to say.

This report provides an overview of the draft results, with an opportunity at the panel meeting to ask questions. The full consultation report will be produced and published in coming weeks when the full data analysis has been completed.

Garden Waste draft results

- 1,420 responses and almost all had a garden.
- Over 90% use the kerbside collection compared to about approx. 55% across the district so heavily weighted to topic interest.
- About half will continue to use the scheme once charges are implemented.
- 65% would feel encouraged to do so if there is a first year discount.
- For those that do not continue, they will use other means such as dropping off at the recycling centre, home composting, putting in their residual waste, burning or dumping. Many did not know what they would do.
- For those that continue to use the scheme 58% would prefer an ongoing direct debit, 42% a one-off payment.
- Strong interest in home composting and schemes such as community composting but less likely in smaller houses and some areas.

Leisure and sports centres draft results

- 662 responses.
- Over 70% using a leisure or sports facility in the last year, reasons mainly for swimming, fitness classes and using the gym.
- Three most important things in a leisure centre being affordable, clean and having good quality facilities.
- 36% who used a council leisure centre thought it was good or very good and 46% okay.
- Higher levels of satisfaction at Hutton Moor and Scotch Horn.
- Main reasons for dissatisfaction include cleanliness and outdated facilities.
- Most travelled by private car or walked to the leisure centre.
- 96% thought the council should provide leisure and sports facilities.
- Reasons for not using council owned facilities include the offer, lack of time, too expensive and not interested.

Libraries draft results

- 79% used a library or Home Library service in the last year.
- Most important parts of the library were borrowing free books, using free reservations, using the library as a comfortable, safe space to spend time and accessing help and support through library staff.
- Respondents like the convenience, the staff, the choice of material and the atmosphere.
- Half accessed help and/or support including general help/advice, help with ordering books, IT help, local information or help with council services.
- Main ways of travelling to libraries was walking or private car.
- Reasons for not using the library were not having a reason, lack of time, lack of choice, issues with opening hours.

Parks and open spaces draft results

- 95% have visited a park and/or open space with over 20% daily and over 50% monthly.
- Almost 60% are 'very satisfied or satisfied', less than 10% not satisfied – this differs by park/open space.
- Main ways of travelling to park and/or open space was walking or private car.
- Most important aspects were mental health/well-being and being with nature/interacting with wildlife, least important were dog walking and taking part in organised sports.
- Most valued were having a welcoming, clean and tidy space safe. Least valued was water features.

- Most important maintenance was bin emptying, safe play areas and maintenance of paths. Least valued was taking care of short grass, sports pitches, flowers/shrubs.
- Over half of respondents supported stopping strimming around obstacles and reducing leaf collection to save money. There was significantly less support for having few dog and litter bins.
- About two thirds supported other options for future delivery of services.

Street cleansing draft results

- About 40% think their area is clean with 25% thinking it is okay. 13% think it is very dirty. Main issues are dog fouling, litter and blocked drains – though these differ by area.
- Emptying dog bins, removing litter and ensuring clean drains are most important. Removal of weeds and leaf fall and graffiti are less important.
- 75% are willing to keep their area clean and 50% would take part in community led activities. There was an appetite to help.
- Over 90% said it was reasonable to use on the spot fines for fly tipping and dog fouling. Just 6% said it as reasonable for when household bins are left out at the wrong time.

A presentation will be provided at the panel meeting to show the results.

Next Steps

Complete the consultation report to include the free-text responses in the surveys, the face to face and other written submissions and feedback to the consultation.

The consultation results will be used to shape service strategies for libraries, leisure and sports centres, waste and parks; to form the service specification for the new street cleansing and parks maintenance delivery; and to inform how the garden waste collection service charges are implemented and to guide the work on home and community composting.

Further engagement will take place on the individual workstreams, especially where there is an identified gap in consultation responses due to the engagement not fully taking place – for example young people were not well represented in the consultation responses so further engagement work will take place with young people as part of the strategy and service development plans.

A further update on this work will be provided at the next panel meeting and it is proposed that working groups of members from the CCO panel and across the full member group are set up to influence the specific strategy and service development work in each area.

4. CONSULTATION

The consultation rans between 13 February 2020 and 7 May 2020. A consultation report reviewing all feedback from online and face to face interactions will be produced at the end of the consultation period – this is underway.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Your Neighbourhood consultation and the resulting work is being delivered using existing resources within the service teams.

Costs

Up to £1000 was budgeted for venue hire and refreshments (this was lower due to the cancellation of many of the face-to-face events).

Funding

Existing revenue fund budgets

6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS

Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires an authority "to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness" ("the best value duty"). It also obliges the authority to consult certain groups of persons "for the purpose of deciding how to fulfil the duty" (s.3(2)). The Your Neighbourhood consultation comprehensively delivers this duty.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant climate change and environmental implications of undertaking the Your Neighbourhood consultation.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

The Your Neighbourhood consultation has been assessed as low risk.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The Your Neighbourhood consultation has been designed to ensure that it is accessible by all equality groups and protected characteristics. There was a plan in place to comprehensively engage with organisations representing equalities, however this plan was not fully delivered and only one session with the disability forum took place. Engagement with representative groups will be prioritise in the next phase of the strategy and service development pieces of work.

10. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

The Your Neighbourhood consultation is being delivered within existing resources.

11. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None

AUTHOR

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None