

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 7 December 2015

Portfolio: Policy and Resources
Subject: **Recording Customer Satisfaction**
Report of: Director of Finance and Resources
Strategy/Policy: Communications
Corporate Objective: Strong and Inclusive Communities

Purpose:

This report assesses the effectiveness of the biennial Residents' Survey and outlines an alternative approach to recording and analysing customer satisfaction.

Executive summary:

One of the ways that the Council has previously gauged the level of resident satisfaction with our services is through a biennial Residents' Survey, which has been running since 2000.

The introduction of systems thinking, using the Vanguard Method since 2013, has required a clear understanding of what matters to customers and their personal journeys. This combined with the rise of social media, which allows people to give detailed and timely feedback on services has brought into question the value of a lot of the top level satisfaction data that the Residents' Survey provides.

This report proposes an alternative option for gathering useful data on resident satisfaction.

Recommendations:

That the Executive agrees to replace the Residents' Survey with quarterly customer satisfaction surveys, focusing on service areas that have been through a Vanguard intervention.

Reason:

To ensure that customer satisfaction data is recorded and used in the most effective way.

Cost of proposals:

There are no significant costs associated with the proposals.

Appendices: None
Background papers: None

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Executive Briefing Paper

Date: 7 December 2015

Subject: Recording Customer Satisfaction

Briefing by: Director of Finance and Resources

Portfolio: Policy and Resources

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this report is to look at the Council's use of the biennial residents' survey with regard to whether it still meets the Council's needs, and provides a true reflection of the levels of satisfaction felt by Fareham residents.
2. The report then proposes an alternative option for gathering data on resident satisfaction.

BACKGROUND

3. One of major ways that the Council has historically gaged resident satisfaction with our services is through the biennial Residents' Survey. It has been running since 2000 and was started as part of a compulsory government initiative.

Resident Survey Methodology

4. The methodology of the survey has evolved and become more robust over time. For recent surveys, a random sample of 4020 residents (268 from each ward) was selected from the Electoral Register. Selected households were then sent a self-completion questionnaire addressed to the occupier so that anyone living at that address could complete and return the survey. In 2013, we received 1291 responses in total, which represents a 32% return. This is a good return rate for this type of postal survey.
5. A number of questions, focusing on top level satisfaction with different services across the Council, would be carried over across different surveys to allow the tracking of satisfaction over time. In addition to these regular questions there would be ad hoc questions focusing on specific topics e.g. expressing support for the Council's approach to planning for Welborne.

Costs of Residents' Survey

6. The following table outlines the costs associated with the production of the residents' survey:

Activity	Cost
Initial Design	£1000
Design updates	£300
Printing	£200
Return paid envelopes	£200
Postage	£1900
Temporary Staff	£350
Total	£3950

Benefits of the Residents' Survey

7. The Residents' Survey has evolved over time and has proven useful for:
- Providing a general overview of resident satisfaction with the Council as a whole.
 - Getting the views of residents on specific questions e.g. Welborne
 - Tracking general satisfaction over time

A changing culture

8. Since 2013, the Council has been implementing systems thinking using the Vanguard Method. This has involved a fundamental rethink of service provision through the eyes of the customer. The key to success is to design services "outside in" from the customer's point of view, rather than "inside out" for the benefit of the organisation. To facilitate this redesign, a clear understanding of what matters to the customers and their personal journey is needed.
9. To help achieve this, customers are asked during service redesigns what a good service looks like to them, how satisfied they are with the service they used (on a scale of one to ten) and how it could be improved further.
10. In addition to these organisational changes, social media has allowed more customers to engage quickly and directly about their experiences with our services over the last few years. In this context, a biennial residents' survey appears not only slow, but struggles to provide in depth data about customer journeys.

Residents' survey satisfaction

11. Analysing the residents' survey from the perspective of the changing cultures outlined above, a number of limitations of the Residents' Survey become clear:
- It only provides you with a snapshot of satisfaction on a single day within a 2 year period.
 - Residents are often asked to express their satisfaction with services they may never or rarely use.

- It does not allow us to engage in direct conversations with customers about their experiences of our services.
- The strategic nature of the questions loses sight of individual customer experiences.
- It does not provide you with specific information about how services can be improved.
- The questions asked are not open enough to understand what really matters to the customer.

An alternative way forward

12. Taking into account these drawbacks and the changing culture we operate in, any alternative system of recording satisfaction would have to:
 - Be statistically robust i.e. have a valid sample and number of responses
 - Be easy to collect data for i.e. simple questions and not too time intensive with regard to data collection
 - Be easily replicated across different service areas
 - Be simple to analyse and interpret
 - Truly reflect the views of Fareham residents

Satisfaction survey option

13. It is proposed that a satisfaction survey, based on a simple template which can be replicated across numerous departments be used:
14. **Question 1:** Please rate the service you received from 1 to 10, with 1 being really bad, 5 average and 10 really good.
15. **Question 2:** If we didn't get 10, what can we do next time to make sure we do?
16. This approach builds on the work that took place during the Vanguard redesigns. It allows us to track satisfaction levels and also provides useful data regarding how areas could be improved further within the individual services of the Council.
17. Specific questions about issues such as Welborne, which were previously asked in the Residents' Survey, can be covered in standalone consultations in the future. Robust samples and results can still be achieved using a combination of tools, such as the E-Panel, postal surveys and online surveys, depending on the nature of the consultation.

Respondent size and data collection

18. The number of respondents needed to provide sound statistical data depends on the size of the service, as well as how robust we want the results to be. Some services only deal with a small number of customers whereas others deal with thousands per year. With this in mind, the robustness of results needs to be balanced against the resources available to collect data. This means that the number of respondents required will vary depending on the size of service and the number of customers it has.

19. For this type of customer satisfaction survey, we would normally be looking to achieve a confidence level of 90% and a margin of error 5% either way. This means that if 70% of respondents gave a service a score of 7 out of 10, we can be 90% sure that between 65% and 75% of service users would score the service 7 out of 10. To achieve this level of accuracy we need to achieve a high proportion (33%+) of responses from the total number of customers.
20. Some services such as Benefits and Building Maintenance deal with thousands of customers each year. To achieve this level of accuracy on a continual basis would prove to be highly resource intensive.

A light touch approach

21. It could be possible to adopt a more light touch approach to data collection, which would still provide us with a good indication of satisfaction levels and useful data for managers to use.
22. Collecting data over one week per quarter, would give us useful and regular indicators of service satisfaction levels and relatively timely data on areas for improvement which could be used by managers. The approach to the response sizes would be flexible depending on the service areas' level of customer demand:
23. **Service areas with high levels of customer demand:** aim to achieve a confidence level of 90% and a margin of error of 5%, from customers within a single week.
24. **Service areas with lower levels of customer demand:** the focus would be on getting satisfaction surveys completed by all customers using a service within one single week every quarter.
25. It is anticipated that officers in the relevant service area would ideally contact the customer by telephone however, if this was not appropriate other methods such as email or face-to-face meetings could be used.
26. Whilst acknowledging that the approach outlined above is not statistically perfect, it is robust enough to give us a useful and timely indicator of customer satisfaction levels, without overburdening services with too much extra work.

Analysis and reporting

27. Quarterly results reports, which include qualitative data on areas for improvement, could be provided to managers on a quarterly basis by the Customer Engagement Team. More in depth analysis looking at satisfaction over time across different departments, as well as what the overall satisfaction trends are telling us will be provided by the Customer Engagement Team in an annual customer satisfaction report.
28. Whilst acknowledging that the results would not be as statistically robust as they could be, this method would still provide a workable balance between managing resources and providing a regular indicator of satisfaction levels. It would also provide regular qualitative data on how service areas could be improved.

Conclusion

29. Over the last fifteen years, the Residents' Survey has proven to be a useful tool for gaining top level satisfaction data, as well as asking questions on specific topics such as Welborne. However, the Vanguard Method requires a clearer understanding of what

matters to customers and their personal journeys. A new approach is needed to gather this type of in depth and timely data. It is hoped that the customer satisfaction approach outlined in this report will achieve this.