

# Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**2 February 2023**

<b>Subject:</b>	Resident Engagement
<b>Director:</b>	Kim Bromley-Derry – Managing Director / Commissioner
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Kate Ashley – Strategic Lead: Service Improvement Sarah Sprung – Senior Lead Officer: Service Improvement Claire Sanderson – Lead Officer: Service Improvement

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon the new framework for resident consultation and engagement.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Ensuring that the views of residents inform our service planning and decision making is important to officers and members across the Council.
- 2.2 Regular engagement and communication with residents is a cornerstone of the Council's role and is a key driver of producing better local outcomes. Improved engagement with residents' forms part of the recommendations emerging from Sandwell MBC's recent inspections. The Council undertook its first residents' survey in 1988 but has only occasionally repeated this exercise, the last time being in 2017 to









support development of Vision 2030. Regular consultation on budgetary plans has not been conducted with residents since 2010, although annual consultation is carried out with non-domestic rate payers.

2.3 Such major surveys are a critical element of an effective performance management framework and when undertaken regularly provide vital trend information. This intelligence can be used to inform service design and strategic decision making. Over time they can:

- Demonstrate good or poor service performance (e.g. benchmarking).
- Provide an objective case for changes to policy and practice.
- Counter predetermined solutions, challenge assumptions and practice, organisational culture and stimulate corporate working.
- Facilitate engagement as democratic right.
- Offer transparency, and the potential for scrutiny, local voice, citizen research and co-production.
- Help us better understand how various personal identities, (such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender, disability, etc.), shape resident experiences.
- Help us to understand how equal, diverse and inclusive we are being as an organisation.
- Help understand patterns, preferences and choices of our diverse communities.
- Help us better understand the diversity of our residents and their experiences of inclusion.
- Help understand patterns, preferences and choices.
- Give insight into needs, otherwise perhaps hidden or assumed, and future demand.
- Illuminate specific place issues (the borough is not 'mono').
- Enable targeting of both groups and places.
- Support external funding bids.
- Assist with partnership working.
- Gain wider credibility for the local authority.



### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Consultation and engagement with our residents has a positive impact on all strategic outcomes in the Corporate Plan, it enables informed decisions to be taken when developing and planning services.
	
	
	
	
	

### 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 In Spring 2022 Leadership Team approved proposals to undertake a resident wellbeing and perception survey and a separate budget consultation. They also requested that officers develop proposals for a longer-term approach to resident consultation and engagement.
- 4.2 In May 2022 the Council commissioned Enventure, a market research agency, to conduct a borough-wide residents' survey to support evidence-based policy, service delivery and performance management. This was a large-scale quantitative survey covering several themes and particularly aligned to LGA Benchmarking resident satisfaction surveys (June 2022 was used).
- 4.3 The survey was undertaken by telephone, with an adult sample that was designed to be representative of the wider borough by gender, age, ethnicity, employment status and geography. Provision was made for communicating with typically under-represented, or 'hard-to-reach' groups and respondents whose first language is not English through community groups and networks and the use of translators and interpreters.



- 4.4 The residents' survey secured 1,062 responses, which is a sample large enough to provide statistically highly reliable findings at the borough level and sufficient responses to examine the results by sub-groups including at town level. These will be analysed in detail by the Research & Intelligence Team to inform a programme of dissemination within the Council and more widely.
- 4.5 The Budget Consultation was also delivered by Enventure and followed the same format as the Resident Survey.
- 4.6 Results from the resident survey and the budget consultation were included with the Q2 Performance Report presented to this Committee on 12 January 2023.

## 5. Tenant Engagement

5.1 The council undertakes comprehensive resident engagement which includes:

- The establishment of a Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group (TSLG) made up of 7 Tenants and 2 Leaseholders who have so far reviewed 2 service areas in housing and are about to embark on their 3<sup>rd</sup> piece of work
- The Tenant Audit Group set up this year and after undergoing training over the summer they recently completed their first Audit and some of their recommendations will be being implemented by Housing starting this month
- The Neighbourhood Partnerships teams are working with a variety of groups across the borough on the issues that concern them, including drop-ins, surveys about the use of parks and other open spaces, setting up tenants and residents' groups, fundraising
- Tenants have also contributed to consultations on the Annual Report to Tenants, potential changes to the style of the Housing webpages and a tenant conference being planned for 2023
- Neighbourhood Partnerships Officers continue to take an Asset Based Approach to support residents to bring about positive change in their local areas
- To create a baseline for Tenant Satisfaction, MEL Research has undertaken a comprehensive survey of a sample cohort of tenants to check levels of satisfaction with the Housing Service.



- There has also been a Tenant Celebration Event, Tenants have been involved in codesigning the Tenant Engagement Model

5.2 To further improve tenant engagement, the service is also:-

- Planning a tenant newsletter
- Constantly looking to identify other opportunities for tenants to influence housing services
- Aiming to conduct an annual tenant survey in June 2023

## 6. Children and Young People Engagement

6.1 Sandwell carries out a variety of engagement activity with children and young people including:

- The development and co-design with young people of a young people's corporate plan.
- The management of a Youth Forum (the SHAPE Forum) - which involves young people in development of services in Sandwell. Members provide a voice for young people across Sandwell and have been consistently used as a consultative body for various initiatives concerning young people.
- A Care Leavers' Forum to listen to the views of care leavers and to feed those into the Council's strategic planning.
- The deployment of a SHAPE survey. The SHAPE survey consults with children and young people ranging from the age of 8 – 18 years on the five themes:-
  - Staying Safe
  - Being Healthy
  - Enjoying and Achieving
  - Making a Positive Contribution
  - Economic Wellbeing

6.2 In 2022, an online survey was developed for Primary School children from years 5 and 6 and Secondary School children from years 7 – 13. The link to the survey was distributed to all Primary, Secondary, Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in Sandwell. The survey results have been shared with Council Directors, Cabinet Members, the wider workforce of the council and partner agencies including schools, Police, NHS, CCG and the voluntary sector.



6.3 A key element of sharing the survey results across the Council and with key stakeholders is to understand what work is already taking place to address issues identified in the survey results. Following this process any gaps in addressing these key issues will be highlighted and recommendations put forward to relevant agencies.

## 7. The Future of Resident Consultation and Engagement

7.1 Following Leadership Team's request to develop proposals for future activity in this area, a Council Wide Group [the Group] was established, with key individuals from across the nine directorates who are involved or have an interest in consultation and engagement. Membership of this group includes a representative from the Equality and Diversity Team, the lead officer for tenant engagement, and the lead for engaging with children and young people.

7.2 Ensuring that consultation and engagement activity offers opportunity for all of our residents to participate, and that this intelligence is fed into the council's decision-making is paramount and is a central consideration for the Group. Particular areas of focus include: -

- Ensuring people with one or more protected characteristics have the same opportunity to participate and we put in place inclusion measures to encourage and enable residents to access our surveys, with reasonable adjustments if needed.
- That the data gathering ensures we are asking the right questions to understand what our diverse residents think about our services and about their experiences of living and working in Sandwell. In particular, what difficulties/challenges/barriers they have or are experiencing as a Sandwell resident with one or more protected characteristic(s).

7.3 The Group mapped current activity across the Council, researched best practice and developed options for Leadership Team to consider.

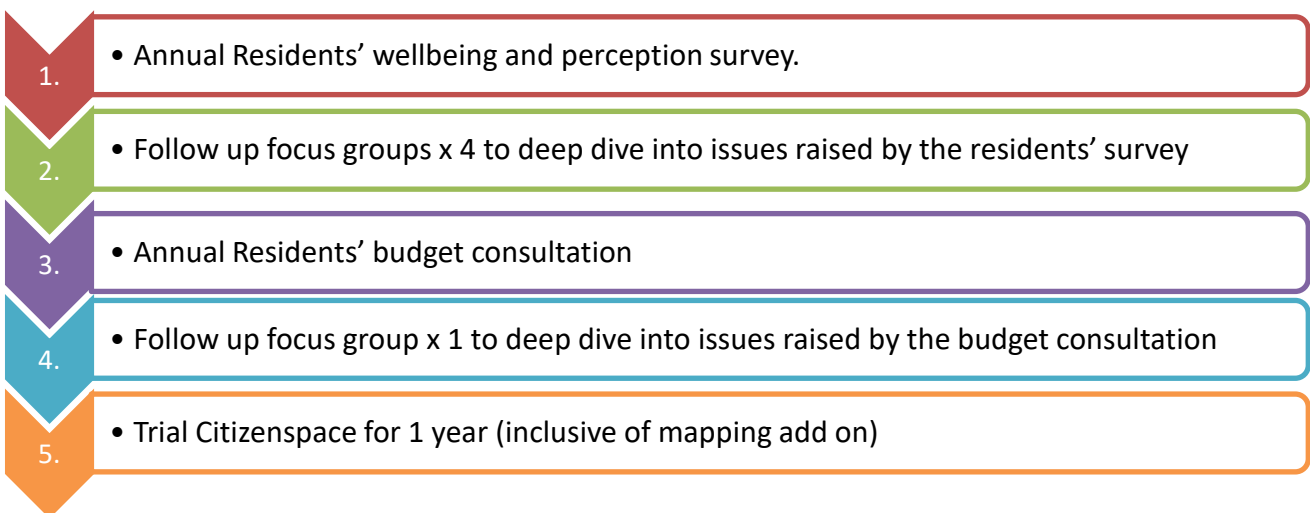
7.4 At its meeting on 22 November 2022 Leadership Team considered the findings of the Group together with the options for the future structure of resident engagement.



- 7.5 Leadership Team felt that the results of resident survey and the budget consultation in 2022 had a constructive impact on the Council. Positive feedback boosted staff morale, and the wider results allowed learning opportunities and direction for how we could improve. The findings from both surveys provided a foundation for the 2023/24 business planning process over Autumn 2022.
- 7.6 With this in mind, Leadership Team were committed to building on the foundation established in 2022 and approved proposals for a corporate approach to consultation and engagement, ensuring a consistency in approach to activity across the Council and maximising opportunities to share our collective intelligence.

## Resident Consultation & Engagement Framework

7.7 The framework agreed by Leadership Team is set out below: -



7.8 Annual Residents Survey and follow up focus groups: committing to running an annual survey will allow the Council to build its intelligence, track and compare progress and understand how our services are perceived by residents. The survey will continue to be based on the LGA benchmark survey which allows us to understand our performance compared to other local authorities which then provides the opportunity to learn from other Councils and deliver improvements locally. The LGA benchmark questions will be supplemented with further questions to boost our local intelligence. For example, in 2022 we added questions relating to climate change, digital connectivity and social isolation.



The focus for the follow up focus groups will be determined from the survey results and will allow us to develop our understanding of residents' views in key areas.

Specific requirements in relation to a representative sample of the borough's population will be set for this activity, meaning that the sample size will be circa 1,100.

7.9 Annual Residents Budget Consultation and follow up focus group: year on year the Council has to make difficult decisions about where to prioritise spend. With increasing demand and a reduction in resources to deliver services, information about what is important to our residents and what they value the most is a vital part of the budget setting process. The follow up focus group will allow us to further understand residents' views in specific areas.

Specific requirements in relation to a representative sample of the borough's population will be set for this activity, meaning that the sample size will be circa 1,100.

7.10 Citizenspace: Citizenspace offers a platform to consult consistently and visibly, to feedback on outcomes and importantly to be transparent. It is used by many local authorities and government agencies to manage consultation activity. The diagrams below detail how we will be able to utilise Citizenspace.



#### Inform the public

Publish key documents, notices or policy drafts



#### Consult online

Build convenient, time-saving response forms



#### Get responses

Collect input from the public and stakeholders



#### Analyse results

Export, report and feed back on your findings



Build beautiful, informative maps that ask people questions



Collect geospatial responses from citizens and stakeholders



Analyse, filter, report and export your data in one place



Publish responses as data for transparency and accountability





As part of the package we will be purchasing the mapping/spatial add on to enable us to run spatial consultations via this platform. Given the statutory consultation requirements associated with developing our own Local Plan, Citizenspace offers us a vehicle for delivering consultation requirements in this area.

Citizenspace is a digital platform and we appreciate that not all residents are digitally active or will need support to access digital content. There is a facility on Citizenspace to print out surveys so paper copies could be provided in community settings or directly to individuals. There is also potential to translate material to increase accessibility and reach to the varied communities within Sandwell.

Citizenspace can be utilised to support the work of overview and scrutiny, ensuring the views of residents are easily able to be fed into activity.

Some local authorities run Citizenspace with partners (for example CCG Hospital Trust, Voluntary Sector) there could be opportunity to grow into a Sandwell Citizenspace.

Running all of our consultation and engagement activity through Citizenspace offers many positives. It will allow us to have a holistic view of all activity, therefore minimising the risk of duplicate or similar surveys being run, it will also allow us to quality check activity and minimise any reputational damage to the Council and it will allow us to share intelligence and maximise its use in developing and planning service provision.

- 7.11 Along with adopting this framework for consultation and engagement, corporate standards for consultation and engagement are being developed. This work is being co-designed by the Corporate Consultation and Engagement Working Group which will help to ensure its corporate ownership as well ensuring that it sets the standards expected of our interactions with residents. Another emphasis for this work is to ensure there is equality of opportunity for all of our residents to participate in consultation and engagement activity.
- 7.12 A communications and training plan is being developed to promote Citizenspace and ensure it becomes imbedded into organisational culture.



7.13 Overall, this framework offers comprehensive and consistent consultation and engagement opportunities with residents. Taking a corporate approach to this activity ensures opportunities for shared learning are maximised and that we take intelligent, informed decisions in relation to the planning and provision of future services.

## 8 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	<p>There was no corporate budget allocation for resident engagement. Given the priority Leadership Team have placed on this work and its value across the Council, proposals are being put forward for the cost of this activity to be recognised as a corporate budget pressure.</p> <p>Where activity aligns to health and wellbeing a proportion of the cost will be met from the Public Health Grant.</p>
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<p>Where we collect information from residents, we need to ensure that we are GDPR compliant in managing this data.</p>
<b>Risk:</b>	<p>If residents' views are not sought in relation to their perception of the borough and what is important to them service planning and resources may fail to address key issues.</p>
<b>Equality:</b>	<p>It is imperative that any consultation and engagement opportunities offer all communities the opportunity to participate. Collaborative working with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team will help to ensure that the Resident Consultation and Engagement Framework offers all residents the opportunity to participate.</p> <p>Consistent consultation and engagement activity will also support the council's Equality Impact Assessment process, helping us to make more informed decisions to benefit residents.</p>
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	<p>The residents survey will retain a focus on health and wellbeing, providing valuable data and insight into residents' wellbeing.</p>



<p><b>Social Value:</b></p>	<p>The consultation and engagement framework will provide the opportunity for us to increase our intelligence in areas such as employment, skills and training. It will also provide the opportunity to consult with businesses to develop our understanding of needs in that area.</p> <p>In addition, there will be opportunity in the tendering process for the residents' survey and the budget consultation to encourage companies applying to give consideration as to how they may be able to add social value.</p>
<p><b>Climate Change:</b></p>	<p>The resident survey in 2022 sought to improve the Council's intelligence about residents understanding of climate change and what activity they did within their household to support the green agenda. There will be further opportunity going forward to support intelligence in this area.</p> <p>Again, there will be opportunities in the tendering process for the resident survey and the budget consultation for companies to demonstrate how they can deliver on requirements whilst also upholding the Council's commitment to 'green in everything we do'.</p> <p>Procuring Citizenspace, an online platform, offers a level of environmental efficiency, reducing the need to print surveys and transport in distribution.</p>

## 9 Background Papers

[Q2 Performance Report - SMB 12 January 2023](#)

[Appendix 6 to Q2 Performance Report to SMB 12 January 2023](#)

