

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14 December 2022

Voice of Warwickshire residents' panel - Project Update

Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. Reviews the interim report on the delivery of the Voice of Warwickshire project and notes the contribution the residents' panel provides to the ongoing development of Council strategy.
2. Considers how the panel can be used to inform the work of the Committee and support an evidence-based approach to policy development.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Cabinet has previously approved (October 2020) the creation of a Warwickshire residents' panel to help inform the Council's policy making. This would deliver a specific action set out in the Customer Experience Strategy but, more broadly, provide a mechanism for the Council to engage with residents and take their views into account on a range of policy areas.
- 1.2 Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report, in December 2021, describing how the panel was being established and how it would be used. The Committee asked that a further report was brought to review progress after the panel had been in place for twelve months.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 provides a detailed review of the activity delivered through the panel during 2022. The panel has been used to help inform policy in a number of key areas, including the Council's approach to tackling climate issues and the levelling up agenda.
- 1.4 There will be a further recruitment exercise in early 2023 to maintain membership numbers and ensure the panel remains representative of the Warwickshire population. The project team will also work with service areas to devise a work programme for 2023, focusing on supporting delivery of the Council Plan and Integrated Delivery Plan.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) made an ongoing provision of £60k to deliver the Voice of Warwickshire panel, to cover staffing costs, software, licensing, recruitment and communications.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 None

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 A recruitment exercise was launched in October 2021 with an aim to recruit up to 1,000 residents aged 18 and over from across the county. The panel needed to be representative of the overall county population and targeted campaigns were used in certain parts of the county and with certain age groups where initial numbers were low.
- 4.2 In total, 1,013 residents joined the panel. Since early 2022, a small number have withdrawn from the panel and the current total is 1,000. The panel is broadly representative of Warwickshire's population although the 18-24 age group is under-represented despite significant efforts to engage with that specific age group.
- 4.3 A dedicated Voice of Warwickshire website was created so that panel members could be kept informed and, crucially, understand how their views have been used to help shape Council strategy. The website can be viewed at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/voice>.
- 4.4 Appendix 1 details the specific surveys that have been conducted with the panel and how the insights gathered have been used. In summary, the following exercises have been completed or are scheduled:
- Feb 2022 – First survey (Climate & Energy)
 - May 2022 – Second survey (Levelling-Up)
 - Oct 2022 – Third survey (WCC website review)
 - Dec 2022 – Fourth survey scheduled (perceptions of WFRS and its role)
- 4.5 Response rates for the completed surveys to date have been 58% (Climate & Energy), 47% (Levelling-Up) and 36% (WCC website). These are at or above average for this type of exercise (the benchmark is 30%) and we should expect some drop-off over the course of the year.
- 4.6 The respective project groups and service leads that have commissioned surveys with the panel have all found them to be a highly valuable source of

intelligence. The information gathered has actively influenced how the strategies and associated action plans have been developed.

- 4.7 Additional recruitment will take place in early 2023 to ensure the panel remains vibrant and representative.
- 4.8 Alongside the additional recruitment activity, the Voice of Warwickshire project team will put out a further call in early 2023 for topics to cover during the next twelve months. The topics should align with Council priorities and the refreshed Integrated Delivery Plan.

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1 N/A

Appendices

1. [Voice of Warwickshire – Project Review](#)

Background Papers

N/A

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s):

Other members: Councillors Warwick, Birdi, Boad, Philipps and W. Roberts