

2007 Annual Consultation Report

Introduction

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council actively seeks information from its residents regarding the services that it provides, and strives to continually improve its services by involving them in the decision making process.

We offer a number of opportunities for residents to participate in decision making in the local area. We already have an established track record of consultation using such mechanisms as residents' surveys, user and non user surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews, exhibitions, workshops and open day events/evenings. We also manage a Citizens Panel made up of over 1,000 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council residents who are sent surveys on a regular basis to collect feedback on various council services and local issues.

Consultation Strategy

The Council first produced a Consultation Strategy in 2000, which is reviewed on a regular basis, most recently at the end of 2005. The strategy sets out a consolidated, centralised and co-ordinated consultation process to ensure efficient and effective consultation across the Council. We have a successful approval and quality assurance process in place for this purpose.

To ensure that effective consultation takes place, the Consultation & Communications Unit will develop an action plan for the coming year, which will set out the consultation projects that the Council will carry out over the coming months.

Consultation Database

There is a consultation database on the Council's website. The aim of which is to improve communications to partners and local residents on consultation taking place, and to improve the accessibility of consultation results.

The database holds information on projects which have taken place and their outcomes; work which is currently being undertaken; and consultation which is planned for the future. Where consultation has been carried out by the Council's in-house consultation team, a copy of the final report is also available.

Consultation PI

The Consultation & Communications Team records all consultation taking place throughout the authority, and monitors outcomes, successes and areas for improvement for each project. This information is extremely useful in giving a Council-wide overview of consultation, and allows the team to monitor feedback given and action taken as a result of the consultation.

To allow for target setting, and to adhere to best practice guidelines, the Consultation & Communications Team has a Consultation Performance Indicator (PI). By evaluating each piece of research against certain criteria (cost, effectiveness, response rate, action arising etc) the team can monitor the percentage of all research that meets the required level. This is vital for maintaining a level of consistency across the authority.

This information can all be found in the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Consultation Activity 2007 chart.

Consultation Activity 2007

Twelve pieces of external consultation were conducted in 2007. These range statutory consultation to consultation that supports the Councils Key Priorities (which changed during this period) as well as other consultation.

The Council also conducted five internal surveys during this time. These range from consultation with staff about the Corporate Plan, as well as a Staff survey which looked at members of staffs views Council wide.

This report summarises the findings of some of the larger consultation activities carried out by the Council in 2007. A full list of consultation activity carried out during 2007 can be found in the Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Consultation Activity chart.

FEEDBACK panel

The Councils Citizens panel, made up of over 1,000 residents within Epsom & Ewell was refreshed in 2006. Members of the panel are consulted on a regular basis about a range of local issues and council services.

2 surveys were sent to the citizen's panel in 2007:

FEEDBACK survey March 2007

This survey asked about a number of different Council services. The objectives of this survey were to establish resident perception/experience of anti-social behaviour and crime within the previous 12 months. It was also to establish awareness amongst residents of social centres within the borough and the programme of activities on offer at each centre.

The survey method used was both postal and electronic and it was sent out to 1,222 members of the Citizens' Panel, generating a good response of 83.3%.

Key findings...

Community Safety

- Respondents generally feel safe in the Borough during the day. Local parks or open spaces, public transport and the town centre are the areas residents feel most unsafe in during the day.
- Respondents are understandably more likely to feel unsafe in the evening, with parks and open spaces giving residents the most cause for concern. 37% of respondents said they feel unsafe in local parks at night. Generally, residents do feel safe in their homes at night, and walking in their own street.
- Nearly half of respondents feel that the level of crime and disorder in the Borough as a whole has stayed the same in the last year. Nearly 30% feel that there is more.
- The biggest crime and disorder problems identified in respondents neighbourhoods are young people being disorderly, rubbish and litter and parking problems.

Social Centres, Meals on Wheels and Community Alarm

- Awareness of the services varies, with almost three quarters of residents aware of the Meals on Wheels service, but only 41% aware of Home Services and the Social Centres.
- Only 6% of respondents (55) had made use of the Social Centres. Among those who have made use of them, the friendliness of staff is rated very highly, as is the value for money of the meals. The range of things to do at the centres and the quality of meals are also rated highly, but with larger percentages of respondents rating them as average.
- Only 3% (29 respondents) have made use of the Routecall Service.
- The main reasons for not using Routecall are that respondents have access to or own their own car, the perception that the service is only for older people, or being unaware that the service exists.
- Only 8 respondents had used the Meals on Wheels Service. Again there is a perception that the service is only for older residents. 614 respondents answered that they are able to prepare and cook their own meals so do not need to use the service.

Annual Residents Survey 2007

The Residents' survey is an annual questionnaire sent out by the Council to local residents in order to gain their views on the services they provide for them. It has been carried out on an annual basis since 1997. This year 1226

Surveys were sent out, 1026 surveys were returned, giving the 2007 Residents Survey a 83.6%% response rate.

Key findings...

- Overall it can be said that respondents are more satisfied than not with street cleansing in the Borough. Total satisfaction levels for the majority of areas within the Borough show an overall satisfaction rate of 68% and above.
- The results for the level of respondents in the Borough who recycle on a regular basis is 95%. Overall satisfaction with the service is also high at 76.3%
- When looking at how safe respondents feel within their neighbourhoods levels are overall high. The majority of respondents (99.2%) feel safe during the day and fairly safe after dark.
- 53.3% of residents feel that the levels of crime have stayed the same over the past 12 months, with 14.4% of respondents feeling that levels of crime have increased.
- When asked about the Councils online services only 20.4% of residents said they had used them, but their satisfaction level was very high 83.1%.
- Just over half of respondents stated that they had contacted the Council via the Council's Contact Centre over the past 12 months. Levels of satisfaction are high, with total satisfaction levels exceeding 80%.
- Overall residents are satisfied with how the Council runs things. (BV3, 64.8%)

Consulting with young people

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is committed to consulting with young people, and has established a successful mechanism to do so via the schools within the Borough.

Youth Leisure Day 2007

On Saturday 22nd September 2007 The Ebbisham Centre, in partnership with Epsom and Ewell Borough Council Leisure Developments, Surrey County Council Youth Development Service, and Yell (Epsom and Ewell Youth Forum), ran another successful Youth Leisure Day for all young people in the Borough aged between 13 and 17 years of age.

This day is aimed at targeting the young people in the Borough to find out their views about living in Epsom & Ewell.

Schools Survey

The Leisure Developments Team, together with the Consultation & Communications Team piloted a questionnaire in two schools, Epsom and Ewell High School and Blenheim High School in March 2006, and following from the success of this pilot, rolled out the consultation to other schools in the Borough in March 2007. Each school taking part in the consultation was asked to attempt to complete a maximum of 350 questionnaires, either on paper or via an electronic link.

1003 questionnaires were returned in total, from students at Epsom and Ewell High School, Blenheim High School, Rosebery School, Glyn Technology School and Ewell Castle School.

Key findings...

Epsom Town Centre

- 51% of students who responded to the survey visit Epsom Town Centre 1 to 2 times a week, during the day. However, almost a third never visit the town centre during the day. The percentage visiting the town centre during the evening is slightly less, with a larger percentage (41%) never visiting.
- The most popular reason for visiting Epsom is the cinema, followed by shopping and hanging out with friends. When asked what they like about Epsom, the most popular response was the shopping, as well as the general variety of things to do for young people. Despite this, many students commented that it could be improved by having more shops, particularly girls clothes shops.

The Council and Getting Involved

- Many respondents have not heard of the activities and initiatives run in the Borough for young people. The activity most students have made use of is the Starbucks Youth Café, as well as the plasma information screens in school reception areas. Some initiatives are well known, but not well used, in particular the Text 4U service and Euphonic music festival.
- Almost all of students know that their school has a school council, and 56% who is on it. Students are split over whether the council fairly represents their views, and some students commented that they feel the school council could listen to them more, and ask for student's opinions more regularly.

Advice and Guidance

- Students are more likely to know how to contact a Connexions Personal Advisor within school than outside of it. Around a third of students have accessed the Connexions library at school, but only 12% have accessed Connexions online.
- Respondents answered that if a friend or relative had a problem with smoking, drinking alcohol or taking drugs, they would be likely to look to friends and family for advice about this. Lessons at school are the most popular method for receiving information and advice about the effects of substance misuse.

Employee satisfaction survey 2007

The overall purpose of the employee satisfaction survey is to gain an understanding of how Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's employees perceive the Council as an employer, and what it is like to work for the Council. To ensure that all staff were included and could participate in this survey, both hard copy and web surveys were created. All members of staff were sent the survey. 118 completed surveys were returned to the Consultation and Communication team within the given timescale, generating a response rate of 37%.

Key findings...

- 75% of staff are proud to work for EEBC
- 73% of staff are clear how their job has an effect on the Council's objectives
- 87% of staff said the Council must continue to change
- Satisfied with their job – 81%, Secure in their job – 71%
- 70% of staff agreed with employment terms and conditions
- 87% said Managers treated them with respect and dignity
- 35% were confident the Council would act on issues raised in the survey

Three key areas for improvement as highlighted by staff were:

- The main issue that became apparent in the survey result was that staff felt that they had a closer affiliation with their immediate team rather than the Council as a whole.
- Managers and the learning development process: Respondents stated that their managers do not talk to them about what they should try and get out of training or that after attending a training course, or check if skills learnt have improved their performance.
- Directors explaining and trying to get staff support for decisions that affect them.

Consultation schedule 2008

Discussions take place regularly with managers and Directors to identify potential consultation areas.

The surveys due to take place are:

- Citizens panels survey- June 2008
- The Place Survey- September 2008
- Annual residents survey- March 2009
- Staff satisfaction survey- November 2009

It is highly likely that additional consultation activity will be added to this schedule throughout the year.