

Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 4/13

Date: 26 April 2013

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Business Support Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Purpose:

At the committee meetings on 7 February 2013 and the meeting on 3 April 2013, the committee requested the following information:

7 February 2013

Briefing Note: information on whether NI 123 is the number of individuals or the number of times they have quit smoking

Briefing Note: info on Citizens Panel – breakdown of demographic, gender, ward, etc

3 April 2013

Briefing note to be supplied setting out information as to the content of the Citizen's Panel Survey and the reasons why only 50% of surveys had been returned

The following sets out the information requested:

Briefing Note: information on whether NI 123 is the number of individuals or the number of times they have quit smoking:

Under the 'Adults maintain their independence and live healthy lives' Priority, the Council Plan includes the measure of success :

"Rate of self-reported 4 week smoking quitters aged 16 or over".

At the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny meeting on 7th February Members asked if the figures were of the number of individuals stopping smoking or the number of times they have quit smoking.

Colleagues in public health have confirmed that the figures are of the number of individuals quitting successfully at 4 weeks.

Briefing Note: info on Citizens Panel – breakdown of demographic, gender, ward, etc and setting out information as to the content of the Citizen’s Panel Survey and the reasons why only 50% of surveys had been returned

Make-up of the Panel

The Citizens’ Panel consists of approximately 1400 members specifically recruited to be representative of Medway by:

- geographical location (residents are recruited to be approximately representative of the six main areas of Medway (i.e. Chatham, Gillingham, Strood, Rochester, Rainham and the rural areas) and also by the 22 electoral wards)
- age (the age bands cover: 16-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-59, 60-65, 65+)
- gender
- ethnicity

It is recruited by independent researchers – usually as part of the conduct of a full resident’s opinion poll. The recruitment is done face to face in people’s homes.

To achieve representation by geographical location, fifty five sample points are selected at random throughout the Medway area and interviewers are required to undertake 20 interviews from each point. Sample points are stratified by ward to ensure that all wards are included. For each sample point the area is matched to the Postal Address File (PAF) and a list of addresses supplied, from which interviews are undertaken. As well as geographical location, quotas were also set on age, gender and ethnicity, at the time this was based on the 2001 census, to ensure that respondents interviewed are representative of the profile of the area. During the recruitment process interviewers aim to achieve a spread of socio economic group and include a good percentage of individuals with a disability. Once recruitment is completed, a review of the sample achieved is conducted and further booster recruitment may be conducted amongst under-represented groups if required.

Confidence in the results

A sample survey uses the results from a small proportion of the population to estimate the responses of the entire population. Sample surveys are the main kind of survey used in research and consultation exercises as they provide a cost effective and reliable method of establishing community views.

Surveys normally quote a level of confidence that we can apply to the results, with the industry standard being 95% with a margin of error of +/-5%. This simply means that if 47% of a sample picks an answer you can be ‘sure’ that if the entire

population had been asked that between 42% (-5%) and 52% (+5%) would have also picked that answer.

We use citizens' panel survey results to give Members information on residents' views at a Medway wide level. We do not generally use the sample results to drill down by particular groups or areas. This is because when breaking results down further to examine the responses from particular geographical areas (e.g. by ward), or from different segments of the population (e.g. the views of men as opposed to women or of specific ethnic groups) we need to recognise that the sample population will be smaller than the typical 'global' response that we are currently receiving of around 700 people. This will mean that the confidence in the results at this sub group level will be less.

The feedback from sub groups of the population can still be useful as it can give an idea of general trends and/or lead to the identification of areas for further exploration.

Responsiveness of Panel members

The Panel research is conducted by postal survey with a consistent response rate of 50% (i.e. an actual sample of around 700).

Panel members are unpaid volunteers who have said they wish to participate in surveys, however their participation is not guaranteed. The panel needs to be 'managed' – being given good time to respond to surveys and not asked to participate in too many over the course of a year, for example. Inevitably, busyness and the interest in particular subjects will be determinants of whether an individual completes a survey. The Council has previously provided feedback to panel members on how the issues they have commented upon have progressed by producing a newsletter as a way of sustaining participation rates.

Over time Panel members can become less representative of the 'person on the Clapham omnibus' as they become better informed than the average resident about the council, the local area and key issues. Periodically Panel members need to be replaced to get back to a fresh set of residents; members also get replaced through the year as people move out of the area or resign from the panel.

Provision of information to Panel members

Panel members are deliberately not given supplementary information about the issues that a questionnaire is addressing. The Panel mechanism seeks to reflect the views of ordinary people in Medway. Many 'deliberative' and qualitative market research mechanisms – most commonly focus groups or citizens juries – are approaches that allow us to dig deeper into the opinions of people and the factors that are influencing those opinions. In these situations it is often essential

to provide background information to an issue. This would be the case if you wanted public input to budget options for example. In the case of our Citizens Panel we are seeking the views as they exist today of a sample of residents, unprompted by additional information.

By asking consistent questions over time we can build up a picture of how opinions and attitudes are either shifting or remaining constant. Quantitative and qualitative research approaches are often used together, with qualitative techniques often helping frame questions for quantitative questionnaire surveys.

The 2012 Citizens Panel Questionnaire is attached to this note.



(Double click image to open questionnaire)

A copy of the questionnaire has also been sent appended to this email in the event that the above link does not work.

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