

Tool: Survey builder for understanding your area

Creating a 'place strategy' helps you go beyond engagement as a one-off process, and begin to develop an approach for the whole council that reflects the capabilities, concerns, aspirations and identity of your population.

Insight is central to this. As a council, you won't be able to reflect or represent your community as well as possible until you fully understand them. You'll already be gathering data about resident satisfaction, and will have information on demographics and deprivation, too and these things fit into the sense of place as well, of course.

The next step is to try and get a better handle on the personality, identity and 'texture' of your place – as much as the cold hard facts.

Below are some of the key questions to think about when gathering the insight to start doing this. Whatever method you're using for collecting this quantitative or qualitative data many of the key questions are the same. They're outlined below, and can be used as the building blocks for a survey or topic guide.

- 1. Cohesion and clashes:** How do different groups feel about economic or cultural differences? Resentful of each other, or enriched? Is diversity thought of as a strength or a weakness? Is there cross-fertilisation between groups or are there cohesion issues? Can the area make an asset of how mixed it is?
- 2. Transience and settledness:** What's the population turnover (this may link to age)? Are people transient and if so why? Is it a sign of an upwardly mobile borough always on the move? Likewise, if the population is settled, how do residents feel about this? Do they like the feeling of being an established community?
- 3. History and identity:** What are the significant events from the area's past? What are the narratives and histories that dominate in different areas and neighbourhoods? How do people see themselves as a result of this? How does this carry over? Is there a maritime heritage, a history of civil rights protests? Have famous writers or explorers come from the area? Are people proud to come from the area?
- 4. Values and ideals:** How do people see the world? What are their political values? Anti-establishment or pro-? What types of charities do people give to? What are the politics of the area? Do people consider themselves altruistic or traditionalist? Sustainable or self-sustaining?
- 5. Proactivity and capacity:** How much confidence and enthusiasm is there? How likely are local people to 'step up'? What sorts of thing are they likely to do? Are there many retirees, who could donate time and expertise? Or

Contents

Foreword

Introduction

Which hat are you wearing?

Context

Section 1:
The Basics

Section 2.1:
Trust and democracy

Section 2.2:
Trust in the community

Section 2.3:
Trust in the system

are there more likely to be students and young people, who can donate skills?

- 6. Hopes and fears:** Is the area generally felt to be in decline or ascent? Are people positive about living there? What does the area aspire to? What do the people living there want it to be? Do they look forwards to a better future?
- 7. Geography and mind-set:** Where do people say they're from when asked? Do they say the same name as the name of the council? Or somewhere more specific, like a ward or district? Or somewhere nearby, that other will know better? Do people tend to have a global or local identity? Do they leave the town much?

In putting these into practice as part of a place branding strategy, the LGA offers some useful guidance. Plymouth's place branding as 'Britain's Ocean City' is a good example of effectively applying this approach.

Contents

Foreword

Introduction

Which hat are you wearing?

Context

Section 1:
The Basics

Section 2.1:
Trust and democracy

Section 2.2:
Trust in the community

Section 2.3:
Trust in the system