

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

10 January 2020

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Digital Officer – K.Jones

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title

Neath Port Talbot Citizens' Panel Pilot

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with information on the introduction of a Neath Port Talbot Citizens' Panel.

Executive Summary

2. A Citizens' Panel is a demographically representative group of residents, which helps to assess public preferences and opinions.
3. To support the Council's Communications and Engagement Strategy and to help meet our obligations under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, a Neath Port Talbot Citizens' Panel is to be launched in January 2020 and initially run for a period of 3 years, after which a review will take place.

Background

4. On 21 February 2018, Policy and Resources Cabinet Board approved a Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy which was subsequently endorsed by full Council. Officers undertook to report back to members at key stages as the strategy progressed.
5. One of the communications and engagement objectives contained within the strategy was "to strengthen the Council's approach to consultation and engagement so that people can express their views and opinions about the Council's work and feel that their voices are listened to".
6. One of the key tasks to be implemented to further this objective was to research options for introducing a citizens' panel for Neath Port Talbot. In order to achieve

the best solution for the council's limited Community Engagement budget, a bespoke solution has been developed whereby a proportion of the Citizens' Panel work will be undertaken in-house, with specialised elements being delivered by ORS, a Swansea Based, independent social research practice.

Scope and Benefits of the Panel

7. The Citizens' Panel will be open to residents of Neath Port Talbot aged 16 years and over.
8. Following an initial online recruitment, the panel membership will be compared with census information for the county borough, then face-to-face recruitment will take place to target groups that are under-represented.
9. In line with the Council's Smart & Connected Digital Strategy, a 'digital first' approach will be taken, whereby panellists will be required to participate online if they are able to do so. However, where residents wish to be part of the panel, but cannot participate online, paper versions of questionnaires will be made available.
10. By joining the NPT Citizens' Panel, citizens will agree to be sent survey questionnaires up to 12 times per year.
11. The purpose of the Panel will be to:
 - make it easier for Neath Port Talbot residents to give feedback to the Council on its work and to contribute to policy and service change
 - actively involve residents in decision making at a very early stage, so they help shape proposals before these go out to wider public consultation
 - Develop a mechanism for obtaining quick and reliable feedback from residents about proposals and new ideas
 - Help the Council understand residents' perspectives to help make decisions.

Next Steps

12. The NPT Citizens' Panel will be launched during the week commencing Monday 13 January 2020. This will be supported by a comprehensive recruitment campaign.
13. Officers will report back to members at key stages to update on progress.

Financial Appraisal

14. The budget requirements for the first three years are as follows:

Year 1 (19/20) – Budget - £12,000
(Total costs are £11,138, plus contingency of £862.00)

Year 2 (20/21) – Budget - £19,000
(Total costs are £17,940, plus contingency of £1,060.00)

Year 3 (21/22) – Budget - £22,000
(Total costs are £20,640, plus contingency of £1,360.00)

The Citizens Panel will be funded from the existing Community Engagement budget (currently £20,984 for 2019/2020). This budget funds other engagement activity and to bridge any gap in funding other budgets have been identified which are underspent. Therefore there is no additional pressure that requires to be funded corporately.

Integrated Impact Assessment

15. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes. However, the recruitment will specifically aim to ensure that the NPT Citizens' Panel is as representative of the communities within the county borough as possible. This will take account of geographic location and people who share protected characteristics are able to engage with the Council and have their voices heard.

Valleys Communities Impact:

16. The Panel will be representatives of the county borough population.

Workforce Impact

17. No implications.

Legal Impact

18. The pilot will help us to meet the requirement under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to involve people in the work that the Council carries out.

Risk Management Impacts

19. The contract with ORS will be regularly monitored by the Corporate Engagement and Communications Officer. In addition, a set of performance measures for the Panel will be included in the integrated corporate performance and risk management system (CPMS), to regularly report on strategic and high level operational risks.

Consultation

20. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

21. It is recommended that Cabinet notes the arrangements made to launch the NPT Citizens' Panel.

Reason for Proposed Decision

22. This is a matter for information, therefore no decision is required.

Implementation of Decision

23. This is a matter for information, therefore no decision is required.

Appendices

24. None

List of Background Papers

25. [Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services to Policy And Resources Cabinet Board \(Special\) on 21 February 2018 - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy](#)
26. [Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services to Council on the 28th February 2018. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Corporate Communications and Community Relations Strategy](#)

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