

Cornwall Council Stakeholder Survey Overview Report

Cornwall Council

Final report – December 2016

Strategy & Engagement

The report has been drafted by Cornwall Council and
independently verified by PFA Research Ltd

Cornwall Council 2016 Stakeholder Survey Overview Report

Executive Summary

What is Cornwall Council like to work with?

Cornwall Council's first survey of stakeholders – stakeholders being defined as the organisations that Cornwall Council works in partnership with – was undertaken in Summer 2016 in order better understand what Cornwall Council is like to work with and to generate ideas about how we can work in partnership more effectively in the future.

Overall, whilst the pilot survey has identified positive elements experienced by respondents when working in partnership with Cornwall Council, there are some clear areas for improvement.

The positive aspects of working in partnership with Cornwall Council expressed by respondents included:

- strong relationships with Council Officers and recognition of their professionalism and commitment
- recognition that delivery partners across Cornwall are together working towards shared objectives for Cornwall

A range of ideas and suggestions were generated in response to the survey which could improve the effectiveness of working in partnership in the future. These included:

- improving how Cornwall Council communicates and engages with partners
- aligning the collective work and efforts of the Council and partners towards shared objectives for Cornwall
- involving stakeholders early in planning and decision making processes
- building a clear, honest and open dialogue
- being clear about the parameters of engagement and following up with information about the actions that are being taken as a result

Over 90 responses were received from a range of stakeholders including VCSE organisations, interest groups, registered charities, town and parish councils, local businesses and suppliers, academic institutions and other public sector organisations.

The number of stakeholder organisations who responded to the survey (92) was small in comparison to the total number of groups – for example there are 213 Town and Parish Councils and over 4000 voluntary, community and social enterprises in Cornwall. As such, the overall results should be treated as an indicator of views from delivery partners, as opposed to being considered as a representative sample or a definitive view.

It is also acknowledged that the views individual partners expressed in their responses may in part be influenced by their most recent/current experiences with the Council which in turn will have happened during the recent period of both devolution and funding cuts.

The following report sets out the background to this survey and outlines a summary of the responses to each question. This report has been drafted by Cornwall Council and independently verified by PFA Research Ltd and is intended for stakeholders who completed the survey and requested to be informed of the findings.

The insight and feedback gathered from the survey will be used, together with other sources of insight, to inform a range of Cornwall Council decision making processes, which will shape the organisation's priorities and ways of working over the coming years.

Cornwall Council would like to thank the organisations who responded to the survey for their insights and time in completing the survey. For further information about the survey, please contact Carolyn Cadman, Corporate Organisational Development Manager ccadman@cornwall.gov.uk.

Introduction

Background and objectives

Cornwall Council's first survey of stakeholders was undertaken to better understand what Cornwall Council is like to work with and to generate ideas about how we can work together more effectively in the future.

Specifically, the survey was seeking an understanding of:

- i. What Cornwall Council is like to work in partnership with, including how easy or difficult it is and overall levels of satisfaction
- ii. The effectiveness of different types of interactions with the Council (e.g. meetings, telephone conversations, workshops, online)
- iii. Views about:
 - a. partnership working across Cornwall as a place
 - b. the way Cornwall Council works in partnership
 - c. experience of working with people from Cornwall Council
 - d. Cornwall Council in general, including asking the same questions posed to residents and staff regarding overall satisfaction with the way the 'Council runs things'
- iv. Respondents were asked to provide examples of when Cornwall Council has worked effectively in partnership and for suggestions of how Cornwall Council can work even more effectively in partnership. They were also given the opportunity to leave their contact details for follow-up contact.

The insight and feedback gathered from the survey will be used to inform a range of Cornwall Council decision making processes which will shape the organisation's priorities and ways of working over the coming years.

Methodology

Given that Cornwall Council had never undertaken a survey of stakeholders, the survey was approached as a pilot to see what added value and insight the survey could bring.

The question set and approach of using a mix of likert scale assessment and open text boxes was based on research of industry best practice of stakeholder mapping and analysis.

The survey was available online with hard copies being supplied on request.

The survey was sent to 95 Cornwall Council contacts directly on 5th July with a follow up prompt sent on 15th July 2016. Input to the contact list was received from key partner lead contacts across the Council based on the external stakeholders they each work with on programmes within their area, as well as from our stakeholder list used for partner engagement. The survey was also promoted through the Town and Parish Council bulletin sent on 6th July (distribution list of 382).

Of the respondents, around half were Town and Parish Councils and a quarter were Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations. To put these figures into context, there are 213 Town and Parish Councils and circa 4300 VCSEs.

The sample size of the stakeholder organisations surveyed means that responses should be treated as an indicator of the views of our delivery partners, as opposed to a representative sample or a definitive view.

It is acknowledged that the views individual partners expressed in their responses may in part be influenced by their recent/current experiences with the Council on matters such as local devolution deals and funding arrangements.

In addition, the survey was undertaken in the same time period as the resident survey and employee survey. This helped to ensure that, when reviewed as a package, the surveys would together provide a more rounded view of:

- what it is like to work for Cornwall Council (employee survey)
- what it is like to work with Cornwall Council (stakeholder survey)
- what it is like to receive services from Cornwall Council (resident survey).

Stakeholder Survey Results

1. Respondent Profile

Responses were received from 92 Council stakeholders of which, 64 completed the survey in full. Respondents covered a range of Council stakeholders, across one or more of the following categories:

- Town and Parish Councils (50% of respondents)
- Community, Voluntary or Social Enterprise groups (25%)
- Registered Charities (16%)
- Public sector bodies (12%)
- Businesses or private sector bodies (5%)
- Suppliers of goods and services to the Council (5%)
- Academic or educational bodies (4%)
- Interest groups / representative bodies / lobbying organisations (3%)
- Other (including a cross sector partnership and Councillor) (3%)

2. How did stakeholders describe their relationship with Cornwall Council?

Delivers services with, for, or on behalf of, Cornwall Council	44 %
Sharing information / knowledge with Cornwall Council	14 %
Receives services from Cornwall Council	12 %
Advisory / consultancy role to, or on behalf of, Cornwall Council	10 %
Campaigns / lobbies on specific issues	3 %
Supplies goods and / or services to Cornwall Council	2 %
Other	14 %

3. Which service areas do the stakeholders work with Cornwall Council to deliver, or deliver to Cornwall Council?

Planning	43%
Environment & Heritage	43%
Grounds Maintenance	33%
Local infrastructure	30%
Health	23 %
Social Care	23%
Tourism & Leisure	23%
Education	21%
Litter	20%
Transport	19%
Housing	15%
Waste	12%
IT	1%
Construction	1%
Other (examples included advice and guidance, toilets and playgrounds and community safety)	23%

4. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are stakeholders with the way Cornwall Council works in partnership with their organisation?

Very satisfied	5%
Satisfied	19%
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	26%
Fairly dissatisfied	31%
Very dissatisfied	17%
Don't know	3%

Stakeholders were also given the option to add their reasons for the rating given in a free text box. Respondents who are satisfied with the way Cornwall Council works in partnership with their organisation cited the following reasons:

- Staff knowledgeable and leading in good practice
- Whilst the Community Link Officer has really helped and provided support when issues arise, there is an opportunity to be more responsive to Town Council needs through improving our ability to be more proactive when information is requested
- Positive relationships with Officers, Members and Services are mentioned, stakeholders find them receptive and positive
- The Council appreciate the work done by stakeholders and generally listen to problems and provide support
- Genuine improvement in joint working, but still a danger of becoming embroiled in discussions over who pays for what rather than pooling funds and agreeing priorities.

The following themes emerged from the feedback received in the free text responses for this question;

4.1 Stakeholder engagement and communication:

- Ensuring consistency of experience in contacting the Council, regardless of which department an individual is dealing with
- Improving understanding amongst Council officers of the voluntary sector, to enable a more effective two way partnership to take views on board and reflect opinions consistently
- Ensuring the systems in place and style of communications demonstrate a collaborative approach to owning and tackling issues
- Improving written and timely communication, providing clarity over decision making
- Improving awareness on the impact and ability for partners to effectively communicate with officers or services arising as a result of internal organisational changes
- Ensuring consultation is meaningful.

4.2 Resources:

- Ensuring effective resourcing to manage obstacles and fulfil obligations as understood by partners
- Ensuring we are consistent and timely in our responses to stakeholders requests for information
- Proactively manage communications with our stakeholders to reduce the amount of correspondence required to resolve matters
- Ensuring impact assessments are available when funding is cut.

4.3 Ways of working:

- Ensuring evidence based outcome commissioning remains core to our business, whilst having the confidence to be more radical in exploring innovate collaborative ways for more creative delivery to meet emerging needs
- For Cornwall Council to look out of county, on areas to collaborate on – e.g. work on rail is an example of what can be achieved by working collectively with others.

4.4 Decision-making:

- Need to create an environment and appetite, supported by the right systems to enable prompt decisions
- Ensuring transparency in the decision making process through the availability of minutes, helping to build understanding, trust and confidence between the Council and Partners
- To ensure our partners and our residents are confident that our communities are at the heart of what we do and how we do it, and that our internal systems and processes underpin this.

5. How would stakeholders rate their experience of working with Cornwall Council?

Would speak highly without being asked	9%
Would speak highly if asked	14%
Would be neutral if asked	31%
Would be critical if asked	33%
Would be critical without being asked	12%
Don't know	1%

Stakeholders were also given the option to add their reasons for the rating given in a free text box.

Comments relating to respondents' experience of working with Cornwall Council were consistent with the themes emerging from the free text comments left in response to Question 4.

Additional positive feedback received:

- Cornwall Council's people are open and approachable/friendly and act in a professional manner – from the CEO to Council Leader and all teams
- Many of the individual Officers that respondents were in contact with were commended, but the process of getting accessing them was less easy
- Good leadership and some excellent staff
- One stakeholder believes Cornwall Council to have the best interests of Cornwall 'in its DNA'
- Culture within County Hall encourages people to visit e.g. coffee shop and computer access for partners.

Additional feedback suggesting areas for improvement:

- Ensuring budgetary pressures do not affect the quality of service our customers feel they receive
- Ensuring governance does not dilute the ability to take timely action
- Ensuring decision making for local areas, are decided by local people with knowledge of the local issues
- Ensuring we have meaningful partnerships, with clear two-way communication to support how we approach common goals in the best way for our communities.

6. How easy or difficult do stakeholders find working with Cornwall Council?

Very easy	5%
Fairly easy	26%
Neither/nor	22%
Fairly difficult	33%
Very difficult	12%
Don't know	1%

Stakeholders were given the option to add their reasons for the rating given in a free text box. Comments related to ease or difficulty of working with Cornwall Council were consistent with the themes identified in Questions 4 and 5.

Additional comments related to areas of difficulty in working with Cornwall Council highlighted inefficiency, other examples include:

- Ensuring business continuity is naturally part of any internal changes to minimise the impact on our stakeholders
- Ensuring our stakeholders understand the decision making processes within and across the Council

7. How effective do stakeholders find their interactions with Cornwall Council?

	Effective	Not effective	Don't know
Meetings	52%	32%	16%
Correspondence by email or letter	51%	38%	11%
Telephone conversations	62%	15%	23%
Online interactions	44%	34%	23%
Workshops, consultations and events	43%	32%	25%

Interactions are deemed to be effective on the whole, with telephone conversations deemed most effective, followed by meetings and written correspondence above online interactions and workshops, consultations or events. Meetings and events can tend to be process and procedure focussed and actions based around reports and more meetings. The focus on outcomes for people and communities can be lost.

Stakeholder feedback suggests the Council website is now very good – praise is given for the amount of information available on the site. However there can be difficulty in searching for/finding relevant information and this has resulted in a loss of confidence in online interactions, which has been underpinned in part through inconsistencies sometimes via email and voicemails.

8. What do stakeholders think about partnership working across Cornwall?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Don't know
Partners work well together in Cornwall	4%	25%	30%	22%	12%	7%
Collectively we offer good services for Cornwall	4%	29%	29%	22%	7%	7%
We have shared objectives with our partners	3%	35%	25%	20%	10%	7%
We have a good understanding of who does what	4%	22%	31%	26%	10%	6%
We know how decisions are made by our partners and how to influence them	3%	18%	22%	32%	16%	9%
The Cornwall Executive Group is effective	1%	7%	29%	13%	19%	30%

Partnership working across Cornwall could be improved in terms of understanding of who does what, knowing how decisions are made and how to influence them and the effectiveness of the Cornwall Executive Group.

9. What do stakeholders think about the way Cornwall Council works in partnership?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Don't know
Taking the lead in making things happen to make things better in Cornwall	3%	20%	30%	26%	17%	3%
Good at working with those individuals or organisations that have the most impact on the future of Cornwall	4%	17%	32%	23%	12%	12%
Working effectively at the community level	3%	9%	25%	37%	24%	3%
Working effectively in partnership with Town and Parish Councils	3%	12%	21%	22%	22%	21%
Working effectively in partnership with Voluntary Community and Social Enterprises	0%	6%	21%	15%	16%	43%
Working effectively in partnership with businesses	3%	11%	26%	11%	3%	47%

There is a considerable opportunity to improve the way in which Cornwall Council is viewed to work in partnership effectively at a community level and with Town and Parish Councils.

10. What do stakeholders think about working with people from Cornwall Council?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Don't know
Understand the challenges facing our organisation	7%	30%	22%	22%	17%	1%
Display passion and commitment to delivering positive outcomes for Cornwall	4%	24%	27%	17%	27%	0%
Are approachable / friendly	9%	51%	24%	13%	3%	0%
Are effective at finding solutions	6%	13%	28%	33%	17%	3%
Act in a professional manner	10%	47%	29%	10%	4%	0%
Are accessible - it is easy to have regular or face to face contact with them	6%	17%	23%	26%	27%	1%
Engage proactively with stakeholders and involve them in meaningful ways	7%	14%	26%	26%	22%	4%
Seek the views of our organisation before making decisions that affect us	3%	15%	16%	26%	34%	6%
Provide stakeholders with helpful guidance	4%	22%	32%	19%	17%	6%
Respond within timescales that are appropriate	4%	17%	16%	27%	33%	3%

The majority of stakeholders agree that Cornwall Council's people are open and approachable/friendly and act in a professional manner. Stakeholder's views of Cornwall Council's people are generally negative in how they:

- seek the views of their organisation before making decisions that affect them
- are effective at finding solutions
- proactively engage with and involve them in meaningful ways
- display passion and commitment to delivering positive outcomes for Cornwall
- are accessible.

11. How do stakeholders describe Cornwall Council?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Don't know
Is responsive to changing needs and circumstances of Cornwall	3%	13%	41%	25%	15%	3%
Speaks with one voice across the Council's teams and departments	3%	9%	9%	37%	35%	7%
Is a go-ahead, confident and active organisation	3%	12%	22%	25%	32%	7%
Provides clear evidence on what is happening in Cornwall	1%	16%	28%	28%	23%	4%
Has clear aims and objectives	1%	32%	29%	20%	12%	6%
Takes evidence based decisions	1%	18%	26%	22%	22%	10%
Provides easy to understand information on their services	3%	32%	40%	12%	12%	1%
Has clear and visible leadership	12%	25%	22%	22%	19%	1%

The majority of stakeholders disagree that Cornwall Council:

- speaks with one voice across its teams and departments
- is a go-ahead, confident and proactive organisation
- provides clear evidence on what is happening in Cornwall
- takes evidence based decisions.

12. What do stakeholders say when asked about when their organisation has worked effectively in partnership with Cornwall Council?

Stakeholders were invited to share their views on effective partnership working with the Council. The feedback suggests Council works most effectively in partnership with other organisations when:

- The Council has developed trust with partners and established a common understanding and shared goals
- The Council has actively and effectively engaged with organisations and invited open and honest discussion and debate, and when the Council has listened to the views of various stakeholder organisations and the views of people they represent are taken into account and reflected in the outcomes and reviews.
- The Council has welcomed the contribution of partners and entered into meaningful dialogue about how to work together and deliver shared goals
- There are clearly identified goals in common and shared resources to achieve them
- Working with committed and knowledgeable individuals, people with local knowledge for example Community Link Officers (formerly known as Community Network Managers), contacts within Localism, Planning and Environmental Health.

Some specific examples of partnership working were highlighted including developing and delivering capital projects, supporting schools improvement and safeguarding. There is also reference to the hard work of officers and partner contacts such as Community Network Managers.

Feedback suggests partnership working is most effective where the work has focused on shared outcomes which benefit people and the local community and where the work is not purely financially driven, such as developing Cornwall's future economy.

There were some specific points raised by Town and Parish Councils in addition to the above themes including the provision of clear information and timescales for projects and follow through of commitments made.

Examples of effective partnership working highlighted by Town and Parish Councils were recent neighbourhood planning engagement, responding to crises such as floods and housing, and resolving litter and fly-tipping issues. There were mixed views regarding the effectiveness of devolving services of assets to local Town and Parish Councils.

The feedback included areas for development which are in line with earlier findings and specifically highlight that there is a need for meaningful engagement and for the Council to plan further in advance to enable more proactive work with partners.

13. What do stakeholders suggest would make their organisation work even more effectively in partnership with Cornwall Council?

Stakeholders were invited to suggest what would make partnership working with the Council even more effective. The key themes include:

- Better partnership relations, with partners treated as equals and the Council enabling partners to deliver jointly and valuing partner expertise
- Agreed shared priorities for joint working and better understanding of shared goals and alignment to a strategy for Cornwall
- Better communication with partners
- The Council embracing an ethos of co-production with local people, communities and partners more effectively engaged
- More transparent decision making, less bureaucracy and less process-driven
- Timelines for projects that allow partners and stakeholders to respond to changes and support the Council
- More funding available and resources spent more effectively, transparency over policy and the decisions behind funding and resource allocation
- Pooled public spending to remove financial barriers around 'who pays for what'
- Skills and resources were used more effectively across the Council
- More freedom for partners to innovate and deliver in new ways
- Known contact established for partnerships.

There were some specific points raised by Town and Parish Councils in addition to the above themes including suggestions that views and feedback on planning matters are taken into account more fully. Also that there is more and better communication with Town and Parish Councils including consistent Councillor representation at Town and Parish Council meetings.

There were also points raised by Town and Parish Councils regarding the devolution agenda including the responsiveness of certain departments involved in the process and the scope of opportunities available.

14. Overall, how satisfied are stakeholders with the way Cornwall Council runs things?

Very satisfied	5%
Satisfied	17%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	30%
Fairly dissatisfied	38%
Very dissatisfied	11%
Don't know	0%

Overall, stakeholders are fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way Cornwall Council runs things.

15. How did stakeholders apply these statements to Cornwall Council?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Disagree	Don't know
Provides value for money	3%	16%	24%	33%	16%	8%
Is making the local area a better place to live	3%	16%	24%	40%	16%	2%
Is working to make the area cleaner	3%	25%	24%	27%	14%	6%
Is efficient and well run	2%	10%	24%	29%	29%	8%
Is trustworthy	5%	30%	22%	22%	17%	3%
Acts on the concerns of local residents	5%	21%	21%	31%	18%	5%
Is campaigning and standing up for a better Cornwall	11%	22%	33%	21%	8%	5%

The statements our stakeholders are most likely to apply when describing Cornwall Council is that Cornwall Council is trustworthy and is campaigning and standing up for a better Cornwall.

The following are statements our stakeholders are least likely to apply when describing that Cornwall Council is:

- efficient and well run
- making the local area a better place to live
- providing value for money
- acting on the concerns of local residents

Conclusions

Cornwall Council has piloted an approach to undertaking a stakeholder survey. The purpose of the survey was to better understand what Cornwall Council is like to work with and to generate ideas about how we can work in partnership more effectively in the future.

Overall, whilst the pilot survey has identified positive elements experienced by respondents when working in partnership with Cornwall Council, there are some clear areas for improvement.

The positive aspects of working in partnership with Cornwall Council expressed by respondents included:

- strong relationships with Council Officers and recognition of their professionalism and commitment
- recognition that delivery partners across Cornwall are together working towards shared objectives for Cornwall

A range of ideas and suggestions were generated in response to the survey which could improve the effectiveness of working in partnership in the future. These included:

- improving how Cornwall Council communicates and engages with partners
- aligning the collective work and efforts of the Council and partners towards shared objectives for Cornwall
- involving stakeholders early in planning and decision making processes
- building a clear, honest and open dialogue
- being clear about the parameters of engagement and following up with information about the actions that are being taken as a result

The number of stakeholder organisations who responded to the survey (92) was small in comparison to the total number of groups – for example there are 213 Town and Parish Councils and over 4000 voluntary, community and social enterprises in Cornwall. As such, the overall results should be treated as an indicator of views from delivery partners, as opposed to being considered as a representative sample or a definitive view.

It is also acknowledged that the views individual partners expressed in their responses may in part be influenced by their most recent/current experiences with the Council which in turn will have happened during the recent period of both devolution and funding cuts.

Work is already underway to improve partnership working arrangements taking into account recommendations from the recent Governance Review and a Local Government Association Peer Review of our Communications and Engagement.

A number of respondents expressed an interest in continuing this dialogue to ensure we make ongoing improvements to partnership working arrangements and we will use this report as the foundation for those conversations.

The insight and feedback gathered from the survey will be used, together with other sources of insight, to inform a range of Cornwall Council decision making processes, which will shape the organisation's priorities and ways of working over the coming years. We will also use the experience of this pilot to inform the future approach for stakeholder surveys.

Cornwall Council would like to thank the organisations who responded to the survey for their insights and time in completing the survey. For further information about the survey, please contact Carolyn Cadman, Corporate Organisational Development Manager ccadman@cornwall.gov.uk.

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