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Housing & Communities

PropTech Engagement Fund Round 2

Final Report

September 2022

Local Planning Authority/ies	Stevenage Borough Council
Date Report Submitted	28/10/22

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Executive Summary

Region	East of England
LA Rural-Urban Classification Category	Other Urban
Project summary	The aim of the project was to capture broad and qualitative data, engaging residents with open questions in order to establish their priorities for the local area. Previously these activities had been limited in scope and reach, with a very minimal digital element. This was carried out in alignment with our Co-operative Neighbourhoods Programme and represents the building blocks of an ongoing engagement cycle which we want to use to build richer involvement and a co-operative relationship with local communities.
Funding allocated	£125,000
Supplier(s) Appointed	Novoville
Consultation Topic	Area-based local community feedback on what residents would like to highlight within their neighbourhood.
Consultation Outcomes	Significantly increased digital reach to a broader cross section of Stevenage residents alongside substantial data analysis efficiencies. Lessons learnt as to approach, the importance of reach and further development potential.
Consultation dates	Total Engagement Window: May-October 2022 Digital Engagement Window: 29th July 2022 – 30th September 2022

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Contents Page

1.0 Project Summary
- **Summary:**
  Our Cooperative Neighbourhood Programme aims to bring together key local stakeholders, including council officers, elected members and community groups to develop neighbourhood plans, respond quickly to neighbourhood issues, deliver local projects and respond to the most pressing issues with each of our six Co-operative Neighbourhoods areas.

  A key aspect of this is engaging with local residents to ensure our local plans and projects align with the needs of the residents. To achieve this we are developing an engagement cycle. Our engagement cycle has several key aspects:
    - Fundamentally it is broken down into two stages:
      - A main engagement stage that runs from May through to October that is used for the main yearly tranche of data capture.
      - An analysis and workshop stage which runs from November through to March. This allows us to work directly with key stakeholders and build upon the qualitative data capture that has been undertaken in the previous stage.
  In order to realise this we wanted to be able to:
    - Utilise and build upon previous engagement conducted through the Cooperative Neighbourhood teams and the Council's resident's survey. As part of this we wanted to start working towards a dataset that is representative at a neighbourhood level, due to the volume of responses.
    - Building in 'visioning workshops' & participatory budgeting to enable residents to further develop and have direct involvement decisions at a local neighbourhood level. These are specifically focused on identifying:

- - - Quick Wins
      - Participatory Budgeting Project Options
      - Wider Strategic Focuses
    - Our current approach is very 'hands on' conducting face to face engagement via events etc. Focusing on the development of a digital approach would enable us to improve our digital reach to residents. Specifically using:
      - Social Media Approach – wanting to improve our reach via social media using paid ads targeting residents
      - Conversational Style – to engage digitally in a style that encourages people to share their views similar to how we engage face to face
    - Focus our data capture and analysis around effective use of qualitative data by drawing key and specific themes from data to enable stronger more robust conclusions on the priorities of local people. This will give us the ability to draw specific local plans that has residents at the forefront with the 'you said, we did' mentality.

- **Status quo pre-PropTech:**
  Prior to receiving funding, we had a number of different limitations in our approach to consultation. Such limitations were:
    - Same voices – we became reliant on the same voices wanting to express their opinions on topics thus not creating an honest representation of the town. This was the case for in-person engagements and those that commonly engage via social media of which are usually negative
    - Staff resources – there are two areas where staff resources are strained to achieve the standard consultation we require, these are data collection and analysis of data. Currently, we rely heavily on our 'boots on the ground' to gather the quantity of data required to make it reliable. This has involved delivering specific consultation events (pop ups) in areas to speak to residents. Furthermore, we do not have dedicated staff to undertake the analytics of data collected, especially analysing qualitative data that requires specific resources to complete.
    - Marketing & reach – our limited capacity results in poor marketing and reach to residents thus not creating successful engagements

  These limitations create further challenges with scaling up our previous approach to achieve a higher number of responses increasing the validity of the data. Furthermore, this adds to our confidence level of the data collected.

- **Outcomes:**
  Our project achieved a number of outcomes that has improved the quality of interactions with residents and provided a reduction in staff resources required to gain insight from residents:
    - Pre-PropTech we collected 487 responses from residents using traditional methods e.g., face to face engagement, events, basic

online survey over a 12-week period. This required 117 hours of staff time (13 events, one per ward, 9 hours of staff time per event) to deliver this engagement which is a big drain on resources.
- Post-PropTech using Novoville to deliver our online digital engagement over an 8-week period we collected 1,900+ responses of which 1,328 have been used for qualitative analysis and 853 (63%) identified themselves as local residents.
  - This data collected gives us with a 95% confidence level with 2.6% margin for error. Compared to our previous 4.4% margin for error which puts our subsequent results in line with LGA benchmarks on resident satisfaction data.
- Pre-PropTech analysis was completed in-house using current staff adding to their current capacity. This equated to 50 hours (one member of staff over four weeks) to complete this work, from members of staff relying on previous expertise outside of the core requirements of their role.
- Post-PropTech the analysis was completed by Novoville who have the resources and expertise to efficiently analyse the data thus resulting in no additional resources required by us to complete
- 122 email addresses have been harvested from the data to use for future engagements
- This has enabled us to focus more on planning and delivering at existing events making better use of staff resources to collect the in-person engagements as well.

- **Opportunities**:
  This funding has enabled us to build on current engagement programme. Specifically providing:
  - Further scale & reach that has provided a more robust dataset at a neighbourhood level. This will now enable us to make better informed decisions on local infrastructure & projects.
  - Ability to hear from those residents who would typically not interact with the council. These new voices are in stark contrast to typical engagement methods, which can result in a lot of the same voices having disproportionate weight.
  - Resources for innovation allow us to try new ways of engaging with residents. This is something that is sometimes a challenge in a local authority setting. Budget challenges mean that businesses cases for investment often need a level of robustness that is not possible without having already undertaken a pilot version of a project.
  - Fundamentally, the project has allowed us to put into gear our ambitions plans for a yearly engagement cycle, based on our Co-operative Neighbourhoods model, at a scale and speed which would otherwise have not been feasible.

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	Amount Bid	Amount Spent
Staffing Costs	£100,000	£88,000
Application Licence and Support	£20,000	£26,000
IT Equipment	£1,000	£2,000
Management Costs	£4,000	£4,000
Internal Marketing, Legal & Procurement Support	£0	£5,000
TOTAL	£125,000	£125,000

- **Funding review:**
  - We spent less on direct staff costs than anticipated. This was due to us altering the grading of the posts that we brought in. One was brought in as an Assistant Programme Manager to add capacity and another was brought in as Programme Support.
  - Our approach meant that we did not have to bring in dedicated officer support for either data analysis or communications, both of which had been considerations when we submitted the bid. Novoville's approach ensured that these aspects could be covered entirely by the supplier.
  - The Novoville software and platform was slightly more costly than our original estimation. However, the feature set allowed us to make cost savings elsewhere, which ensured that the project was still able to deliver within budget.
  - One area where we did not previously budget costs was the internal, Marketing, Legal and Procurement support that would be required as part of the process. This was especially important in the tendering period, where we had significant internal support.

- *Some wider reflections on the financial elements of the project:*
  - Testing ideas – The freedom that the funding gave us to test ideas and concepts was essential. Without this it would have been a much longer and more challenging process to capture the same breadth of resident feedback.
  - Importance of reach and the impact of digital marketing – As a small borough council, we have a limited social media reach. As advised by the PropTech team, setting funding aside for this element and ensuring it was a key part of the brief was instrumental in the volume of responses we were able to collate.
  - Solutions had significant price ranges and USPs – We wanted to focus on a solution that could be implemented to develop interoperability with our corporate digital platform, rather than creating another disparate system. This meant that Novoville's approach was extremely enticing due to the application element being optional and

the shorter start up times. Adopting a system that had no guarantee of continued funding but was a one stop solution for everything wasn't as attractive a solution because of the timescales involved. Our business case had to focus on the interoperability of the solution alongside existing IT infrastructure and ongoing Digital Transformation work in order to succeed.

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2.0 Lessons Learned
As part of developing guidance for best practice, we want to understand the lessons learned at each stage of your project. We know that these project stages might look different for different projects so feel free to edit the table to reflect your particular experience. Please provide as much detail as possible as these insights will be integral to developing national best practice guidance. Where applicable, please share links or attachments to supplementary evidence such as a copy of your business case, supplier briefs etc. These can be included in the appendices at the end of the report.

Project stage or milestone	Approach - what process was undertaken?	Lessons Learned
Getting started: Developing the business case/gaining organisational buy–in to apply for Round 2 funding.	● Cooperative Neighbourhood engagement cycle is a priority within the programme. ● Building on current plans we developed a business case for investment into digital engagement & this fund came along at an opportune time. ● We acquired buy-in from strategic management and executive members as this was seen as ideal funding to support our ambitions within the programme.	● Aligning delivery with the wider ambitions of the council identified through the corporate plan, the greater the alignment the easier the justification for continuation ● Making the most of external funding pots to utilise as proof of concepts to support internal business cases. ● Unlikely that these can be used to immediately transition projects into business as usual activities but can give a robust evidence base for core investment.
Procurement: developing supplier brief and project budget	● Working with expertise provided by PropTech and our internal procurement team we explored frameworks and developed a brief as options for procurement. ● Decided to create a project brief as we had specific project outcomes	● Establish early whether a framework is applicable, this simplifies the process for the layman. ● Utilise subject matter expertise where you can, go out to all stakeholders, especially engaging with our IT team.

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Procurement: finding and appointing a supplier(S)	● Pre-market research was crucial to help provide information on what suppliers were able to deliver and how that fits with what we wanted to deliver. ● Appointing Novoville as preferred supplier was simple as they demonstrated within pre-market research and through their tender documentation that they understood the aims of what we wanted to achieve.	● Timescales for procurement were longer than we expected and not factored in. ● Learnings from other expertise in our organisation, IT, procurement to help support this process. ● Understanding the technology and being able to articulate what is required to suppliers is key.
Onboarding: PropTech suppliers, additional consultants, and internal teams	● Several engagements with suppliers and stakeholders took place who were able to meet our demands to begin delivery in a timely manner. Along with frequent communications via email we were able to go live within 2 weeks of appointment ● We worked with Novoville on a joint project management approach using their expertise to develop an engaging script and marketing strategy ● We introduced the engagement activities to key elected members	● Identify key stakeholders as part of the business case and work with them throughout the project. ● This extends to other similar delivery teams who may be able to utilise the same approach/technology i.e., Regeneration
Campaign Development: developing marketing and engagement strategies. This might also include developing survey questions, platform content, or user research.	● We passed over the delivery of this to suppliers with expertise, whilst making sure that we can augment this utilising our own reach ● Working with Novoville we evolved our question format from previous engagements, building on what we are asking and using suggestions from supplier to increase	● The role of a combined approach to marketing. ● Need to hit as many channels as possible with the right messaging and utilising elected members more for promotion

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	completion of responses	
Campaign launch and management: working with suppliers to 'go live', attending in person / hybrid events, troubleshooting tech issues	● Our 'Go live' process was straightforward following our onboarding, script development and marketing materials ready to go. We launched on 25th July 22. ● During the first week we had a couple teething issues we the survey, but we worked Novoville to fix and respond to queries ● We frequently held touchpoint meetings to establish progress and discuss how best to increase our reach	● Following our onboarding we handed over to the supplier to deliver whilst staying in communication. Utilising a combined approach could have increased engagement further and we are able to take better learning from their activities that would help to shape future solutions
Campaign wrap-up: Closing campaigns, running analysis, agreeing next steps	● Our consultation closed on the 23rd September 22. ● Novoville were able to share initial demographic data and quantitative statistics. Further analysis is being conducted to analyse the qualitative data and break this down into ward specific feedback ● Once the full qualitative analysis is complete our supplier will provide a dashboard to enable us to run our own reports. ● Following the close of our initial consultation, our next steps are to build on this and begin additional delivery beyond our initial window with supplier.	● Sharing previous analysis so that it has an evolutionary link to what the supplier produces, rather than coming from left field. Have done significant work to get officers and members on board with analysis
Feedback loops: e.g., developing opportunities for ongoing feedback from the community, following up with	● Incorporating lessons learned from previous engagement ● Looking to make changes to the second tranche of delivery taking into account people	● Nature of qualitative engagement means that iterative improvement is very applicable. The type of data you are presented with is hugely malleable and the

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people who responded to the consultation, sharing consultation insights with key stakeholders	outside of Stevenage and how they interact with the town i.e., work, visit friends/family etc. ● Create changes to prevent duplications whilst still allowing boots on the ground delivery	refinement of it is a core part of the process. ● This project represents an evolution of activities we have previously undertaken
Other?	● Building digital engagement into a wider engagement cycle and using it to support the council's wider ambitions around neighbourhoods and neighbourhood plans, which is where we plan to go in the future.	● Challenges of short-term projects. The sweet spot for bringing good officers on board on 2-year contracts. Short projects (~6 months) for us to rely on expensive consultants that takes away from deliverables. ● Current challenges around growth requests for internal funding mean that continuation of projects is challenging as local authorities look to tighten the belts. This makes having a robust base with which to make a case even more important, especially if it can demonstrate efficiencies of savings as a result.

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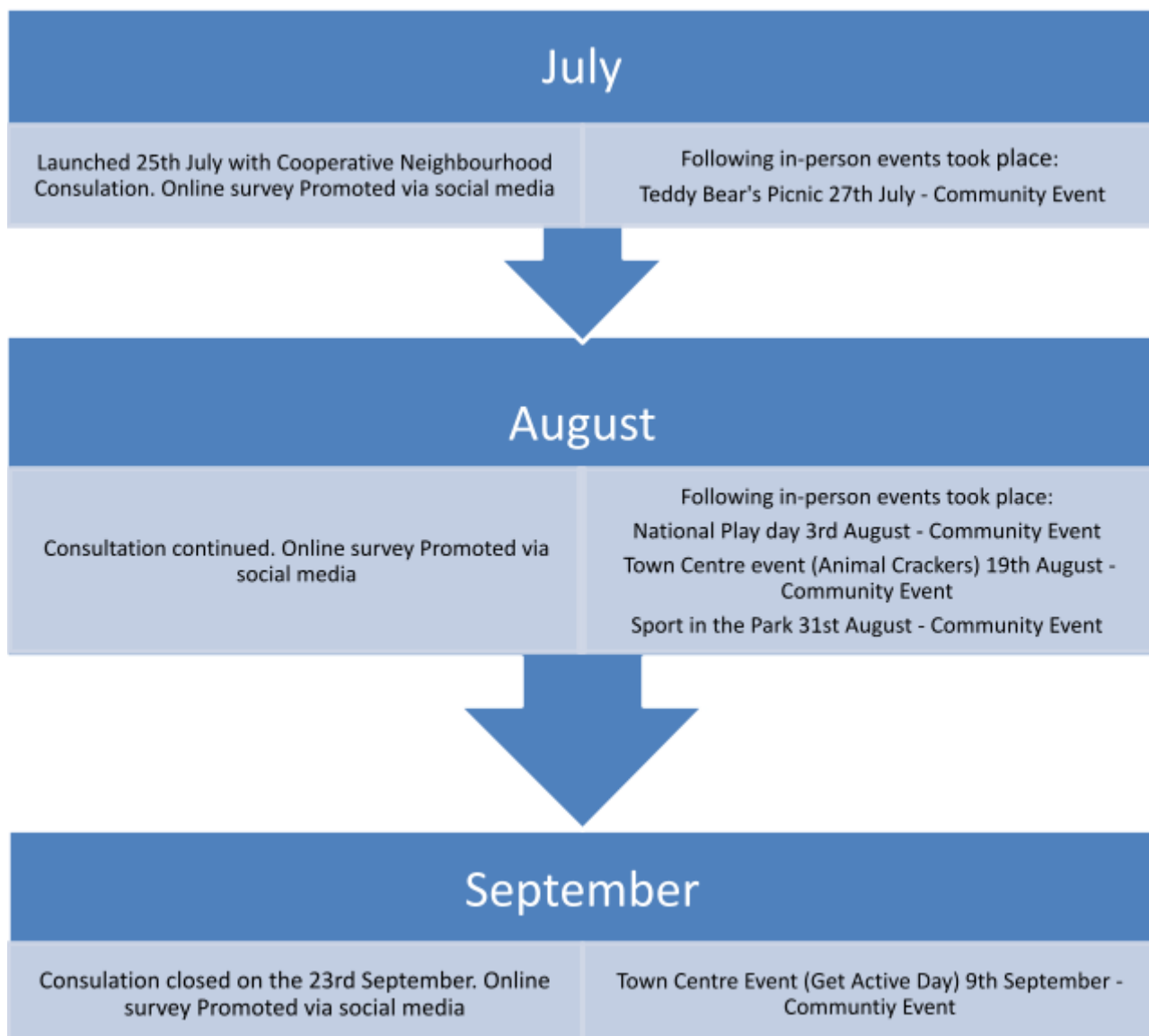Housing & Communities

Final Reflections: Where applicable, please also respond to the following questions:

- **How did you conduct community outreach (digital and/or in person)? What approach, including timelines, budget, and tools were adopted?**

  We used a hybrid approach combining the digital engagement with planned corporate events to deliver face to face engagements. This allowed us to free up officer resources which had previously been utilised to plan and deliver additional engagement events to increase our presence at ongoing events with already established memberships.

  Our timeline was based around the broad engagement period that begins shortly after Local Authority elections in May, through to late autumn, where the nights draw in and the weather worsens. Whilst this is primarily applicable for face-to-face engagement combining this with digital engagement has significantly increased our reach.

  Here is a timeline of engagement activities:

July

Launched 25th July with Cooperative Neighbourhood Consulation. Online survey Promoted via social media

Following in-person events took place:
Teddy Bear's Picnic 27th July - Community Event

August

Consultation continued. Online survey Promoted via social media

Following in-person events took place:
National Play day 3rd August - Community Event
Town Centre event (Animal Crackers) 19th August - Community Event
Sport in the Park 31st August - Community Event

September

Consulation closed on the 23rd September. Online survey Promoted via social media

Town Centre Event (Get Active Day) 9th September - Communtiy Event

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- **Looking back at this project, was there additional guidance or support from DLUHC or other stakeholders that would have been helpful to work through these and other stages of delivery?**

Realistically the biggest challenge with this project, and other similarly targeted pots of funding is the timelines placed upon delivery. Allowing a project to develop and deliver over several years, similar to the approach adopted through UK Shared Prosperity Funding allows for much more breathing room with regards to delivery. This would allow project delivers to have more confidence in the decisions they have made and test larger projects over a longer period of time.

From our perspective, we could have fully tested the implementation of our full engagement cycle and tested the interoperability with our upcoming digital transformation. This wasn't possible with the current timelines as we needed to make sure we were able to deliver within the timescales of the original scheme.

Beyond this, I think the support available from DLUHC was appropriate and helpful, especially where resources were provided around procurement. I would perhaps have liked to see these extended to marketing elements, which ended up being a significant element of the project but are not a particularly strong point of the delivery team.

- **What was the primary reason you chose your particular PropTech supplier?**

There were two primary reasons we chose Novoville as our supplier:

1. Their ability to capture and analyse a large number of responses using paid social media ads using a chatbot tool replicating how we engage with resident's face to face. This kind of reach was not replicable without the use of social media marketing and set it aside from what we were able to accomplish in house.
2. The second reason is their track record of analysing qualitative data and providing a dashboard to create reports on data sets. They were able to provide an impressive demonstration as part of our pre-market engagement, which gave us significant confidence in their ability to analyse the complex qualitative data that we knew would be an essential element of the project.

- **Were there any wider surprises which surfaced through undertaking the project?**

Early on it became clear that it was much more effective to look to an external organisation to provide additional digital reach, rather than just relying on our own previously established channels.
This change in focus significantly changed our priorities in terms of supplier, with many more aesthetically impressive platforms not having the same ability to draw in a user response as our eventual preferred supplier.

13

This changed the focus of our approach towards two fundamental elements:

- The ability to greatly increase our reach to those groups who we traditionally struggle to engage with.
- The ability to provide automated analysis of qualitative data and provides a thematic breakdown of key categories.

3.0 Pilot Outcomes

- **Proposed Outcomes:** The proposed outcomes we suggested in our original bid were slightly more limited, with less of a focus on direct efficiencies. However, the below are aligned with the outcomes specified in the attached spreadsheet
    - Increase in number of people who engage
        - Subscriptions to Application
        - Social Media Engagements
    - Reduced internal resource demands/expertise
        - Analysis of data
        - Planning and delivery of events (focusing on attending already established events

- **Baseline data:** Our Cooperative Neighbourhood engagement numbers from the from boots on the ground and basic digital engagement totalled around 487. This was previously suitable as it was combined with other sources such as our residents survey, which significantly increased the amount of response, but is only carried out every 3 years and has a significant cost element attached.

    Whilst the data from Residents Surveys contains demographic information, what we had previously captured did not allow for us, due to the in-person nature of the consultation elements. This baseline data was far less statistically robust than what we were able to capture this year and allows us to capture a representative sample size, without having to integrate our approach with the full resident's survey.

- **Measurement challenges:** Qualitative data needs to be analysed in order for it to be useful. The lens by which you do this is hugely important and needs to be delivered over time. Main impact will be giving a robust mandate for the delivery of community projects in line with UKSPF, we are happy with the data but obviously the long tail of those benefits hasn't yet been realised.
    - Differences in collection method meant that not all responses were usable – this approach picked up a lot of commuters who do not live in Stevenage but did get the survey. This data has provided to be useful, but this was not something we planned from the outset.
    - Many were from outside Stevenage, which changed the lens through which we wanted to look at results. Clear that it's not only Stevenage residents who are impacted, but many also contribute to the

Stevenage economy and as a result need to have a space for their voice to be heard. Our solution is to add an option to the next round that lets us ask 'What part of Stevenage would you like to talk to us about'.

- **Demographics:** Previously, we haven't collected detailed demographic data due to our collection process. Boots on the ground conversations doesn't specifically lend itself to deep demographic analysis and moreover we tend to see a lot of the same types of people responding, this approach helped us cast the net wider. However, we can compare with what we know about the town's population and previous residents surveys.

  It is clear that this approach has resulted in us speaking to a much broader and more representative group as we have been able to make comparisons with the demographic makeup of Stevenage. Whilst this data has not previously been collected, the fact that the new results align well with this suggests that this is almost certainly an improvement as previous collection methods were not a truly random sample size and typically selected for those individuals who are more likely to typically engage with us.

- **Cost effectiveness**: This funding enabled us to save time but more importantly it provided resources we don't actually have around data analysis. This was previously done due to team skill sets but wasn't actually the core role of anyone assigned to its delivery. The choice between looking at a solution to save time rather than having to make room to allocate those internal resources would have been a more costly but a long-term solution.

  This approach let our core officers focus on the delivery of projects rather than the delivery of engagement events. We were able to tack on to big engagement pieces and contribute to them without the need to run our own and increase this volume.

  We measured this by calculating the previous time and resources costs that we used to deliver similar exercises last summer. As we were able to drastically reduce the number of events we needed to deliver and outsource the analysis of data, this resulted in significant efficiencies highlighted in section one.

4.0 Community Feedback
- **Summary of community consultation**:
  The focus of our engagement was to gain further information on how residents feel about their local area to enable us to create local plans. The questions asked have been significantly improved since our initial consultation. Our initial survey consisted of the following questions:
    - *Postcode or location data*
    - *How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?*
    - *Has your local area got better over the past two years?*

- *Are there any specific issues or aspects of your local area you would like to inform us about?*

Working with Novoville these questions were then developed into the following for our recent engagement:

- *The following two "demographic" questions are optional but can help us target our work better. Do you identify as…*
  - o *Male*
  - o *Female*
  - o *Other*
  - o *Prefer not to say*

- *OK, got it. And what age are you?*
  - o *Under 18*
  - o *18-24*
  - o *25-34*
  - o *35-44*
  - o *45-54*
  - o *Over 54*
  - o *Prefer not to say*
- *First, we'd like to know your general feeling of satisfaction about your local area (we're asking specifically about your local area within Stevenage, not the whole town itself). How do you feel about it?*
  - o *Very satisfied*
  - o *Satisfied*
  - o *Neutral*
  - o *Unsatisfied*
  - o *Very unsatisfied*
- *In the last couple of years, has your view about your local area changed at all?*
  - o *Improved a lot*
  - o *Improved a bit*
  - o *Hasn't changed*
  - o *Deteriorated a bit*
  - o *Deteriorated a lot*
- *Bearing this in mind, which 3 areas do you think we should work on improving as a matter of priority at the moment? We'll give you some examples, but feel free to come up with your own and type up your answers in the box.*
- *Would you like to expand on your answer? Feel free to type up anything. Otherwise, just type "no".*
- *In general, are there any local projects, initiatives or developments which you would like to see in your local area? These could be things which are not necessarily managed by the council, but we could have an influence over (e.g., a local festival, different transport options, etc.)*
- *OK, and just to check, are you a Stevenage Borough Council housing tenant? In other words, is your property rented from the council (if*

> *you rent from a housing association, please answer "no"). If yes. Ok, good to know! Do you have any issues or comments about your council housing? This could be anything at all. If so, feel free to provide any details, including contact details. If not, just type "no".*
> - *If you are interested in hearing more about projects in your local area and future engagement activities (including the potential release of an exciting new local app!), please provide us with your email address. Otherwise, just type "no".*
> - *Thank you so much for your answers to this survey, you've been great. What did you think of the survey?*

This evolution has created a much more nuanced and detailed responses from residents and enabled us to gain better insight into demographics whilst also allowing us to keep and build upon the essential qualitative elements that were the main focus of the activities.

- **Summary of community responses:**
  Novoville were able to provide a high level of responses that we've previously not gained.
    - 1900+ total answers
    - 1328 answers can be considered to produce qualitative results.
    - 853 (64%) have verified their locality with valid postcodes from the Stevenage area.
    - 157 people gave their email address.
    - Preliminary results highlighted several thematic categories that were the focus of resident feedback, these included:
        - Improvements to Parks and Green Spaces (13.3%)
        - Better Transport (10.2%)
        - Local Events (8.2%)
        - Littering and Cleanliness (5.9%)
    - The next step is to undertake sub-categorisation analysis and further draw out specific tangible focuses as part of visioning workshops in the New Year.
    - We are also in the process of comparing these to previous year's survey activities and broadening the engagement out to the full complement of 1,328, rather than the initial 853 which has been used to brief Elected Members of responses specifically by Stevenage residents.
- **Delivering on feedback:** Throughout the project our approach has been to use this as a piloting stage for a larger engagement cycle that will be delivered yearly. This element is the wider engagement that forms the backbone of further analysis and workshop exercises. The broad goal is the creation of Community Plans for each of our Six Co-operative Neighbourhood areas.

The outcome of this project is that we have a larger and more robust dataset with which to complete the first of these engagement cycles in the new year. Officers are already planning the delivery of Visioning Workshops in each of our six Co-operative Neighbourhood areas that will bring council

officers, elected members, and the public together to highlight tangible outcomes for their local area. This is focused on three broad themes:
- Quick Wins
- Participatory Budgeting Project Options
- Wider Strategic Focuses

Following these the next spring and summer engagement period, starting in May 2023, will include a further round of engagement that highlights potential projects that could be delivered, residents are invited to vote on their preferred option. This cycle would then continue yearly, with data captured, analysed and project delivery options identified.

This is tied into the council's plans for the spending of UK Shared Prosperity Funding, which will allow residents to have significant agency in the Place element of these plans.

- **Community testimonials**:
We received a number of good responses from residents with comments on their local area and ideas for projects or 'things they would like to see'. Here are a few quotes which we have found insightful:

I'm concerned that our green spaces will end up as housing. As a retiree, I'd like to see more activities. Online searches haven't come up with anything. Education is always important.

Stevenage needs more recreational green areas for kids football etc, we only seem to have King Georges now, probably the worst town I've seen on my travels for sports facilities.

Eco friendly transport, more affordable and accessible transport, better shops in the centre to bring in more business

Bigger and better markets in the High Street, total replacement of speed humps with more effective and environmentally friendly traffic calming measures.

More green spaces would be great. And a reduction of scooters around the town centre at peak times to lessen the noise pollution

More parks and playgrounds, more splash plays

5.0 Conclusions and Policy Reflections

- **If you could re-start this project what, if anything, would you do differently**?

- ○ Look into using a framework to identify more premarket engagement opportunities. We entered into the project without fully identifying everyone that we wanted to contact. This slowed us down in the procurement phase and put us behind other projects.
- ○ We would look to increase the time we went out for engagement, project timelines prevented this but would enable higher level of responses. Whilst we are satisfied with the level of responses we received we will be continuing to work with Novoville on our Engagement Cycle going forwards to continue to capture additional views and test project ideas with residents at a local level.

- **What longer-term changes, if any, do you expect to make as a result of this pilot? If not, why - what barriers are preventing long term adoption?**
  - ○ We have already had conversations around the successes of the approach and how it could be adopted through our wider teams throughout the organisation including Housing, Climate Change and Regeneration. These conversations have been really fruitful with several departments already looking to adopt a similar approach, with us looking to aid with and support delivery.
  - ○ Fundamentally, our main consideration has been the organisations wider goals around Digital Transformation. We wanted to ensure that we delivered an approach that would be interoperable with the council's corporate digital platform going forwards. This made us shy away from certain suppliers as advice from our Digital and Transformation team suggested that such applications would duplicate elements that they already had in flight.
  - ○ If we had a longer project timeline then this would have been something we were able to explore directly as part of this project. However, as it is now, we have focused on the broad engagement element of our Engagement Cycle which is the fundamental precursor to all future activity.

- **What (if any) other stakeholders (outside of those who responded to consultations) do you think should be involved alongside LPAs to support long term adoption of digital planning?**
  - ○ Our approach is centred on increasing community engagement, especially to those residents who typically are less likely to interact with local authorities. As a result, true involvement of residents in decision making and budget spending is crucial. This is the broad aspect of our Engagement Cycle. Our next step is a narrower approach with key stakeholders to define specific outcomes, before again sharing these with people for their opinion.
  - ○ The benefits of true local agency and involvement in decision making processes, vs. tokenistic approaches that have been historically the focus are a significant focus of our political and officer leadership and are looking to shape our placed based neighbourhood focus on Stevenage.

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- **Policy reflections:**
  - *Where do you think further guidance is required, either for local authorities and the wider PropTech sector?*
    - Would like to see a forum for learning to be shared, at the moment best practice requires significant research to access, but the ability to discuss and learn by making relationships with other likeminded authorities has a huge advantage.
  - *How could DLUHC better support LPAs in the future with the further adoption of digital citizen engagement tools, best practice guidance, or other support?*
    - Current approach is a strong one. Would like to see the government give more certainty to local authorities by allowing projects to be delivered over a longer timescale. This would increase the impact of the projects significantly.
    - Online learning resources would be really helpful. Signposting to solutions or previous projects and giving contact details of those who could be helpful.
  - *If additional funding was available - what do you think future PropTech Fund rounds should focus on delivering / achieving?*
    - Building on what has been achieved. Additional funding would allow us to significantly augment our plans for an engagement cycle, but the scale and scope of that project isn't something that we could accomplish within the timeframe of this project.

Please use this space to include any quotes from your team about your project. Don't forget to attribute the quote so it is clear whose perspective you are sharing (e.g. 'project team member or 'supplier' etc).

- **'Working with an external supplier allowed us to focus on the aspects of engagement that are our strengths, not only did this increase our reach, but also allowed us to reach those residents who we traditionally really struggle to hear from.' – Project Team Member**

- **'Seeing the work undertaken through the PropTech Engagement Project has given us some good ideas on how to take our own agenda forwards, we are already in conversation with the supplier about developing something similar.' – Stevenage Borough Council Officer**

- **'It was good to find a supplier that had the same commitment to asking open qualitative questions and providing nuanced and detailed analysis of this feedback. Previously suppliers have encouraged us to go down more quantitative routes as this makes their analysis job easier, but also tends to rob the information of that depth.' – Project Team Member**

Department for Levelling Up,
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6.0   Additional reflections and feedback for DLUHC (optional)
This is a space for you to provide any additional reflections or feedback for the DLUHC team that you prefer not to be published publicly.

- **Timescales** – Longer projects are better impact wise, and do not significantly increase the funding requirements. At least 1-year timescales are preferable.
- **Light Touch** – The light touch approach taken by the DLUHC team was a large benefit. They provided support and external resources that were very helpful in delivery, whilst not constraining the project team to monitoring and assurance cycles that take away from delivery.