

Dear Council,

In September and October 2020, our municipality conducted the survey 'waarstaatjegemeente', a vital survey for councils to understand their communities, amongst more than 500 residents and 200 entrepreneurs of the municipality of Voorschoten. The survey consisted of two polls, one for residents and one for entrepreneurs. For the first time in The Netherlands, the survey was conducted in English. This way, expats could voice their opinion about the services in Voorschoten. As we find ourselves in the midst of the corona pandemic, we took the opportunity to add questions about the corona measures.

Waarstaatjegemeente is an initiative of The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG). Comparison of municipalities can be read on www.waarstaatjegemeente.nl. This website compiles, edits and presents the data of and on the different municipalities, making it possible to compare them to each other.

In this information letter, we want to inform you about the most important results of the 2020 Poll. The data has been compared to the results of 2018, when we also held this survey. The reports of both the resident and entrepreneur surveys have been added to this letter. These results have also been shared for publication on www.waarstaatjegemeente.nl.

Residents' survey: trust in our public leadership has increased

Compared to the results in 2018, residents' appreciation of the general services of our municipality shows a slight increase to a 7-. The digital services were rated more than sufficient with a 7 and communication and information slightly lower (6-). We are happy to report that, over the past two years, residents' trust in our administration has increased from 13% to 26%. Of course, this shows room for improvement, especially as 45% were neutral towards the municipality council, 21% indicates little faith in the council and 8% hardly to none. Collaboration with residents unfortunately dropped to a 5,5. We must and feel confident we can improve on this.

Appreciation of municipality staff

Much appreciation was voiced for the *hostmanship* of the municipality's employees. The vast majority of residents is positive about their expertise, empathy, solution-orientation and their capacity to give room to customers' considerations. 51% of residents is pleasantly surprised about the service they receive.

High appreciation of Living Environment

Residents value their living environment with 8,5. This is in alignment with the Elsevier survey, where Voorschoten is at the top of the list of best municipalities in the Province South Holland, and in the top 10 of The Netherlands as a whole. The attention the municipality pays to creating an attractive living environment is valued at 7-. A large majority of respondents agrees that flower beds, public gardens and parcs are well kept; that main roads, local streets and smaller paths and pavements are easily accessible, and that the neighbourhood is clean. Additionally, a vast majority (81%) indicates that very little is broken. 92% feels safe in the neighbourhood.

Wellbeing and Care

Appreciation of our wellbeing and care remained the same. 89% of the residents is satisfied about the health care services. 54% of the residents are satisfied about social welfare services. 79% is satisfied about sports facilities and 84% about our public transport. The municipality's efforts to support participation of residents with physical limitations or people in a vulnerable position is valued at an average of 6,5. Generally, people are satisfied about all services that Voorschoten offers. The report shows that residents are aware of the efforts made by the municipality for liveability in the neighbourhoods.

The most important outcomes of the survey per topic (to be finalised)

Subject/Score	2018	2020
Living Environment	6,89	6,75
Resident-Community Relationship		
Collaboration with the inhabitants	5,67	5,5
Community Service		
Community Service	6,63	6,74
Digital services	6,71	6.95
Communication and information	5.67	5,86
Wellbeing and (health)care		
Participation in society	6,48	6,48

Entrepreneurs Survey: opportunities for improvement

The entrepreneurs' survey indicates that there is a slight increase on two aspects, representativity and safety. On the whole, we see a decrease in appreciation compared to the survey results in 2018. The rating for our general services has dropped from 6,5 to a 6-. The decrease was possibly caused by the vast number of staff changes over the past years. What could also have influenced the ratings, is that the survey was held during the corona pandemic. The municipality feels that the results offer many leads for improvement.

Representativity of our municipality

Entrepreneurs give the business climate in Voorschoten an adequate rating. They are mainly satisfied about the accessibility of the town, its many parking spaces for clients and limited criminal offences. 57% of the respondents are satisfied about the level of enforcement of rules with a fairly good score. What emerges from the open-ended questions is their satisfaction about Voorschoten's green character and the towns appearance. They want to keep it this way.

Appreciation of municipality staff

The *Hostmanship* of municipality employees was evaluated more positively on all levels of service than two years ago. Important was the findability of the right person, their solution-orientation, expertise and empathy. Even though the appreciation for our employees increased, there is room for improvement.

The most important outcomes of the entrepreneurs' survey

Subject/Score	2018	2020
Representativity company environment	6,81	6,85
Safety in the company's environment	6,99	7,33
General services municipality	6,46	5,79
Digital Services	5,61	5,55
Professionalism	5,82	5,59
Handling of permit applications	6,46	5,44

Collaboration with entrepreneurs	5,78	4,68
Communication and information	5,72	4,73
Business environment municipality	6,19	5,84
Administrative pressure	5,26	5,23
Business Climate	6,37	6,09
Living environment	7,63	7,31

Investing in collaboration

There is much to be gained in the area of the relationship and collaboration with entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs feel little engagement with the municipality and her (policy) initiatives. In recent years, much effort has been given to communication and collecting input with our Taskforce Centrum, COV and OVV, without really looking at how best to reach entrepreneurs.

The executive committee of the municipality recognizes this need for direct communication and sees many opportunities to connect with individual entrepreneurs, for example to have their periodical Economic Meeting be used to this end.

Municipal charges and administrative burden

73% of the respondents rate the municipal charges and administrative burden as (very) high. It is unknown which administrative burdens are referred to exactly; we will need to go into this more deeply. The new Economic Agenda includes more flexible planning regulations where mixed use will be possible for the town centre. This might contribute to a reduction in the experienced administrative burden.

Municipality Communication around Corona Measures Voorschoten

Because the survey was held in the midst of the corona pandemic, we added a list of questions on the corona measures taken. Residents as well as entrepreneurs were asked to rate the following topics:

- Communication about national corona measure
- Communication about municipality specific measures
- Amount and frequency of communication
- Reachability by phone
- Reachability by e-mail
- Current and update information on the website
- Enforcing rules
- The extent to which residents and entrepreneurs felt supported

Ratings given by residents varied between 5,79 (level of information) and 6,67 (website information up to date). Tips were given in the area of enforcement and communication. There were also compliments. Specifically, for routing in the village and policies on the outside terrasses.

Entrepreneurs' scores varied between 4,94 (sufficient communication) and 6,02 (website information up to date). Tips were given in the area of communication and accessibility. There were also compliments on communication in relation to the weekly market and the routing in the Schoolstraat.

The corona-related questions were tailored to the situation in Voorschoten and therefore the results can't be compared with other municipalities. There was, however, a national survey which resulted in a report on how the corona pandemic resulted in closer collaboration of the municipality with entrepreneurs (*'Corona geeft ondernemersdienstverlening een impuls (hoe gemeenten dichterbij ondernemers zijn komen te staan door corona, hoe dat te behouden en verder uit te bouwen)'*). This report shows that 45% of entrepreneurs felt supported by their municipality, 22% even felt highly supported.

These results have been shared with our Team that deals with Population and Care and are being used to further improve services.

Conclusion: a mixed picture

The results of the survey *Waarstaatjegemeente*, show a mixed picture. The resident's survey shows a positive result but unfortunately, the entrepreneur's survey shows less positives, which prompt us to further actions of improvement.

New civil service organisation

Our new upcoming, civil service organisation, where employees will be working for Voorschoten only, will help us improve our services for residents and entrepreneurs alike. During this first period, we may have to take the impact that this transition will have on our staffing and capacity, into account. It is plausible that during this transition, immediate improvement might be desirable but might not be feasible. Clear considerations and choices will have to be made so that it facilitates the new organisation in Voorschoten with the utmost care and attention.

Investing in collaborations with our residents and entrepreneurs

Our challenge lies in collaborations with our residents and entrepreneurs. We want to make sure that the ratings in two years will be better, and more than sufficient. The experiences of these past years will be put to use to improve current and new trajectories.

For the new organisation in Voorschoten, we are working on quality guidelines. The ideas of our committee and council members on these guidelines is important. In the new year, you will be consulted on the collaborations within the municipality. About the way of working amongst each other, within the new organisation and with external and regional parties.

The development of the independent organisation of the municipality of Voorschoten is focused on making more direct contact between our residents and our organisation and board. This also fits in well with the organisational development of Voorschoten, where we wish to work more task-oriented and from the inside out. This way, our residents/entrepreneurs and the municipality can examine together how they can each contribute to the development in Voorschoten.

We are researching the possibility of creating a digital resident's platform. This way we could reach different groups in our community and broaden representation.

Focus on economic policy and attention for entrepreneurs

The services for entrepreneurs can and needs to improve. It is important to come into contact with a broader representation of entrepreneurs than previously consulted before starting a decision-making process. This way we will better understand what's important to entrepreneurs. In the coming year and a half, we will invest in our relationship with our entrepreneurs. The amount of attention the municipality pays to entrepreneurs and the accessibility of our municipality have our priority.

The new website will contribute to better experiences with our digital facilities. Based on the results of the survey, the council wants to take our level of service and the administrative burden on board as important points of action on the Economic agenda, which is presently being developed, for the next four years.

To conclude

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all residents and entrepreneurs for taking part in this survey. With your input, the municipality received valuable information with which our services can be improved.

Kind regards,