

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

4 JUNE 2008

CUSTOMER PANEL SURVEY (2) – QUALITY OF LIFE

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor Mike Webb, Portfolio Holder for Customer Care and Service
Responsible Head of Service	Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform members of Cabinet of the key findings of the second Customer Panel survey which took place in February-March 2008 (full report attached as Appendix 1)

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Cabinet considers the attached report and other appendices and notes the findings.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council's first Customer Panel Survey was run in May 2007 and results reported to Cabinet in September 2007. This provided officers and Members with in-depth information about residents' opinions on the Council's priorities and levels of satisfaction with Council services. The satisfaction survey is due to be repeated in May 2008, with results to be forthcoming in July 2008.
- 3.2 The attached report (Appendix 1) details the findings of the second residents' survey, which has again been run by SNAP Surveys Ltd, with whom the Council has a contract. The emphasis of this second survey has been on residents' perceptions of their quality of life, and as such the survey was themed according to existing LAA blocks. Residents were asked questions covering the environment, affordable housing, Bromsgrove town centre, health and wellbeing, children and young people, community safety and community cohesion. DCLG plans to introduce a national Place Survey later in 2008 and this will cover similar themes.
- 3.3 The results of this survey, together with the results of the forthcoming satisfaction survey will be used by CMT and Cabinet at their Away Day on 11th July 2008 to review and the Council's corporate priorities and key deliverables. The results will also be used in the annual business planning

process and will be passed to the LSP Board to assist in their review of the Community Strategy. The new Comprehensive Area Assessment framework is heavily focussed on perception measures rather than the process/output measures of CPA. The reporting of results such as these are therefore becoming progressively more important as Councils and their partners place greater emphasis on the need to be 'intelligence-led' in their decision-making.

- 3.4 The quality of life survey was sent out to 1500 households across the district in February 2008. One reminder letter was sent and 704 responses were received in total representing a good response rate of 47%. The confidence interval was +/-3.69% which is a marked improvement on the last Customer Panel survey (6%).¹ The recipient households were selected randomly from the Council's own GIS database, addresses in which had been coded by ward into four geographical areas, and labelled for identification as Rural 1 & 2 and Urban 1 & 2 to provide an indication of perception in different parts of the district. A detailed breakdown of which wards were covered under each area is shown on pages 10-11 of Appendix 1.
- 3.5 Using the Council's own GIS data enabled the novel approach of breaking down responses geographically although it should be noted that the sample sizes for each area are not large enough to be considered statistically valid at ward level – rather, they should be seen as indicative. However, this approach has meant that for the first time the Council has been able to observe how views differ across the District and to gauge the extent to which it is viewed as Bromsgrove-centric. The use of GIS data has also eliminated the costs normally associated with purchasing an address database from the Post Office (Postal Address File) and it also allows the ability to plot response types onto a map of the district. This exercise has been undertaken by Worcestershire County Council for the BVPI Satisfaction survey results, and maps showing district breakdowns from the 2006 survey are attached as Appendix 3 as an example of what might be done in future.
- 3.6 The age range of survey respondents shows an ongoing difficulty in engaging with under 35s, although the perception amongst Council officers that the views of older residents are better represented in this type of consultation exercise are not borne out because 61% of respondents were aged 35-64.
- 3.7 The Council's current selection of objectives and priorities is supported by the results of the survey (Customer Service was not included as a topic in

¹ A confidence interval is used to indicate the reliability of an estimate by giving a margin of error around which one can be fairly sure the 'true' value for that area lies. A smaller confidence interval indicates more reliable results. In a survey such as this, where the results are based on a sample of the population, the confidence interval describes the uncertainty that arises from random differences between the sample and the population itself. The stated results for each question in the survey should therefore be considered as an estimate of the true or 'underlying' value, which will likely lie within the 3.69% on either side of the stated result.

the survey but will be in the satisfaction survey due to go out in May 2008). An extremely high proportion of respondents recycle their waste (95% for paper, 93% for plastic bottles, 86% for cardboard and 88% for tin cans) and there is a further desire to be able to recycle other waste streams – especially other types of plastic. Recycling promotion is seen by residents as the most important thing for the Council and its partners to concentrate on in order to combat climate change (49%), although there is room for the Council's partners to promote home insulation better to assist residents in reducing their own contribution to climate change. The results show that the age group the Council most needs to engage in recycling and home composting is the 18-35 year olds.

- 3.8 51% of respondents felt that more affordable housing should be built in the district, although a dichotomy emerged with only 30% wanting it to be built in their area. In terms of the type of housing desired, the most popular across all areas of the District was family homes, with 1 bedroom flats/houses being seen as least desirable, presumably due to the lack of flexibility in lifestyle this type would offer.
- 3.9 When asked about the improvements residents would like to see made in Bromsgrove town centre, the most popular choices were cheaper parking and a better retail offer. Road layout, cafes and street entertainment were seen as low priorities. In terms of transport across the District as a whole, only 23% of respondents used public transport, although 73% of all respondents were in favour of introducing a Community transport Service for disabled residents.
- 3.10 A range of questions were asked about cultural and leisure provision across the District. A key response for officers and Members to note is that 61% of respondents felt they didn't have enough information to make choices about leisure activities. Cost is also seen as a major factor in preventing residents from using leisure facilities and becoming more active. In terms of cultural activities, only 26% of respondents had been to the Artrix centre in the past year but the experience of the majority of these had been positive. A number of useful comments were made on what improvements respondents would like to see made to culture and leisure service delivery, and in terms of community safety the results also showed the need for Neighbourhood Wardens to be provided with greater powers/ or for their existing powers to be better publicised (51% said they felt they were no substitute for Police Officers and 50% felt their powers were limited).
- 3.11 Respondents confirmed the need for greater Council investment in activities for children and young people because whilst 62% of respondent felt threatened by young people in groups, 77% felt that they would 'cause less trouble' if there was more for them to do. It is interesting that despite the 62% figure above, 57% also felt young people were largely law abiding and well mannered. By the same token, 35% of respondents said young people receive unfair media coverage, yet 21% still felt the media influenced their view of children and young people. A consensus did seem to emerge in the

very high proportion of respondents (95%) feeling parents needed to take greater responsibility for their children. The subject remains a contentious one: it should be remembered that the voices of children and young people themselves are not represented as they were not consulted directly through this survey.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council's existing Customer Panel contract with SNAP Surveys Ltd includes the quality of life survey and satisfaction survey, and this has already been provided for in the 2008-09 budget.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications.

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 The topics included in the survey relate to all the Council's objectives and priorities.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:

- Failure to engage with the community
- Lack of evidence to feed into CPA reinspection
- Failure to measure actions included in the Council Plan, Service Business Plan and Improvement Plan

- 7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

- Failure to engage with the community:

Risk Register: CCPP

Key Objective Ref No: 12

Key Objective: Deliver the Council's Consultation Strategy

- Lack of evidence to feed into CPA reinspection:

Risk Register: CCPP

Key Objective Ref No: 5

Key Objective: Drive delivery of the Improvement Plan, prepare the Council for its CPA re-inspection and prepare for CAA

- Failure to measure actions included in the Council Plan, Service Business Plan and Improvement Plan:

Risk Register: CCPP

Key Objective Ref No: 8
Key Objective: Council Plan

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Customers will be informed of the results of this consultation through the local media. Officers should note results relating to their service areas and use these to inform their own business planning processes. Members should be aware of the emphasis placed on customer consultation and evidence-based decision making in CPA and CAA guidance, and the need to engage participants in future consultation exercises. The results of this consultation will be used to inform and improve service delivery.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The survey was sent to randomly selected households so it is not possible to ensure the sample, and therefore the results, are exactly demographically representative of the population.

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The contract with Snap Surveys Ltd to deliver Customer Panel Surveys was developed using procurement rules and procedures and has been overseen by the Procurement Manager. As budget provision already exists there are no other Value for Money implications

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues None
Personnel Implications None
Governance/Performance Management This report will also go to Leader's Group, PMB and Cabinet.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 None
Policy None
Environmental None

12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	No
Chief Executive	Yes

Executive Director (Partnerships and Projects)	Yes
Executive Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	Yes

13. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards

14. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Quality of Life Survey Report

Appendix 2 Worcestershire BVPI results map – what needs improving in your area?

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Customer Panel (1) Survey – report to Cabinet, 12th September 2007.

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