

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

3RD SEPTEMBER 2008

CUSTOMER PANEL SURVEY (3) - SATISFACTION

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

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the key findings of the third Customer Panel survey (a satisfaction survey) which took place in May - June 2008 (full report attached as Appendix 1, with Historical Benchmarking attached as Appendix 2, Responses to open questions as Appendix 3 and results from self-selecting sample of DUG and E&D Forum members as Appendix 4).

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Cabinet considers the attached report and other appendices and notes its findings.
- 2.2 That Cabinet pays particular attention to the results for questions repeated from last year's survey which track the Council's progress (as perceived by the public) since the Council last ran a satisfaction survey in June 2007 (see Appendix 2 – Historical Benchmarking).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The new Comprehensive Area Assessment framework is heavily focussed on perception measures rather the process/output measures of CPA. The reporting of results such as ones returned for this survey are becoming progressively more important as Councils and their partners place greater emphasis on the need to be 'intelligence-led' in their decision-making. Councils across England will also be required to run the new national Place Survey from September-December 2008 which CLG have introduced to replace the former triennial BVPI general satisfaction survey. The results of the satisfaction survey therefore provide a useful indication of the potential results of the Place survey, which Bromsgrove District Council will be delivering as part of a consortium of Worcestershire and for which results will be reported in February 2009.
- 3.2 The Council's first Customer Panel Survey was run in May 2007 and results were reported to Cabinet in September 2007. That report provided officers

and Members with in-depth information about residents' opinions on the Council's priorities and levels of satisfaction with Council services. In order to track progress, the satisfaction survey was repeated in May 2008, and its summary findings were briefly presented to CMT and members of Executive Cabinet by the Assistant Chief Executive at the Away Day on 11th July 2008.

- 3.3 The attached report (Appendix 1) details the findings of the survey, which has been run by SNAP Surveys Ltd, with whom the Council has a contract. The emphasis of this survey has once again been on residents' satisfaction with Council services and their agreement with Council priorities. Members of Leader's Group may also remember that a residents' Quality of Life survey (based on the LAA themes) was run by the same company on the Council's behalf in February – March 2008 with the results being reported to them in May 2008.
- 3.4 The satisfaction survey was sent out to 1500 households across the district in May 2008. One reminder letter was sent and 611 responses were received representing a response rate of 41%. The confidence interval was 3.96%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 page 10 of Appendix 1.
- 3.5 The Assistant Chief Executive and Senior Policy and Performance Officer visited meetings of the Council's Disabled Users Group and Equality and Diversity Forum in June 2008 to seek their views on the Council's Customer Standards and on their experiences of accessing Council services. It was decided to provide members of these groups with copies of the survey to identify any diverging and similar viewpoints with the main sample (of which 25% considered themselves disabled, 51% were aged over 55 and 4% were not White British). Members of the two groups were provided with 40 copies of the survey (in large print and other formats where requested) and a freepost envelope so that their responses could be returned to Snap surveys for analysis alongside the main sample.
- 3.6 11 responses from the Council's Disabled Users Group and Equality and Diversity Forum were received: a base size too low to be statistically robust but useful nonetheless in identifying differences and similarities with the results of the main sample. The results from these groups are attached as

¹A 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 3.96% on either side of the stated result.

Appendix 4 and should be treated as indicative only, particularly as this sample was self-selecting. The results do however reveal interesting information on the priorities of these groups (including a desire to replace the 'Housing' priority with 'Improving the quality of life of Older people – which reflects the preferences of the main sample). The DUG and E&D sample also gave more favourable responses to getting in contact with, receiving communication from, and influencing the Council.

3.7 In addition to visiting the Disabled Users Group and Equality and Diversity Forum the Council has recently been running District-wide resident focus groups on Council's Customer Standards and accessing Council services, and the qualitative results of these will be reported in September, allowing comparison with the quantitative results contained in Appendix 1.

3.8 Key findings of the satisfaction survey:

- 83% of respondents were satisfied with the ease of getting in contact with the Council (this is up from 54% in 2007), and 70% were satisfied with the ease of getting hold of the right person to talk to.
- 73% would recommend the Customer Service Centre to a friend, an improvement of 1% on the previous year and a high figure in absolute terms.
- 62% remembered receiving Together Bromsgrove (up from 41% in 2007) and 62% of those remembering the magazine found it useful.
- 80% remembered receiving the Council tax leaflet and 55% found it useful
- 61% of residents prefer using the phone to get in touch with the Council. 84% of respondents felt that phonecalls should be answered within 35 seconds or less whilst 48% would prefer calls to be answered within 20 seconds. This contrasts with the results from the DUG and E&D Forum where 45% were happy with the 35 second target and only 18% wanted calls to be answered within 20 seconds.
- Residents were consistently satisfied with all aspects of emailing the Council (results were typically over 80%).
- Of the respondents who use the Council's website 64% were satisfied with it (7% use it once a month or more and 19% use it once or twice a year).
- In terms of the Council's Customer Standards, 'being polite at all times', 'answering the phone within 6 rings', 'ensuring that services, offices and information are as accessible as possible', responding to letters within 10 working days' and 'ensuring a senior officer attends 85% of PACT meetings' all received high levels of satisfaction, which suggests that the Council's existing access channels are sufficient for the needs of residents. The lower satisfaction levels for responding to letters, voicemails in time and in appropriate detail indicates that more work needs to be done in ensuring the Council's good work is not tarnished by these reputation-critical issues.
- 38% of respondents were satisfied with the way the Council runs things (a slight improvement on the 2007 result of 36%).

- Just over 1 in 4 residents felt they could influence decisions affecting their local area which is a relatively low result. However, this may be explained in part by the fact that only 40% of respondents know who their local ward Councillor is.
- The residents of 'Urban 1' (the Bromsgrove local wards of Waseley, Beacon, Hillside, Catshill, Marlbrook, Linthurst, Norton, Sidemoor, St Johns, Whitford, Slideslow, Charford, Stoke Heath and Stoke Prior) were consistently more dissatisfied than residents from elsewhere in the district (see page 14 of Appendix 1). Interestingly, the residents from these wards were also most likely to read a local newspaper (57% of respondents who received a local paper felt that it influenced their views on the Council to some extent).
- Residents indicating they had no understanding of the choices that the Council has to make were more likely to say that they were very dissatisfied with the Council's performance in delivering on its priorities
- Residents were most satisfied with the Council's progress towards delivering the Clean Streets and Recycling priority (46%) and were least satisfied with regenerating Bromsgrove Town Centre (50%).
- 71% were satisfied with the refuse collection service and of those that were dissatisfied the main reasons were debris left behind in the street and collections not being frequent enough
- 91% of residents were against the decision to introduce a fee for green waste collections. This contrasts with the views of the Council's Budget Jury who are engaged in a 6 month programme of detailed information provision and consultation on setting the 2009-10 budget. One interpretation of this could be that residents who are more informed about the reason for the decision are more amenable to it. Street Scene and Community Services are consulting residents separately on this matter (and are providing more information on the rationale for it in the body of their survey) so it will be interesting to compare the result.
- Residents living in 'Urban 2' (Hollywood & Majors Green, Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath and Wythall South) were generally less positive about the Council's cultural and recreational offer than those living elsewhere although they were the most positive about the Bonfire Night event. This may indicate that the Council is not providing enough in their local areas

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 take note of the 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	At Leader’s Group
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	No

13. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards

14. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Satisfaction Survey Report
Appendix 2 Historical Benchmarking

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Customer Panel (1) Survey – report to Cabinet, 12th September 2007.
Customer Panel (2) Survey – report to Cabinet, 4th June 2008.

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