

## **BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**FROM:** Head of Corporate Services

**REPORT NUMBER** **G83**

**TO:** Overview and Scrutiny (Stewardship)  
Overview and Scrutiny (Community Services)

**DATE OF MEETING:** 29 August 2007  
4 September 2007

### **BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: USER SATISFACTION SURVEYS 2006/7**

#### 1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report pulls together the results of four separate satisfaction surveys undertaken by the Council in 2006/7. It highlights the main findings of these surveys, compares performance with this Council's previous results and also, where available, with the results of other councils. It seeks approval for officers to focus on complaints handling, and it seeks Members' views as to the specific issues they would like to progress with the aim of further improving user satisfaction by the time of the next surveys.

#### 2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That complaints handling be focused on as a priority issue for improvement.
- 2.2 That Committee indicates which other issues should be prioritised for further investigation and improvement

The Committee is asked to make recommendations to Strategy on the above matters.

#### 3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications.

#### 4. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 There are links with Strategic Risk 7 – Financial, Performance and Risk Management

#### 5. **KEY INFORMATION**

- 5.1 The Government specifies that councils should collect and report on a number of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) that assess people's perceptions of the services they receive from that council. These surveys are conducted every three years.
- 5.2 In 2006/7 this Council carried out four such surveys by postal questionnaire. These were:
  - The General User Satisfaction Survey – a survey of residents across the district asking questions about attitudes to the Council in general, what issues people felt were important to their quality of life and how well they feel the Council delivers certain services e.g. waste collection.
  - The Tenants Survey – a survey of the Council's tenants covering satisfaction with various aspects of the housing service

- The Benefits Survey – a satisfaction survey of people who use the Council’s Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Service
  - The Planning Survey – a satisfaction survey of people who have used the Council’s Planning Service
- 5.3 Where these surveys have been undertaken in the past, the last time was in 2003/4, they have been reported separately to committee. This year they are presented together to make it easier to get an overall picture of satisfaction with the Council and to highlight any themes or issues that run through the four sets of results. Further analysis has been undertaken in respect of various aspects such as age and gender and where any key differences occur these have been highlighted in the report.
- 5.4 The findings of the surveys are detailed in the Appendix to this covering report with the main points appearing in the Executive Summary. The Appendix does not contain the full technical details of survey respondents which will be added for the final version.
- 5.5 Seven of the twelve satisfaction BVPIs had improved from the previous survey, with five of these improvements being statistically significant. These improvements in satisfaction included planning, recycling, and parks and open spaces. Three areas showed a drop in satisfaction from the last survey of which two were statistically significant. These were overall satisfaction with the Council and satisfaction with household waste collection.
- 5.6 When comparing the Council’s performance with other councils both nationally and locally there is a mixed picture. 2006/7 quartile figures are only available for eight of the twelve BVPIs at present. For these one is top quartile (recycling) and two are bottom quartile (complaints handling and sports and leisure). Overall satisfaction with the Council is second quartile (1% below top quartile performance). When compared with other councils in Suffolk the Council ranks first for recycling but last for complaints handling, waste collection and sports and leisure facilities.
- 5.7 Generally users of specific services, such as tenants, were more satisfied than residents overall. Tenants particularly felt they got good value for money. Babergh residents also tended to feel well informed about the Council although there were specific areas where they felt less well informed such as anti-social behaviour, delivering on the Council’s promises and how well the Council was performing.
- 5.8 For tenants the priority for improvement was the repairs and maintenance service (although the satisfaction level for this is high) while for benefits users the nature of the claim form and the response time to decide on claims were key.
- 5.9 Residents also gave a clear indication of those issues they felt most important and most needed improving. These were affordable housing, good health services and a low level of crime. The results of this part of the survey will be fed into the Corporate Plan Working Group and considered more widely as part of the State of the District Debate.

**Next steps**

- 5.10 Members are asked to consider which aspects of the results they wish to pursue further and, of those, to indicate which they feel should be a priority. Officers will need to then consider the resource implications and report back on the action to be taken.

## **View of Management Team and Heads of Service**

- 5.11 Management Team and Heads of Service have considered the results and recommend that the clear corporate area for action is satisfaction with complaints handling. It should be noted that this is not a judgement on the Council's formal complaints procedure as the way the public interpret making a complaint is wider than those complaints that trigger the formal procedure.
- 5.12 Although satisfaction with complaints handling has improved by 1% since the last survey, a level of 28% represents a poor comparative performance, the best performing districts score about 20% higher. The Council needs to understand why this indicator is so low and also to identify the approach and processes used by the better performers and look at the suitability. Focusing on improving this area is likely to assist in improving other corporate indicators.

## **Other potential areas for consideration by Members**

- 5.13 The areas listed below are those where performance has dropped since the last survey, where the Council is performing less well than comparators or simply appears to be lower than might be expected.
- 5.14 **Corporate**
- Overall satisfaction with the Council
  - Informing the public on specific issues such as antisocial behaviour, delivering on promises and how well we are performing
  - Participating in local decision making (people under 45 years of age)
- 5.12 **Service areas**
- Satisfaction with waste collection
  - Satisfaction with bulky waste collection
  - Street cleansing perceived as worse by over 30% respondents
  - Aspects of cultural and recreational activities
  - Satisfaction of Black and Minority Ethnic tenants
  - Tenant Participation Compact
  - Overall satisfaction with benefits service
  - Opening hours for benefits service users
  - Customer confidence in the information given by benefits staff
  - Satisfaction with the time taken to resolve a claim
  - The benefits claim forms
  - Aspects of planning

## **6. APPENDIX**

Appendix A - BVPI User Satisfaction Surveys 2006/7

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:**

None.

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