

REPORT FOR DECISION

Agenda Item	
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MEETING: PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

DATE: 18 DECEMBER 2006

SUBJECT: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

REPORT FROM: BOROUGH PLANNING, ENGINEERING AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFICER

CONTACT OFFICER: TOM MITCHELL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

TYPE OF DECISION: COUNCIL

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION STATUS: This paper is within the public domain

SUMMARY:
 The report contains the results of a recent Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted with applicants and agents who have received planning application decisions. (Full report in Appendix)

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTION (with reasons):
 The Committee is recommended to note the response to the survey.

IMPLICATIONS -

Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	N/A
Financial Implications and Risk Considerations	N/A
Statement by Director of Finance and E-Government:	N/A
Equality/Diversity implications:	N/A
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	N/A
Are there any legal implications?	No
Staffing/ICT/Property:	N/A

Wards Affected: ALL

Scrutiny Interest: N/A

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR:

Chief Executive/ Management Board	Executive Member/ Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Scrutiny Commission	Executive	Committee	Council

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Council is required to conduct a survey of applicants and agents, the results of which are submitted as a Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI111). The survey is undertaken every 3 years, the last being in 2003, and is instigated by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The broad objective of the study is to establish benchmark levels of satisfaction, amongst planning applicants and agents, with the services they receive from the Council.

The Council has again used the services of Beacon Research to undertake the survey work and report on the results, a full copy of which is attached.

2.0 COMMENT

The customer satisfaction level for this year's survey is 78.5% and this compares with a satisfaction level of 76.1% in 2003.

The past 3 year's has seen dramatic changes within the National planning system and has also seen many changes locally including:-

- Increased officer delegation
- Improving performance (speed)
- Many staff changes
- Introduction of e-planning
- Planning policy changes including - House Extensions and Housing restrictions policy

Hence during this period there has been a risk that the customer satisfaction level may have slipped but it is pleasing to note that it has not.

It can equally be said that perhaps the changes should have improved customer satisfaction by a greater extent than 2.4%. Whilst this may be

disappointing the results do indicate an improving service and any improvement is to be welcomed.

Approximately 65% of respondents thought the service was the same as 3 years ago but importantly more respondents thought the service was actually better rather than worse.

Out of 164 responses only 20 generated specific comments, most of which reflected an unsatisfactory outcome (application refused).

The area that continues to generate most dissatisfaction is keeping applicants informed about the progress of applications. Despite the on-line access to the application file, it is proving difficult to resource a more proactive dialogue with applicants and agents about the progress of their planning application.

The table below lists some of the results from other Authorities in and associated with Greater Manchester:

Authority	BVPI 111 for 2006
Stockport	83%
Wigan	79.5%
Bury	78.5%
Blackpool	77.2%
Tameside	76.7%
Oldham	76.5%
Salford	69.1%

3.0 CONCLUSION

The findings of the survey and the resulting Best Value Performance figure are a welcomed improvement on the previous figure. The “score” compares well with neighbouring Authorities and reflects a good achievement for the service.

The results represent a modest improvement in customer satisfaction, compared to the 2003 survey, but do continue to indicate areas where further improvement can take place and attention will need to be paid to the areas of communication and provision of information/advice.

List of Background Papers:- None

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