

REPORT TO CABINET
BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

Contact Details:- Sara Moutard
Designation:- Head of Policy
Ext. No:- 2361
E Mail Address:- sara.moutard@braintree.gov.uk

Background Papers:- Corporate Performance Plan 2007-2008
Financial Implications:- None at this stage
Equalities Implications:- None
Legal Implications:- None
Options: None
Risks: Failing to respond to the need to improve satisfaction ratings will lead to poor inspection results and reduced confidence in the Council by local communities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the results of the three-yearly Best Value Satisfaction Surveys which were carried out by the Audit Commission last year and compares them with other surveys which have been carried out during the year.

The results show that Braintree District Council scores in line with the national average in terms of satisfaction with the overall service provided by the authority – notwithstanding the fact that our scores are lower than in previous years. This accords with the national trend which shows that satisfaction in relation to public services generally has deteriorated.

Satisfaction in relation to some specific services has increased – particularly leisure services.

Improvements need to be put in place to sustain those increases and to ensure that where scores have deteriorated the situation is addressed and that satisfaction levels increase.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) That members note the survey results
- (2) That the situation regarding overall satisfaction with the authority in general be researched in more detail and an action plan for improvement be put in place
- (3) That negotiations be entered into with Essex County Council and the Essex Partnership with a view to a combined public service satisfaction survey being developed for the Braintree District which builds on the Local Area Agreement Tracker Survey process.

1. Background

Braintree District Council currently uses four different types of surveys to identify satisfaction levels with the authority:

These are:

- (i) the Best Value General survey (three-yearly)
- (ii) service-specific Best Value satisfaction surveys (three-yearly)
- (iii) the Essex Local Area Agreement 'tracker survey' (quarterly)
- (iv) an annual satisfaction survey (annually in the years when the Best Value General survey is not carried out)

Brief details about each survey are set out below:

(i) Best Value General Survey

This survey is a national requirement – it applies to all local authorities and has to be carried out every three years. It asks questions specifically in relation to ten Best Value Performance Indicators. These are set out in the left hand column of the table attached at **Appendix 1**.

An external research company carries out the survey in accordance with strict methodology laid down by the Audit Commission and central government. 2,800 postal surveys are sent throughout the District to addresses at randomly selected post-code areas.

The Audit Commission weights the results for comparison purposes and to ensure consistency.

(ii) Service Specific Best Value Satisfaction Surveys

In addition to the Best Value General Survey, three-yearly service-specific surveys are also required for Housing, Planning and Benefits. These were carried out in-house last year. The early results are attached at **Appendix 2**. They are awaiting final verification by the Audit Commission.

Unfortunately, due to an administrative error, it is likely that the indicators will be qualified for 2006/07 (ie the Audit Commission will not take them into account when assessing the Council's overall performance for Comprehensive Performance Assessment purposes). However the results can and will be used when planning service improvements and corrective action is being put in place to mitigate the situation.

(iii) The Essex Local Area Agreement (LAA) Tracker Survey

Essex County Council commissions and co-ordinates the Tracker Surveys on a quarterly basis and uses them to monitor progress against the targets set out in the Essex Local Area Agreement. They are postal surveys and are sent to 10,500 households throughout Essex. They duplicate the questions in the BV General survey and also ask additional questions about living in Essex.

The first such survey was carried out at in October and was broken down to District level. Future surveys will only be assessed at County level however Essex County

Council has offered each District and Borough the opportunity to add to the sample size in their area, to ask additional questions and to have District level analysis carried out subject to the additional costs being met (see recommendation 3).

(iv) Annual Satisfaction Survey

These have traditionally been commissioned by Braintree District Council. In 2004 (prior to the development of the Essex Local Area Agreement) it was agreed that they would be carried out annually in the years when a Best Value General survey is not carried out. Appropriate funding was allocated.

These surveys follow the same methodology as the BV General survey and expand on the questions which are asked. The table below shows the overall satisfaction levels with Braintree District Council in each year that a survey has been carried out.

Survey carried out by:	Year	Satisfaction level (%)
Foresight	1993	81.2
NOP	1998	79
MORI (BV General survey)	2001	73
NOP (BV General survey)	2004	58
NOP	2005	59
BMG (BV General survey)	2006	55

2. Analysis

2.1 2006/07 BV General Survey results and comparisons with previous years

There are ten questions in the Best Value General survey which relate to satisfaction related Best Value performance Indicators. Of the ten, eight can be compared with previous years performance. Of the eight, six have improved and two have deteriorated although not by a great margin.

The results of the 2006/07 survey are attached at **Appendix 1**. Also shown are comparisons against levels in 2003/04 (when the last three-yearly survey was carried out), 2005/06 (when the last BDC un-audited survey was carried out) and the LAA Tracker Survey.

The most significant improvement is satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities where levels have increased from 51% in 2003/04 and 45% in 05/06 to 59% in 2006/07 – still only placing us in the 3rd quartile nationally. Although satisfaction with parks and open spaces increased by 4% compared with 2003/04 it remains in the third quartile nationally and does not compare favourably with either the Essex or the national averages.

Although two show deterioration from 2003/04 (BV3 – the % of citizens satisfied with the overall service provided by the authority and BV90a – the % of people satisfied with household waste collection) they have actually gone up a quartile when compared nationally with performance in 2003/04. Nevertheless the satisfaction levels are still low.

All of the indicators therefore require action in order to ensure ongoing improvement.

2.2 Overall situation

There are a total of 26 satisfaction related indicators (including BV General survey and service-specific indicators). Of these, 3 (11.5%) cannot be compared with the last audited survey in 2003/04. 13 (50%) show that satisfaction has improved, 9 (34.5%) show that it is deteriorating and 1 (4%) has remained static.

Two of these indicators relate to services which are either not provided by the Council (libraries) or which we do not have in the District (theatres and concert halls) however the Audit Commission's view is that we have a duty to promote the use of these facilities and they are therefore taken into account in our overall assessment.

2.3 Comparison with other Essex authorities and nationally

Appendix 3 shows how Braintree District Council's scores compare with the other District and Borough Councils in Essex and which quartiles we are in when compared with other local authorities nationally.

It can be seen that all of the Braintree results are close to the average results for Essex however satisfaction levels are low generally across the County. The highest % of satisfaction with the overall service provided by an authority in Essex is only 64% and the lowest is 45%. Only three local authorities in Essex are in the top quartile nationally for that particular indicator.

The national figures have only recently been received and require further analysis however it can be seen from the early results that the number of indicators in each quartile (ie when compared with the national figures) are as follows:

Top quartile = 2
2nd quartile = 3
3rd quartile = 4
Bottom quartile = 1

3. Improvements

The particular area for concern therefore is the satisfaction level with the overall service provided by the Council. Whilst this is in line with the national trend which shows a decline in satisfaction with public services generally – and Braintree DC is in the 2nd quartile when compared with other authorities - it nevertheless requires improvement. A comprehensive action plan needs to be put in place to ensure that the situation is remedied.

All satisfaction related performance indicators which relate to BDC services have been classified as 'high priority' in the Corporate Performance Plan 2007/08. Performance monitoring sheets have been or will shortly be completed for all of these indicators which show how targeted improvements for the coming year will be achieved. They will form part of the Corporate Performance Monitoring and Management framework and will be monitored closely by the Performance and Efficiency Group and Management Board. They will be reported on a quarterly basis in performance reports to Cabinet.

4. Future methodology

The Government proposes to move away from 'process based' indicators to a system of 'outcome based' indicators which will emerge from a revised Local Area Agreement for Essex which is to be completed in 2008. The revised performance management system will be known as 'Comprehensive Area Assessment' (CAA).

The CAA methodology is currently the subject of national consultation and the details have yet to be finalised however it is widely acknowledged that the focus will increasingly be on assessments of satisfaction with local public services and improvements in outcomes for people in local areas.

It is essential therefore that a robust and sustainable method of assessing satisfaction levels is established at the earliest opportunity – without burdening local communities with a plethora of surveys from different organisations - which can be confusing and result in duplication.

It is accordingly recommended that negotiations be carried out with Essex County Council and the Essex Partnership with a view to establishing a combined public service satisfaction survey for the Braintree District which builds on the LAA Tracker Survey process.

5. Recommendations

In light of the results for 2006/07 it is recommended:

1. That members note the survey results
2. That the situation regarding overall satisfaction with the authority in general be researched in more detail and a detailed action plan for improvement be put in place
3. That negotiations be entered into with Essex County Council and the Essex Partnership with a view to a combined public service satisfaction survey being developed for the Braintree District which builds on the Local Area Agreement Tracker Survey process.

Sara Moutard
Head of Policy
July 2007

APPENDIX 1
Braintree District Council – Best Value General Survey – weighted results 2006/2007

NOTE:

- (1) These results are weighted. They are lower than the un-weighted results.
- (2) The Audit Commission will compare performance against 2003/04 Survey results. The 2005/06 survey was commissioned by BDC and was not audited.

PI No.	Description	00/01 quartile and %	03/04 quartile and %	05/06 quartile and %	2006 ECC Tracker	06/07 quartile and %	Improvement in % compared with 2003/04	Improvement compared with 2005/06
BV3	The percentage of citizens satisfied with the overall service provided by the authority	2 nd (72%)	3 rd (58%)	3 rd (59%)	62%	2 nd (55%)	▼	▼
BV4	The percentage of complainants satisfied with the handling of their complaint by the authority	Top (45%)	Bottom (28%)	2 nd (36%)	N/A	Top (38%)	▲	▲
BV89	The percentage of people satisfied with the standard of cleanliness in their area	N/A	3 rd (61%)	Top (67%)	N/A	3 rd (68%)	▲	▲
BV90a	The percentage of people satisfied with household waste collection	N/A	Bottom (81%)	Bottom (80%)	N/A	3 rd (77%)	▼	▼
BV90b	The percentage of people satisfied with waste recycling facilities	N/A	2 nd (70%)	Top (77%)	N/A	2 nd (72%)	▲	▼
BV119 a	The % of residents satisfied with sports and leisure facilities	2 nd (55%)	3 rd (51%)	Bottom (45%)	N/A	3 rd (59%*)	▲	▲
BV119 b	The % of residents satisfied with libraries	N/A	N/a	N/a	76%	Top (81%)	N/a	N/A
BV119 c	The percentage of residents satisfied with museums and galleries	Bottom (39%)	3 rd (31%)	Bottom (30%)	N/A	2 nd (39%)	▲	▲
BV119 d	The % of residents satisfied with theatres and concert halls	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Bottom (25%)	N/A	N/A
BV119 e	The percentage of residents satisfied with parks and open spaces	3 rd (57%)	Bottom (64%)	Bottom (61%)	73%	3 rd (68%)	▲	▲

* = Top quartile in 03/04 was 60%

APPENDIX 2
Planning, Housing and Benefits Satisfaction Survey results 2006/07

- NOTE: 1. All are still subject to final verification by the Audit Commission
 2. Quartile status is calculated using 2003/04 parameters as 2006/07 parameters are not yet available
 3. None are included in the LAA Tracker Survey

PLANNING SATISFACTION							
PI No.	Description	00/01 quartile and %	03/04 quartile and %	05/06 quartile and %	06/07 quartile and %	Improvement compared with 2003/04	Improvement compared with 2005/06
BV111	The percentage of applicants satisfied with the planning service received from the authority	N/A	3 rd (69%)	N/A	2 nd (75%)	▲	N/A

HOUSING SATISFACTION							
PI No.	Description	00/01 quartile and %	03/04 quartile and %	05/06 quartile and %	06/07 quartile and %	Improvement compared with 2003/04	Improvement compared with 2005/06
BV74a	The percentage of all council tenants, or a representative sample of council tenants, stating that they are satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord when surveyed NOT ADJUSTED FOR DEPRIVATION	N/A	81%*	84%	83%*	▲	▼
BV74a	The percentage of all council tenants, or a representative sample of council tenants, stating that they are satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord when surveyed ADJUSTED FOR DEPRIVATION	N/A	2 nd (90%)	N/A	2 nd (90%)	↔	N/A
BV74b	Satisfaction of ethnic minority local authority tenants (excluding white minority tenants) with the overall service provided by their landlord	N/A	Return was too low to measure	N/A	Bottom (55%)**	N/A	N/A
BV74c	Satisfaction of non-ethnic minority local authority tenants with the overall service provided by their landlord	N/A	3 rd (80%)	N/A	2 nd (83%)	▲	N/A
BV75a	Satisfaction of council housing tenants with opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord NOT ADJUSTED FOR DEPRIVATION	N/A	57%*	61%	61%*	▲	↔
BV75a	Satisfaction of council housing tenants with opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord. ADJUSTED FOR DEPRIVATION	N/A	2 nd (74%)	N/A	Bottom (66%)	▼	N/A
BV75b	Satisfaction of ethnic minority council housing tenants (excluding white minority) with their opportunities for participation in management and decision-making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord.	N/A	3 rd (57%)	N/A	3 rd (54%)**	▼	N/A

BV75c	Satisfaction of non-ethnic minority council housing tenants with their opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord.	N/A	Bottom (59%)	N/A	3 rd (61%)	▲	N/A
--------------	--	-----	--------------	-----	-----------------------	---	-----

* = No quartile information available

** = the return for these surveys was a total of only 11 out of 2,500

BENEFITS SATISFACTION					
	Benefits indicators do not have national quartile comparators No surveys were carried out in 2005/06				
PI No.	Description	2000/01	2003/04	2006/07	Improvement compared with 2003/04
BV80a	Benefits Survey – Contact with office	N/A	81%	82%	▲
BV80b	Benefits Survey – Service in the office	N/A	81%	80%	▼
BV80c	Benefits Survey – Telephone service	N/A	76%	70%	▼
BV80d	Benefits Survey – Staff in the office	N/A	80%	79%	▼
BV80e	Benefits Survey – Forms	N/A	65%	69%	▲
BV80f	Benefits Survey – Speed of service	N/A	74%	72%	▼
BV80g	Benefits Survey – Overall satisfaction	N/A	81%	79%	▼

**APPENDIX 3
COMPARISON OF BEST VALUE GENERAL SURVEY SATISFACTION INDICATORS WITH OTHER ESSEX AUTHORITIES AND NATIONALLY**

	BV3 – Overall satisfaction with the Council	BV4 – Satisfaction with complaints handling	Satisfaction with cleanliness	Satisfaction with household waste collection	Satisfaction with waste recycling facilities	Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities	Satisfaction with libraries	Satisfaction with museums and galleries	Satisfaction with theatres and concert halls	Satisfaction with parks and open spaces
Braintree	55	38	68	77	72	59	81	39	25*	68
Basildon	45	24	67	92	81	56	82	19	23	77
Brentwood	64	41	78	84	82	69	81	19	40	87
Castle Point	52	35	72	86	77	56	78	15	19	60
Chelmsford	62	44	76	92	77	66	82	52	56	83
Colchester	50	31	60	75	71	66	82	66	61	83
Epping Forest	52	38	65	67	73	59	72	24	18	76
Harlow	45	33	67	80	76	55	79	46	55	80
Maldon	50	41	78	86	83	64	80	35	18	83
Rochford	62	35	77	88	76	67	86	24	28	82
Tendring	50	39	71	83	76	53	76	23	46	67
Uttlesford	55	37	75	76	71	63	68	48	28	75
Essex Average	53.5	36	71	82	76	61	79	34	35*	77
BDC is:	above by +1.5%	above by +2%	below by -3%	below by -5%	below by -4%	below by -2%	above by +2%	above by +5%	below by -10%	below by -9%
National average	55	35	71	81	72	60	75	38	37*	74
BDC is:	same	above by +2%	below by -3%	below by -4%	same	below by -1%	above by +6%	above by +1%	below by -12%	below by -6%
National Top quartile parameter	60	38	74	86	76	65	78	50	52	78
National Median	55	34	71	81	72	60	75	38	37	74
National Bottom quartile parameter	50	32	65	73	68	55	71	26	26	68
Braintree is in quartile . .	2	1	3	3	2	3	1	2	4	3
Ranking in Essex (out of 12)	4th	Joint 5th	8th	9th	10th	Joint 7th	Joint 5th	5th	8th	10th

* The Braintree District does not have any Council owned or managed theatres or concert halls