

2009 Report
Customer Survey
Rural and Parish Liaison Service

Date: October 2009

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1. Executive Summary

This report gives the results from an annual customer service review of the Rural and Parish Liaison Service undertaken with all 54 Parish and Town councils in the Braintree District. This was in the form of a questionnaire covering the following four areas: - 1. Contacting the team, 2. Information sent out i.e. Parish Update, letters etc, 3. Events/forums/network meetings; and 4. Overall support from the team.

There was a slight improvement with responses this year as more questionnaires were returned (26). We were marked higher for Questions 1 and 4 and slightly lower for Questions 2 and 3 but overall there was an improvement.

To conclude, taking into account the higher scores achieved this year for contacting the team and for how good our general support is considered, we believe this shows a continued improvement. The results show that most of the parish and town councils believe we give an excellent and useful service as most of the scores were above 8 (very good or excellent).

The recommendations for the service for the four areas as indicated in paragraph 1 of this summary are to improve and update the Parish Information pages of the website, encourage more parish councils to use the website, research ways to include relevant information in the Parish Update, for all parish councils, large and small which will be implemented in future editions, and to improve feedback from our own parish events and those of other district services.

2. Introduction

An annual customer service review is required as part of the Braintree District Council Corporate Quality and Compliance auditing process and gauges levels of satisfaction and the effectiveness of the service. This enables the team to identify areas which may require improvement or change and also where we have been successful in improving our service.

3. Report

1. Review Method

On 23rd July 2009 a letter enclosing a questionnaire was sent to all parish/town clerks in the Braintree district to be returned by end of September 2009. A copy of the letter and questionnaire is attached to this report (Appendices 1 and 2).

There were four main questions covering:

- Contacting the team
- Information sent to parish councils i.e. Parish Update, letters etc
- Events/Forums/network meetings for Parish Councils
- Suggestions for improvements to service

A copy of the letter and questionnaire is attached to this report (Appendix A and B). A completion date of 30th September was given for return of the document.

2. Response from the Parish and Town Councils

26 questionnaires were returned from the 54 sent out which was a slight improvement on the previous year.

3. Questionnaire

The following tables show the average scores taken from the 26 returned questionnaires, (top score being 10 and lowest being 1). To compare, the previous year's results are shown in brackets.

Question 1. Have you needed to contact the Rural and Parish Liaison Team during the past year either by telephone/letter/email or personal visit? If your answer is yes, how do you consider the service performed?

a. Initial contact, i.e. were you treated in a courteous and helpful manner?	9.5	(previous year) (9.5)
b. How well and efficiently did the team respond to and follow up on enquiries?	9.2	(9.1)

Question 2. When receiving information from the team:

a. Is the language used, for example, in letters, emails and newsletters easy to understand, i.e. is plain English used?	9	(previous year) (9.3)
b. The Parish Update (newsletter), in terms of content and layout – is the information relevant and helpful?	8	(8.4)
c. Is the information on the website useful?	7.9	(8.3)

Question 3. Events – from time to time the team organise events/forums/network meetings

a. In general, how interesting and helpful do you consider these are?	7.6	(previous year) (7.7)
b. How well do you consider the team feeds back information from these events?	7.9	(8.7)

Question 4. Overall, how good do you consider the support given by the Rural Issues and Parish Liaison Team?

9.1	(previous year) (8.9)
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Comments and Suggestions for Improvement

The following are comments from the parish/town councils.

An excellent service, much appreciated by my Council's Members.
Parish Information Pages on the website – Not logged on.
Events – Need to be morning meetings to be able to attend.
Parish Update - We're a very small parish so much of the information is not relevant, but I'd imagine it's very useful for larger parishes.
Events – Unfortunately I have not been able to attend. The evenings are generally very tricky for me – perhaps a daytime meeting?
Events – Too early to say, not been a Parish Clerk long enough to judge.
Can you actually see the Stour Valley from Alphamstone. There is a lovely view from the viewpoint on the hill to Bures out of Lamarsh. Use an actual image, not a stock image.

4. Conclusions

Question 1 'Contact and follow-up', scored '10's (excellent) from most of the Parish Councils, with all scores above 8. The follow-up was marked slightly higher than last year which gave an overall higher score.

Question 2 on 'Information', received many top scores as for the previous year. However one particularly low score gave a slightly lower overall result of 7.9 (previous year 8.3) for the website. This was a disappointing result for the team, as the Parish Information pages of the website have been considerably improved this year, with the addition of individual pages for all parishes, with links to Ward Member details, Office of National Statistics for the parish and service information from the Rural Services Survey. It is apparent the comment from the parish council gives an explanation for the low score. They would have preferred we use an actual image, not a 'stock' image of their parish.

A note was placed on the parish pages when they went live, indicating that some 'stock' images were being used until photographs were available. As there are 54 parishes and towns in the district, adding pictures for each parish is taking some time to complete – all parishes and towns have been contacted to help with their own favourite pictures but not all have responded. We are taking appropriate photos as and when out in the parishes.

Question 3 on 'Events', received mostly scores above 7 with a number of 9s and 10s which gave an average score similar to last year. However, a couple of low scores for feeding back from events, reduced the average score (7.9) which came out slightly lower than last year (8.7). The team uses the Parish Update and the website to feedback from events – alternative routes may need to be sought.

Question 4 requested an overall score for how good the parish councils considered the support given by the Team. This showed a higher score of 9.1 than last year (8.9)

'Comments and Suggestions' were left blank in most of the returned questionnaires. Where it was completed, the comments were varied including suggestions to hold events/meetings in the morning to enable attendance, not being able to judge the website as they hadn't 'logged on', too early to comment as the Parish Clerk hadn't been in post long enough to judge, through to 'An excellent service, much appreciated by my Council's Members'.

To conclude, taking into account the higher scores achieved this year for contacting the team and for how good our general support is considered, we believe this shows a continued improvement and also indicates that most of the parish councils believe we give an excellent service.

5. Recommendations

Although we've received another excellent review from our customers, the following are recommendations for improvements to our service based on the findings of our survey:

- Continue to improve and update our Parish Information pages on the website.
- Encourage more parish councils to use the Braintree District Council website by email, reminders at Parish Cluster meetings and in the Parish Update.
- When compiling the Parish Update, research ways to include relevant information for all parish councils, large and small and implement in future editions.
- Improve feedback from our own parish events and those of other district services by email, website updates and in the Parish Update.

6. Appendices

Appendix A – Letter dated 23rd July to All Parish and Town Clerks

Appendix B - Questionnaire

APPENDIX A

Lh/14.1

Linda Hadley
Linda.Hadley@braintree.gov.uk
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2343
23rd July 2009

To: All Parish and Town Clerks
In the Braintree District

Dear Colleagues

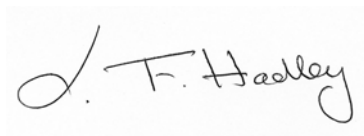
Rural Issues and Parish Liaison – Review of Service Provision

In order to improve our service, we need to assess our performance annually. To assist with this, please would you complete and return the enclosed survey by 30th September 2009.

The report with results from the 2008 survey, have been published on our website. (link: <http://www.braintree.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/0F51E09C-B892-4D93-9598-D04CD02F765B/0/RuralIssuesandParishLiaisonServiceReview2008.pdf>) However, if you wish to be sent a copy, please contact me.

Thank you once again for your help with this.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "L. F. Hadley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and 'H'.

Linda Hadley

**BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL - RURAL ISSUES AND PARISH LIAISON
REVIEW OF SERVICE PROVISION**

APPENDIX B

Colleagues,

Using a sliding scale from 1 to 10, **where 1 is very poor and 10 is excellent**; please give a score on the service provided by the Rural and Parish Liaison Team: **(IF POSSIBLE, PLEASE RETURN BY 30th September 2009.**

1. Have you needed to contact the Rural and Parish Liaison Team during the past year either by telephone/letter/email or personal visit? If your answer is yes, how do you consider the service performs? If your answer is no, please continue to question 2.	Score 1 - 10
a. Initial contact, i.e. were you treated in a courteous and helpful manner?	
b. How well and efficiently did the team respond and follow this up?	
2. When receiving information from the team:	
a. Is the language used, for example, in letters, emails and newsletters easy to understand, i.e. is plain English used?	
b. The Parish Update (newsletter), in terms of content and layout - is the information relevant and helpful?	
c. If you've looked at the Parish Information pages on the website, have you found these useful? (www.braintree.gov.uk – link to parishes and towns from Main Page)	
3. Events – from time to time the team organise events/network meetings for Parish/Town Clerks, i.e., Forums and the Clerks' Network.	
a. In general, how interesting and helpful do you consider these are?	
b. How well do you consider the team feeds back information from these events?	
4. Overall, how good do you consider the support given by the Rural Issues and Parish Liaison Team?	
Please write below any other comments you wish to make or suggestions for improvement:	

	PTO
Name of Parish Council (<i>optional</i>)	