

Agenda Item: 15

Executive Board

15 July 2009

PS 08/09



Place Survey – Comparison of results

Summary

The Place Survey was sent out by the Council on behalf of national Government to a random selection of households in East Devon between September and December 2008. The purpose was to gain information that would improve outcomes for local people and places, so many of the questions are more relevant to East Devon as a place rather than East Devon District Council specifically.

The national results for this survey were published on 23 June which means that some comparison information is available so that the Council's results may now be considered in context against the results of other councils in England.

Recommendation

That the Board consider the results of the Place Survey in comparison to the national results and recommends the areas which should be considered in more detail by relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

The Place Survey is a very important Government survey, carried out by every local authority in England. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) expect that the results will be used by all local public service providers, including EDDC, to understand the area they serve. They expect action to be taken on any issues arising in the results of the survey, including residents' priorities for the area, in particular any poor results. It is very important that these follow up actions are completed for the benefit of residents and the Council's reputation, and also for CAA and the developing Engagement and Empowerment Agenda.

b) Alternative Options

None

c) Risk Considerations

It is expected that the Council will consider and act upon the results and doing so will avoid the Council being criticised in a future inspection and prevent any compromising of the Council's reputation and budgets.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

The recommendation involves considering the results in relation to current practice and policy. There could be subsequent policy changes and there are no immediate budgetary implications.

e) Date for Review of Decision

The Place Survey is due to be carried out every two years with the next one scheduled for the autumn of 2010.

1 Main Body of the Report

1. Place Survey

The Place Survey involves the use of a questionnaire to capture residents' views, experiences and perceptions, so that public bodies can use the results to decide upon their priorities and solutions for their area.

2. History

In 2000, 2003 and 2006 local authorities sent out a General User Satisfaction Questionnaire on behalf of national Government. This asked a variety of questions with a focus on residents' experiences of local services.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) revised the General User Satisfaction Survey and replaced it with the 'Place Survey' for 2008 which focuses on improving outcomes for local people and places, rather than on processes, institutions and inputs. However, some of the questions have remained the same, allowing for trend data to be reported.

3. What we did

The survey was carried out in line with government rules. We sent out the Place Survey questionnaire to 2,476 randomly selected households, whose addresses were provided by the Audit Commission. We received back 1,263 completed questionnaires, giving us a response rate of 51%, higher than in many other district council areas. This gave us more than the amount required by the Audit Commission (1,100). The results are statistically reliable as the standard amount of responses to be received before the results become reliable is 400.

4. National results and comparisons

We now have the national results for the Place Survey which allows some comparison with other councils in England. This makes the results more meaningful as we are able to demonstrate how well our results appear in relation to our peers.

There are 28 national results which are of relevance to the Council – 18 National Indicators and 10 others, 7 of which relate to specific services and the remaining 3 concern the Council overall.

In addition to the results for every council in England, averages for the Devon Districts, South West Councils and English Councils have been provided. How the Council's results compare with these three averages is set out in the first appendix which follows and is summarised below.

Comparison of the Council's results with the three averages	Number of questions
Questions for which our result is higher than the three averages for the Devon Districts, South West Councils and English Councils	17
Questions for which our result is higher than two of the averages and lower than the other one	2
Questions for which our result is higher than one of the averages and lower than the other two	4
Questions for which our result is lower than the three averages for the Devon Districts, South West Councils and English Councils	4
Questions which are neutral	1
Total number of questions	28

The Council is a member of the Sparsity Partnership for Authorities delivering Rural Services (SPARSE) which has undertaken a comparative analysis of the Council with 201 district councils (and the 89 district councils who are members of SPARSE) showing 'overall satisfaction with the authority'. Included in this analysis is the Council's 'direction of travel'



against our result in the 2006 national survey. Graphs depicting this analysis are provided in the second appendix which follows. Similar analysis of most of the other questions will be available in due course.

The first graph in the second appendix places the Council in the second or 'above average' quartile and as the 56th highest scoring district council (and 29th highest scoring SPARSE member) for 'overall satisfaction with the authority'.

The second graph reveals that we have the 14th best 'direction of travel' score amongst 201 district councils (and the 2nd best score amongst the 89 SPARSE members) compared with our score in the last national survey in 2006. Although the Council's 'overall satisfaction with the authority' score went down by 1.4 % points between 2006 and 2008, there was a much greater reduction in the overall satisfaction results nationally. So it is a considerable achievement to have maintained our score at the same level during this period.

This result should not make us complacent, particularly as it is expected that the Council will take action on the results of the survey. In the first appendix, the questions for which our results were below the county, regional and/or national averages are those on which we should focus our attention. These questions are set out in priority order below.

Questions for which our result is lower than the three averages for the Devon Districts, South West Councils and English Councils
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% of people very or fairly satisfied with theatres and concert halls
% of people very or fairly satisfied with doorstep recycling
% of people that agree they can influence decisions in their local area
% of people very or fairly satisfied with sports and leisure facilities

Questions for which our result is higher than one of the averages and lower than the other two

% of people very or fairly satisfied with museums and galleries
% of people who agree that the police and other local public services seek people's views about anti-social behaviour and crime in their local area
% of people who say their health is good or very good
% of people very or fairly satisfied with parks and open spaces

Questions for which our result is higher than two of the averages and lower than the other one

% of people that have been involved in decisions that affect the local area in the last 12 months
% of people that feel they belong to their immediate neighbourhood

Members are asked to select from amongst these 10 questions the areas that they would like relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider in more detail with a view to recommending improvement action to the Executive Board in the autumn. Additional analysis of the results by SPARSE will be available to the Committees, including analysis of other questions similar to that in the second appendix and a breakdown of some of the results by ward which will be of particular interest to members.

Legal Implications

No legal implications.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications with this report. However the findings of the report may result in further reports coming to the committee which may have financial implications.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

A report containing the headline results for the Council was considered by members at:

- The Corporate Overview Committee on 26 March 2009.
- The Scrutiny Committee on 8 April 2009.
- The Executive Board on 6 May 2009.

Background Papers

Two appendices which follow.

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Executive Board
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