

## Agenda Item 6

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Communities**

**16 September 2009**

**PS O&SC 160909**



### Place Survey – Comparison of results

#### Summary

The Place Survey was sent out by the Council on behalf of national Government to 2476 randomly selected 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 2009 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.

The Place Survey results are statistically reliable as there were 1,263 respondents, when anything over 400 is considered to be reliable.

The results contain 18 National Indicators. These National Indicators and what action the Council is taking to improve any poor results gained from the survey will be assessed by the Audit Commission through Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

#### Recommendation

**That the Committee considers the 'community related' results of the Place Survey in comparison to the national results and recommend actions to Executive Board.**

#### 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 Autumn 2010.

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## **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).

### **4. Reliability**

The results for this survey are statistically reliable. If there are over 400 respondents to the survey it can be considered to be statistically reliable for the overall district, and there were 1,263 respondents to the Place Survey. When Ipsos MORI conducts its national polls it is confident about the result from surveying a few hundred people.

### **5. 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	Percentage
Questions for which our result is higher than the three averages for the Devon Districts, South West Councils and English Councils	17	61
Questions for which our result is higher than two of the averages and lower than the other one	2	7
Questions for which our result is higher than one of the averages and lower than the other two	4	14
Questions for which our result is lower than the three averages for the Devon Districts, South West Councils and English Councils	4	14
Questions which are neutral	1	4
Total number of questions	28	100

This is an excellent overall result as for the 28 questions we have comparisons for, 17 of them are above average results.

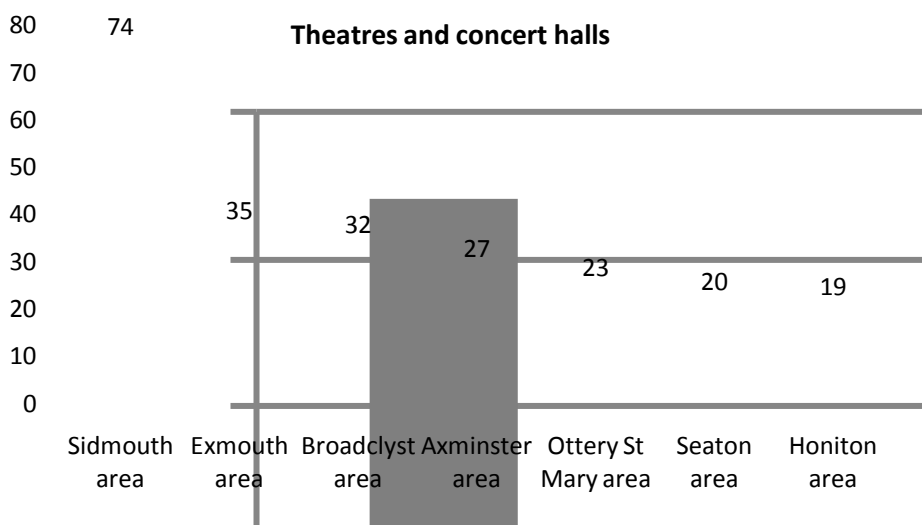
The Council is a member of the Sparsity Partnership for Authorities delivering Rural Services (SPARSE) which has undertaken a comparative analysis of the Council with 201 district councils (and the 89 district councils who are members of SPARSE).

The 'above average' results should not make us complacent, particularly as it is expected that the Council will take action on the results of the survey. 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 below. **Where the results are shown in a grey box it means that East Devon's result is lower than that score, or below average.**

## 5.1 THEATRES AND CONCERT HALLS

% of people very or fairly satisfied with **theatres and concert halls= 35.3%**

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst 201 District Councils	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst 89 SPARSE councils
41.2	43.9	43.2	117 <sup>th</sup>	Below average	44 <sup>th</sup>



### Officer comments

Evidently the survey relates to theatres and concert halls operated by EDDC. In reality we have only 2 that properly fit into that description Exmouth Pavilion (operated by LED though owned by us), and Manor Pavilion (Sidmouth) directly operated by EDDC.

Whether the community are clear of which venues are run by us and which by other people we do not know (so Blackmore Theatre, and I.E.Theatre, for instance are not ours, and many people will travel to the Northcott etc). Most towns and villages have no such specialist facilities and will use community halls for such events. We are also uncertain about how any expression of dissatisfaction relates, for instance, is it the lack of a venue, the size quality and facilities of the venue, the type of programming of shows, accessibility of the nearest venue, or the cost of shows? This suggests that there could be a need for follow-up engagement exercises with those that stated they were dissatisfied.

The Exmouth Pavilion has had major face-lift in recent years and continues to show a good financial return suggesting it is heavily used. Similarly the Manor Pavilion is much better used and has significantly cut its deficit and increased its offer. (Interestingly Sidmouth shows a good level of satisfaction, and Exmouth is at an average level). Presumably the other towns show a lower than average level of satisfaction as they feel they have no specific Council provided facility or reasonable access to one (though such a provision in each town might be unsustainable).

**Possible actions**

- That follow up engagement be carried out with a selection of residents that were dissatisfied.
- That follow up engagement be carried out with those that were dissatisfied in Exmouth, as they have a facility but are not as satisfied as those in Sidmouth.

**5.2 DOORSTEP RECYCLING**

% of people very or fairly satisfied with **doorstep recycling= 61.2%**

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst 201 District Councils	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst 89 SPARSE councils
75.8	72.2	69.8	179 <sup>th</sup>	Bottom Quartile	80 <sup>th</sup>

In relation to the figures above, the results were split into those who are in phase 1 of the new recycling scheme and those households that are not. 72.3% of those in phase 1 were satisfied which would put us above the average for South West Councils (72.2%) and English Councils (69.8%). However this would still be lower than the average for Devon Councils (75.8%).

**Officers Comments**

A survey was commissioned by WRAP (the Government’s organisation which offers advice and information to local authorities) which carried out a door to door survey in the Axminster area following the implementation of the new waste and recycling scheme which found that 97% of those households surveyed were in favour of the new scheme.

We are aware that householders may not be fully satisfied with our waste and recycling service but we believe that this is more to do with the materials which are not collected such as cardboard and in the non-new service areas – plastic bottles rather than the actual delivery of the service by our contractor. We could carry out work with local residents to find out if this actually the case.

**Possible actions:**

- That work is carried out with those that are dissatisfied to find out why they are dissatisfied.
- That work is carried out once more households are taking part in the new recycling service to find out if they then become more satisfied.

### 5.3 INFLUENCE DECISIONS IN THE LOCAL AREA

% of people that feel they can influence decisions in their local area= 24.8%

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils	201	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils	89
27.9	27.4	28.9	168 <sup>th</sup>		Bottom Quartile	81 <sup>st</sup>	

#### Officer comments

We do not know what issue the people who felt they could not influence decisions in their local area were trying to tell us about. For example, they may feel that they have plenty of opportunities to have their say and tell public services what they think, but then what they have said to us is not acted upon, so they feel they cannot influence decisions as they are not listened to.

We are already trying to work more closely with local communities in many ways, for example:

- The last annual meeting of the towns and parishes was held in September 2008. To make this event relevant and useful, we involved volunteer town/parish councillors and clerks in the arrangements – a working group decided on the agenda and approach. This was effective and we are doing it again this year with the intention of the event being town/parish led to improve partnership working and sharing information.
- We are taking steps to widen the work of local democracy week by offering other events through the year, such as the use of the council chamber for debates, visiting schools through the year and staging political speed dating events. Work experience students are also provided with a valuable insight into council work/local democracy through a planned programme of work and interaction. The intention is to make politics real to young people so that they are engaged and able to have their say.
- There has been a Democratic Services/Communications Team led campaign to make sure that Officers are keeping Councillors informed about what is going on in their ward. This means that Ward Councillors have the local information to be able to work with their community at grass roots level.
- Public speaking at Committees was introduced in 2008.
- Other areas of the Council are taking steps to promote local influence on decision making include:
  - Use of Quality Town/Parish Councils to determine certain categories of planning applications
  - Transfer of Assets
  - Participatory Budgeting
  - Sustainable Communities Act
  - The increased usage of the Council's residents' panel

We could do further work with communities to try to find out why this result is poor, and take action on what we find out. For example if opportunities for the public to have their say are in place but the consultees feel that the comments are not acted on, the council could put a procedure in place to ensure that the results of engagement and consultation are properly taken into account and the decision reported back to consultees.

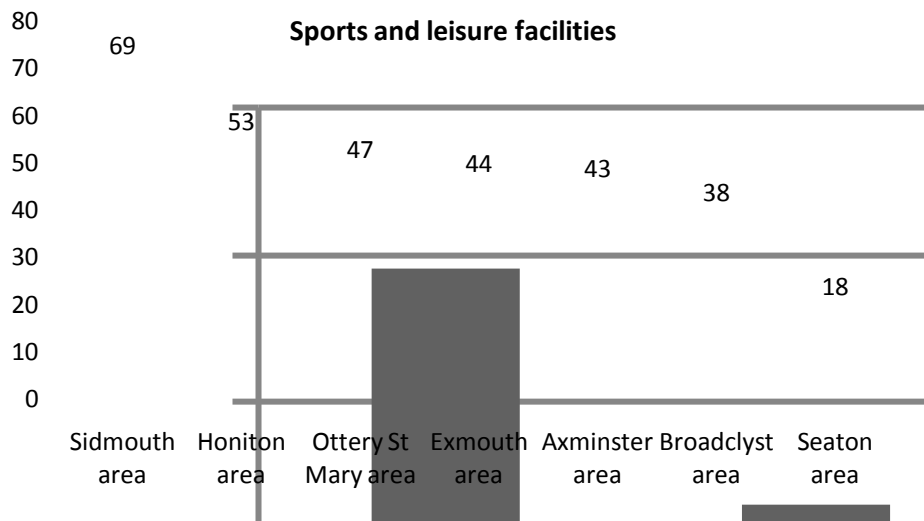
#### Possible action:

- That further engagement work is done with the respondents that felt they could not influence decisions.

## 5.4 SPORTS AND LEISURE FACILITIES

% of people very or fairly satisfied with **sports and leisure facilities= 45.5%**

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils	201	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils	89
48.1	47.4	46.2	108 <sup>th</sup>		Below average	41 <sup>st</sup>	



### Officer comments

Evidently the survey relates to leisure facilities operated by EDDC. We have 9 centres (probably high compared to any equivalent district council) that properly fit into that description though operated by Leisure East Devon. We also have 2 sets of sports pitches which are managed directly by EDDC. Many of our sports facilities are long- leased to community organisations.

Whether the community are clear of which venues are ours and which are owned and run by other people we do not know (so Flamingo Pool for instance is not ours, and some Parishes have their own sports fields, yet some of our 'dual use' facilities might be assumed to be school operated).

Most villages have no such specialist facilities and will use community halls for such activity.

We are also uncertain about how any expression of dissatisfaction relates, for instance, is it the lack of a venue, the size, quality, cleanliness and facilities of the venue, the type of programming of uses, accessibility of the nearest venue, or the cost? We know that the level of use of LED facilities is not declining and users are regularly surveyed as to satisfaction levels.

Around the time of the Place Survey the Council had decided not to offer 'free swimming' and the potential redevelopment of the Exmouth sports centre site was delayed. Similarly some of the sports centres had been changed and improved (Honiton and Exmouth) so it may be that other localities were disappointed that theirs had not been.

Because of our dual use policy with schools there is a long running dissatisfaction that Seaton does not have its own EDDC operated sports facilities (provided at Colyton instead), which is aggravated by the closure of the holiday camp pool, and Seaton Heights. The facilities at Broadclyst are under threat from closure of the school site once Cranbrook is constructed.

The resolutions of the Scrutiny Committee (8 April 2009) regarding this result were:

2. that Leisure East Devon be invited back to a future meeting of the Committee to answer questions in light of the survey findings;

3. that the availability of school premises for activities outside school hours be explored at a future meeting, to include an invitation to the Member Champion for Young People;
4. that the inclusion of specific planning conditions to provide leisure facilities be explored at a future meeting, to include an invitation to the Development Control Manager and the Chairman of Development Control.

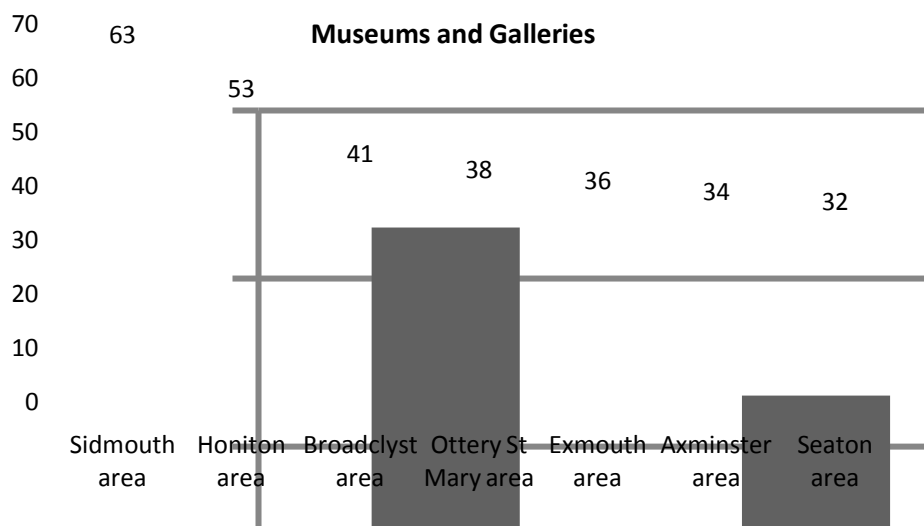
**Possible action**

- That Leisure East Devon, the Member Champion for Young People, the Chairman of Development Management Committee and the Development Management Manager be invited to this meeting to consider leisure and other facilities for young people as resolved by the Scrutiny Committee on 8 April 2009.

**5.5 MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES**

% of people very or fairly satisfied with **museums and galleries= 42.5%**

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils	201	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils	89
44.2	44.2	41.5	66 <sup>th</sup>		Above average	23 <sup>rd</sup>	



**Officer comments**

Evidently the survey relates to museums and galleries operated by EDDC. In reality we have only one that properly fits into that description, Thelma Hulbert Gallery directly operated by EDDC. Whether the community are clear of which venues are run by us and which by other people we do not know (so local museums for instance are not ours even though they may be in our buildings in some cases e.g. Seaton).

Other than Honiton towns and villages have no such facilities operated by EDDC.

We are also uncertain about how any expression of dissatisfaction relates, for instance, is it the lack of a venue, the size quality and facilities of the venue, the type of programming of exhibition, quality of exhibits, accessibility of the nearest venue? This suggests that there could be a need for follow-up engagement exercises with those that stated they were dissatisfied. The major museum in our catchment (RAMM in Exeter) is currently closed for refurbishment.

The Thelma Hulbert Gallery is now due for major expansion and relaunch. We do support our local museums in a small way via curatorial advice etc.

**Possible action:**

- That further work is done with the respondents that were dissatisfied.

## 5.6 POLICE AND OTHER LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES SEEKING PEOPLE'S VIEWS ABOUT CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

% 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**= 24.1%

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst 201 District Councils	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst 89 SPARSE councils
24.0	24.8	24.8	106 <sup>th</sup>	Below average	57 <sup>th</sup>

Please note that the East Devon figure is very close to all three averages.

**Police and other local public services seek people's views about crime and ASB**



### Officer comments

All the other results in relation to crime and anti social behaviour are very encouraging, only 9.9% feel that anti social behaviour is an issue in their local area. This more than balances up the issue of concern.

With regard to this ironically both the Police and District Council have, over the last 18 months to two years, carried out a great deal of consultation about just those issues.

Through the Neighbourhood Assessments across the district we have been asking those questions and in the main people have very few complaints regarding crime or anti social behaviour. The Police, almost on a daily basis, consult the public as part of the PACT (Partners and Communities Together) form of consultation and ask people to identify their top three priorities. One of these is often anti social behaviour as well as speeding, parking and dog fouling. The PACT priorities for each ward are shown on the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary website for the public to view. They can even see what has or is being done to tackle the problems highlighted.

### Possible action:

- That the result be raised with the Devon and Cornwall Police through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership for action.

## 5.7 SELF REPORTED HEALTH MEASURE

% of people who say their **health is good or very good= 77.3%**

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils
78.4	77.5	75.8	107 <sup>th</sup>	Below average	52 <sup>nd</sup>

Note that the East Devon figure is very close to the two averages it is below.

### Officer comments

We know that, standardised for the age profile of East Devon, the health of our residents is very good. However with an older population there will always be a greater proportion of age related conditions, some of them chronic which can affect people's quality of life.

### Possible action:

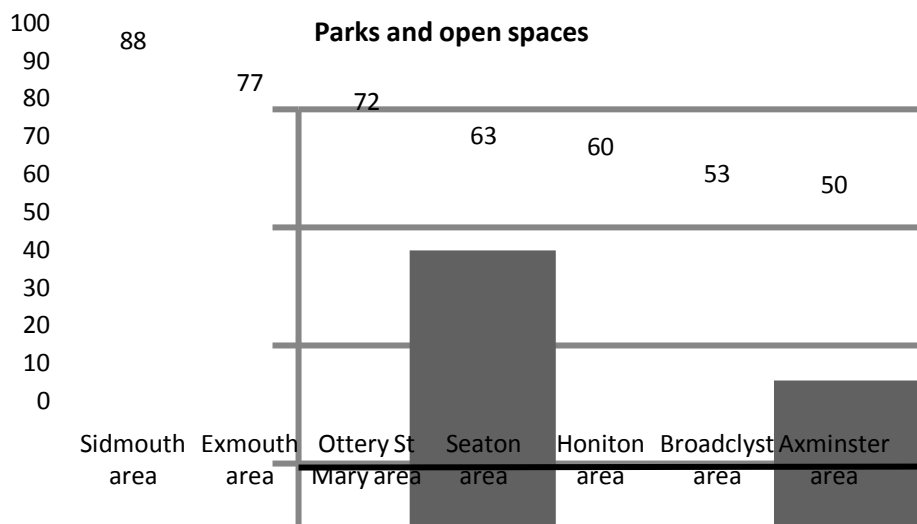
- That the issue be brought to the attention of the PCT for action and report back.

## 5.8 PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

% of people who are very or fairly satisfied with **parks and open spaces= 69.8%**

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils
70.3	69.9	68.5	99 <sup>th</sup>	Above average	36 <sup>th</sup>

Note that our figure is extremely close to all three averages.



### Officer comments

Broadclyst (along with the majority of rural villages) has no parks or playing fields provided by EDDC and so residents are likely to be dissatisfied with the provision. There has been no change since Sept 2008 and I am not aware of any plans to do so other than the building of Cranbrook.

Axminster has no formal park, but does have 3 playing fields, 4 equipped play areas and a recreation ground provided by EDDC. For the size of the population this may be inadequate. Plans are currently being discussed with developers for the provision of a 1 hectare park and 2 more play areas within the town boundaries which may help to address the perceived problem.

Honiton has 18 equipped play areas, 3 playing fields, 3 recreation grounds, a woodland park, a nature reserve and many sizeable informal public open spaces. The town could be considered as well provided for, it may be a question of perception.

Seaton has 5 equipped play areas, a skate park, 3 formal park areas, a playing field, a recreation ground, a large nature reserve and at least 7 sizeable open spaces. The town is reasonably well provided for but field sports provision could be better. Seaton Town Council is involved with EDDC to secure land to improve this provision.

**Possible action:**

- Further engagement work with those in Honiton, Axminster, Broadclyst and Seaton who were dissatisfied and the Town Councils.
- Publicity about facilities available.

**5.9 INVOLVED IN DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THE LOCAL AREA IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS**

% of people that have been **involved in decisions that affect the local area in the last 12 months= 16.3%**

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils 201	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils 89
16.9	16.1	14.0	43 <sup>rd</sup>	Top Quartile	39 <sup>th</sup>

Note that East Devon’s figure is very close to the Devon District average.

**Officer comments**

Although we have scored below the Devon Districts average we have scored 2.3% above the average for English Councils. East Devon is also in the top quartile when we compare ourselves to the 201 other District Councils.

**Possible action:**

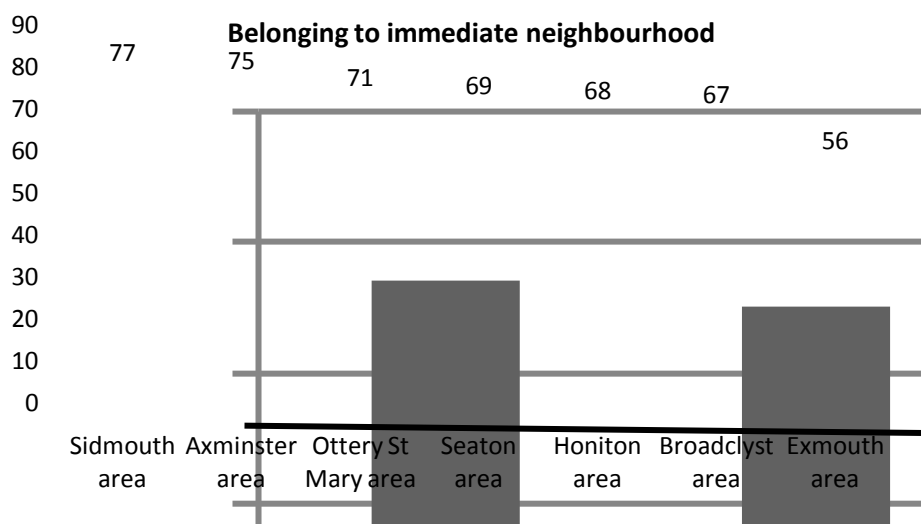
- That we focus on the towns showing poorest results by seeking advice on public engagement from Town Councils.

**5.10 SENSE OF BELONGING TO THEIR IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURHOOD**

% of people that feel they **belong to their immediate neighbourhood= 65.9%**

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils 201	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils 89
66.0	62.3	58.7	54 <sup>th</sup>	Above average	44 <sup>th</sup>

Note that the East Devon figure is extremely close to the Devon District average.



### **Officer comments**

As a larger town with several distinct communities within it is perhaps not so surprising that, of all East Devon towns, Exmouth is the one with a below average feeling of belonging. There may also be a more movement in the resident population of this town, a more diverse community, and a large number of people who may live but not work there, all of which can affect the sense of closeness of a community. Clearly the large tourist population may also affect views about community.

Evidently there has been a lot of public debate voiced about development proposals in the local press over the past few years which may have also divided the views of the town. With progress on regeneration we would hope that there will be a new 'pride, and sense of place' created within the town, but there is scope for more community building activities.

### **Possible action:**

- That no action be taken as East Devon is only 0.1% below the average for Devon Districts, and is 54<sup>th</sup> out of 201 District Council areas and place shaping activities are in hand.

### **6. Actions**

Members are asked to select from amongst these 10 questions the areas that they would like to consider with a view to recommending improvement action to the Executive Board. We are expected to take action on any poor results to the survey and will be assessed on how well we have done this through Comprehensive Area Assessment.

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### **Legal Implications**

No matters requiring comment

### **Financial Implications**

There are no identifiable 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.

A report containing this comparison information was presented to the Executive Board on 15 July 2009.

### **Background Papers**

Two appendices which follow.