REPORT TO: **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 22 SEPTEMBER 2008**

REPORT ON: **ANNUAL CONSUMER SURVEY 2008**

REPORT BY: **ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

REPORT NO: **411-2008**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report summarises the main findings from the 2008 Annual Consumer Survey and explains their use.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee:

(i) note the results contained in this report and agree that the issues raised should continue to be addressed as part of the Council's commitment to continuous improvement.

(ii) authorise officers to publish the report on the Council's website and distribute copies to partner organisations and representative bodies as part of the Council's commitment to Public Performance Reporting.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4. INTRODUCTION

4.1 The Council carries out an Annual Consumer Survey as part of evaluating progress towards achieving the objectives set out in the Council Plan. The main purpose of the survey is to track over time a core set of questions related to customer care issues and the public's overall perception of the Council as an organisation. In addition, the survey asks about fear of crime; the way in which respondents access, or would like to access Council services; and about satisfaction with local facilities, environment and quality of life.

4.2 The survey is conducted by an independent market research company, Ashbrook Research and Consultancy. As in 2007, the survey was based on a sample of 800 citizens, increased from the 400 surveyed in previous years, which allows some analysis at ward level for use by Local Community Planning Partnerships. Respondents were interviewed in their homes during June and July.

4.3 Key results from the survey are summarised below. A full copy of the research report will be sent to each Group Secretary and made available in the members' lounge. A summary of results for each ward will be produced for the Local Community Planning Partnerships.

5. KEY RESULTS

5.1 <u>Customer Care</u>

5.1.1 A key objective of the survey is to gauge the levels of customer care perceived by people who contact a Council service, either by phone or by visit to an office. Tables 1 and 2 below show the results on a range of satisfaction indicators:

Table 1

Satisfaction with Telephone Contacts	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy of Staff	79%	75%	81%	96%	78%	84%	92%	93%	87%	93%
How Quickly Phone Was Answered	90%	96%	84%	100%	84%	85%	91%	91%	94%	94%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	76%	92%	71%	84%	80%	79%	90%	93%	92%	91%
Overall Helpfulness of Staff	79%	75%	81%	96%	78%	84%	92%	93%	87%	93%
Ease of Getting Someone Who Could Help	79%	86%	64%	97%	74%	76%	80%	89%	88%	93%
Outcome of Contact	65%	51%	59%	53%	64%	71%	77%	82%	72%	77%
Average	78%	79%	73%	88%	76%	80%	87%	90%	87%	90%

Table 2

Satisfaction with Office Visits	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Ease Of Getting To Office	91%	95%	100%	91%	94%	96%	98%	100%	94%	96%
Suitability of Office	89%	89%	87%	89%	82%	75%	92%	97%	91%	89%
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy Of Staff	87%	93%	81%	100%	79%	85%	92%	81%	89%	82%
Overall Helpfulness Of Staff	87%	93%	81%	100%	79%	85%	92%	81%	89%	82%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	81%	96%	83%	100%	83%	82%	92%	87%	94%	86%
Outcome of Contact	59%	78%	58%	80%	66%	62%	88%	80%	76%	56%
Average	81%	91%	82%	93%	81%	81%	92%	88%	89%	82%

5.1.2 The profile of satisfaction remains positive across all the indicators, although there is a difference between satisfaction with telephone contacts and office visits. The average score for satisfaction with telephone contacts is up compared to 2007, reflecting increases in most of the individual ratings. However, the satisfaction scores for office visits are generally down compared to last year, with a particular decrease in the % of respondents satisfied with the outcome of their contact. The survey results show that, amongst those who had contacted the Council in the past year, 74% had done so by a general telephone call and 15% by personal visit, with other contacts being by letter, email or telephone call to an 'out of hours' service.

5.1.3 Of those who had recently contacted the Council, 27% of respondents said their last contact was to request a service and 79% of these were satisfied. 26% said to seek information and 83% of these were satisfied. The proportion saying it was to make a complaint was 47%, considerably higher than the 19% figure in 2007. Of those who did contact the Council to make a complaint, 60% were satisfied that the Council responded reasonably to the complaint but 38% were dissatisfied. The level of satisfaction with the response to complaints is up from 39% in 2007.

5.1.4 2008's survey shows that 71% of respondents felt that they receive enough information about the Council and the services it provides. This is up on 2007's figure of 64% and compares to figures of 70% in 2006, 69% in 2005, 64% in 2004, 60% in 2003 and 59% in 2002. 22% of those interviewed in 2008 said they had used the Council's website (up from 14% in 2006 but down on 2007's figure of 32%). Satisfaction levels with the website remain high, averaging 83%, virtually identical to last year's figure of 84%.

5.2 Fear of Crime

This year's survey asked a new question about fear of crime - ' what effect does fear of crime have on your quality of life? ' - as this is the measure which will be monitored through Dundee's Single Outcome Agreement. The results show that 23% of respondents said fear of crime had no effect on their quality of life, a further 23% said fear of crime had little effect, 35% said some effect and 19% said a big effect. No comparable data is available from previous years, but this question will continue to be asked in future surveys so that trends can be monitored.

5.3 Public Image Profile

5.3.1 The questionnaire includes a list of eleven factors which seek to assess respondents' overall impression of the Council. The full list of factors is shown in Table 3 below, along with the percentage of interviewees who responded positively each year. 2008's survey continued to use the new factor introduced four years ago - ' Tackles Important Issues for the Future of the City' - which was seen as a better measure of the Council's image than 'Receives Fair Press Coverage' which it replaced. A new factor was introduced this year - 'Ensures sustainable use of resources and care for the environment' - in order to meet a commitment in the Council Plan to survey public perception of the Council on sustainable issues.

Table 3

Public Image Profile	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Good Range of Services	79%	61%	68%	82%	64%	63%	69%	81%	72%	77%
Friendly Employees	79%	64%	64%	85%	67%	68%	75%	76%	73%	77%
Good Quality Services	65%	54%	63%	76%	55%	60%	64%	72%	66%	74%
Efficient Services	69%	54%	86%	70%	54%	58%	63%	66%	62%	70%
Communicates Well	67%	43%	31%	28%	49%	47%	53%	61%	57%	67%
Promotes Services Well	65%	45%	68%	64%	44%	47%	55%	58%	54%	70%
Receives Fair Press Coverage	69%	31%	37%	42%	45%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Value For Money	57%	34%	64%	67%	45%	49%	50%	56%	51%	65%
Listens to Complaints	69%	46%	23%	29%	53%	53%	55%	64%	61%	68%
Has Sufficient Resources	68%	51%	48%	23%	53%	55%	55%	68%	60%	69%
Tackles Important Issues for the Future of the City	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	41%	44%	55%	55%	65%
Ensures sustainable use of resources and care for the environment	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	66%
Average	69%	48%	50%	57%	53%	54%	58%	66%	62%	70%

5.3.2 The average score for the public image of the Council across all indicators in 2008 was higher than in 2007, reflecting increases in the score for all of the individual factors. The survey also asked respondents to state which of these factors are of most importance to them. In previous years, there has been a high correlation between the top priorities identified by respondents and the factors on which the Council scored most highly. In 2008, there are some 'mismatches' between priority and performance. For example, 'providing an efficient service ' is ranked as the highest priority but only the fourth highest in terms of performance, while ' listening to complaints ' ranks third in terms of priority but seventh in terms of performance.

5.4 Local Facilities and Quality of Life

5.4.1 Repeating the questions introduced in 2007, the survey asked about satisfaction with a range of local facilities, ease of accessing those facilities, satisfaction with the local environment and quality of life. Overall results are set out in Tables 4, 5 and 6 and para. 5.4.2 below. In most cases, totals for satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not add to 100% and both figures are generally lower than in 2007. This is because many respondents said they did not use the facilities under consideration or the facilities did not exist. Individual results for each of the eight wards will be submitted to the appropriate Local Community Planning Partnerships.

Table 4

Local Facilities	**% Satisfied**		**% Dissatisfied**	
	2007	**2008**	**2007**	**2008**
Local Shops	83%	78%	13%	15%
Public Transport	80%	74%	10%	5%
Local Library	67%	56%	2%	1%
Local Health Clinic	62%	55%	4%	2%
Local Dentist	54%	45%	5%	4%
Schools	48%	39%	5%	2%
Arts, Sports or Leisure Facilities	43%	26%	8%	6%
Social Facilities	31%	22%	11%	3%
Local Phone Boxes	25%	10%	17%	4%
Community Centre	25%	28%	6%	3%
Local Childcare Facilities	22%	18%	6%	2%
Local Community Groups	21%	14%	5%	2%
Local Youth Facilities	16%	10%	12%	6%
Local Day Centres	15%	15%	6%	2%

Table 5

Ease of Accessing Local Facilities	**% Satisfied**		**% Dissatisfied**	
	2007	**2008**	**2007**	**2008**
Local Shops	89%	89%	5%	4%
Public Transport	85%	76%	5%	3%
Local Library	66%	56%	3%	1%
Local Health Clinic	62%	56%	4%	2%
Local Dentist	56%	47%	5%	2%
Schools	49%	40%	2%	2%

Arts, Sports or Leisure Facilities	43%	29%	7%	4%
Social Facilities	36%	22%	6%	1%
Local Phone Boxes	33%	15%	11%	2%
Community Centre	26%	31%	5%	2%
Local Childcare Facilities	25%	20%	6%	2%
Local Community Groups	22%	15%	7%	2%
Local Youth Facilities	20%	14%	6%	4%
Local Day Centres	18%	18%	5%	1%

The % of respondents expressing satisfaction with the facilities in Tables 4 and 5 is generally down on 2007, but dissatisfaction also remains low, suggesting that more people who responded to the survey this year do not use the facilities in question. For those who do, satisfaction levels are considerably higher than dissatisfaction.

Table 6

Local Environment	**% Satisfied**		**% Dissatisfied**	
	2007	**2008**	**2007**	**2008**
Shopping Facilities	85%	80%	14%	20%
Cleanliness of area around house	83%	79%	17%	21%
Cleanliness of streets	71%	78%	28%	22%
Quality and maintenance of open spaces	70%	80%	26%	18%
Condition of roads, pavements and streetlighting	49%	61%	51%	39%
Children's play areas	35%	33%	27%	31%

The results in Table 6 are largely positive. Although the level of dissatisfaction with the condition of roads, pavements and streetlighting remains the highest, satisfaction levels with this have increased significantly. Satisfaction with the cleanliness of streets and quality and maintenance of open spaces have increased, while ratings for some other aspects of the environment have gone down.

5.4.2 Regarding quality of life in the neighbourhood:

- 31% of respondents were very satisfied (43% in 2007)
- 55% were fairly satisfied (46% in 2007)
- 9% were fairly dissatisfied (8% in 2007)
- 5% were very dissatisfied (3% in 2007)

6. BENCHMARKING

6.1 The Improvement Service for Local Government in Scotland is currently undertaking a project on the measurement of customer satisfaction which may provide opportunities to benchmark our results with other authorities. Comparisons with other Councils will be included in future reports as soon as available.

6.2 Last year's report to Committee on the consumer survey also included results from the Scottish Household Survey which were published in August 2007. Data from this survey at Dundee level is only available every two years, so this information will be included again in next year's report.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The Annual Consumer Survey continues to provide valuable information on residents' perception of the Council and the new questions introduced last year continue to provide useful information on satisfaction with local facilities and neighbourhoods. As in previous years, the issues raised by the survey results will continue to be addressed as part of the Council's commitment to continuous improvement through consultation with service users. The survey provides important information on trends for self-assessment under the EFQM Organisational Excellence Model, which is a key part of the Council's performance management arrangements for Best Value. The results are distributed amongst officers and used in training courses in relevant areas.

7.2 The survey also provides valuable information on how the public access our services, which will inform the continuing development and implementation of the Council's Customer First strategy.

8 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

9 CONSULTATIONS

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executives, Head of Finance and Head of Public Relations have been consulted on this report.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was relied upon in the preparation of this report:

Annual Consumer Survey - Report prepared for Dundee City Council by Ashbrook Research and Consultancy Ltd - August 2008.

Assistant Chief Executive 16/09/2008