REPORT TO: **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 18 AUGUST 2003**

REPORT ON: **ANNUAL CONSUMER SURVEY 2003**

REPORT BY: **ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (COMMUNITY PLANNING)**

REPORT NO: **554-2003**

1. PURPOSE

This report summarises the main findings from the 2003 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. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

None

5. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

None

6. BACKGROUND

6.1 The Council Plan 1999-2002 committed the Council to continue to conduct an Annual Consumer Survey as part of evaluating progress towards achieving the objectives of the 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 tracks the public's perception of whether the city is improving and whether fear of crime is reducing.

6.2 The survey is conducted by an independent market research company – Ashbrook Research and Consultancy – and is based on a sample of 400 citizens, who were interviewed in their homes during June.

6.3 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.

7. KEY RESULTS

7.1 Customer Care

7.1.1 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	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy of Staff	79%	87%	79%	75%	81%	96%	78%
How Quickly Phone Was Answered	84%	79%	90%	96%	84%	100%	84%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	79%	77%	76%	92%	71%	84%	80%
Overall Helpfulness of Staff	77%	74%	79%	75%	81%	96%	78%
Ease of Getting Someone Who Could Help	74%	70%	79%	86%	64%	97%	74%
Outcome of Contact	61%	68%	65%	51%	59%	53%	64%
Average	76%	76%	78%	79%	73%	88%	76%

Table 2

Satisfaction with Office Visits	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Ease Of Getting To Office	94%	87%	91%	95%	100%	91%	94%
Suitability of Office	N/A	N/A	89%	89%	87%	89%	82%
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy Of Staff	81%	86%	87%	93%	81%	100%	79%
Overall Helpfulness Of Staff	82%	81%	87%	93%	81%	100%	79%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	86%	79%	81%	96%	83%	100%	83%
Outcome of Contact	60%	60%	59%	78%	58%	80%	66%
Average	81%	79%	81%	91%	82%	93%	81%

7.1.2 The profile of satisfaction remains positive across all the indicators, although most satisfaction ratings have returned to the typical figures for recent years following some very high scores in 2002. As in previous years, the most significant level of dissatisfaction relates to ‘outcome of contact’ with telephone contacts and office visits. This is typical of consumer surveys of this kind, with a recently published benchmarking database of responses from over 1.7 million survey respondents showing that while 86% were positive when asked about the helpfulness of staff, only 60% were happy with how quickly their complaints were dealt with. Satisfaction with outcomes will however continue to be monitored closely to identify any significant trends which require attention or have implications for training or the way services are delivered.

7.1.3 2003’s survey shows that 60% of respondents felt that they receive enough information about the Council and the services it provides. This was down from 2001’s figure of 80% and 2000’s result of 68%, but virtually identical to the 2002 figure of 59%.

7.2 **Improvement in the City**

2003's results show a significant increase in the percentage of respondents who perceived the City to have improved. Table 3 shows that less people felt the City to have stayed the same or deteriorated than in recent years.

Table 3

Changes to Dundee	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Improved	41%	44%	42%	46%	28%	17%	65%
Stayed the Same	21%	27%	20%	19%	28%	37%	18%
Deteriorated	31%	25%	31%	31%	33%	37%	13%
Can't Say	7%	5%	6%	4%	11%	9%	4%

When residents were asked, on an unprompted basis, to identify ways in which the city could be improved no single improvement emerged with great significance. However, reference was made to the following:-

- improvements to roads, including standard of repair (8%)
- more/better facilities for young people (7%)
- reduce litter (6%)
- improve public transport (6%)
- more or better policing/CCTV(5%)
- tackle vandalism/graffiti (4%)
- better paid jobs (4%)

7.3 **Fear of Crime**

The percentage of people more worried about becoming a victim of crime was 48%, up from 41% in 2002 and 32% in 2001. However, the percentage of people saying they were less worried was also relatively high at 41%. 8% said they were 'not worried' - the same as last year. In the years prior to 2001, the percentage saying 'more worried' was generally between 50% and 60%.

7.4 **Public Image Profile**

7.4.1 The questionnaire includes a list of ten factors which seek to assess the respondent's overall impression of the Council. The full list of factors is shown in Table 4 below, along with the percentage of interviewees who responded positively each year:

Table 4

Public Image Profile	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Good Range of Services	48%	77%	79%	61%	68%	82%	64%
Friendly Employees	75%	73%	79%	64%	64%	85%	67%
Good Quality Services	46%	67%	65%	54%	63%	76%	55%
Efficient Services	39%	66%	69%	54%	86%	70%	54%
Communicates Well	34%	61%	67%	43%	31%	28%	49%
Promotes Services Well	40%	59%	65%	45%	68%	64%	44%
Receives Fair Press Coverage	52%	59%	69%	31%	37%	42%	45%
Value For Money	39%	53%	57%	34%	64%	67%	45%
Listens to Complaints	45%	53%	69%	46%	23%	29%	53%
Has Sufficient Resources	38%	52%	68%	51%	48%	23%	53%
Average	46%	63%	69%	48%	50%	57%	53%

7.4.2 The average score for the public image of the Council across all indicators in 2003 was down slightly on the 2002 figure though still slightly up on the figures for 2000 and 2001. There were notable increases with respect to the following indicators:

- Communicating well with the public (rising from 28% to 49%)
- Listening to complaints (rising from 29% to 53%)
- Having resources to do a good job (rising from 23% to 53%)

During the same time, however, there were significant falls in a number of other indicators, which brought down the average score.

8. BENCHMARKING

8.1 Last year's report on the survey mentioned a facility on COSLA's website which allows Councils to compare results from residents' surveys. Few Councils have used this facility and there is no fresh data available for comparison. However, COSLA intend to re-launch the benchmarking facility, and it is hoped that more Councils will add their results in future. Comparisons with other areas will be included in the report on next year's survey if available.

9. CONCLUSIONS

9.1 The Annual Consumer Survey continues to provide valuable information on residents' perception of the Council and the city. 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.

9.2 As well as the key results highlighted in this report, the survey also provides valuable information on usage and demand for services and on issues such as citizens' views on, and access to, new technology, which informs the implementation of the Council's Information and Communication Technology strategy.

Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) 11 August 2003