

**REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 16 OCTOBER 2006**  
**REPORT ON: ANNUAL CONSUMER SURVEY 2006**  
**REPORT BY: ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (COMMUNITY PLANNING)**  
**REPORT NO: 568-2006**

**1. PURPOSE**

This report summarises the main findings from the 2006 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. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

None

**6. BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 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 and includes a number of questions about the way in which respondents access, or would like to access, Council services.
- 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 and July.
- 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

<b>Satisfaction with Telephone Contacts</b>	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy of Staff	79%	87%	79%	75%	81%	96%	78%	84%	92%	93%
How Quickly Phone Was Answered	84%	79%	90%	96%	84%	100%	84%	85%	91%	91%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	79%	77%	76%	92%	71%	84%	80%	79%	90%	93%
Overall Helpfulness of Staff	77%	74%	79%	75%	81%	96%	78%	84%	92%	93%
Ease of Getting Someone Who Could Help	74%	70%	79%	86%	64%	97%	74%	76%	80%	89%
Outcome of Contact	61%	68%	65%	51%	59%	53%	64%	71%	77%	82%
<b>Average</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>90%</b>

Table 2

<b>Satisfaction with Office Visits</b>	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Ease Of Getting To Office	94%	87%	91%	95%	100%	91%	94%	96%	98%	100%
Suitability of Office	N/A	N/A	89%	89%	87%	89%	82%	75%	92%	97%
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy Of Staff	81%	86%	87%	93%	81%	100%	79%	85%	92%	81%
Overall Helpfulness Of Staff	82%	81%	87%	93%	81%	100%	79%	85%	92%	81%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	86%	79%	81%	96%	83%	100%	83%	82%	92%	87%
Outcome of Contact	60%	60%	59%	78%	58%	80%	66%	62%	88%	80%
<b>Average</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>88%</b>

7.1.2 The profile of satisfaction remains very positive across all the indicators, with a number of satisfaction ratings, on telephone contacts in particular, showing an increase compared to those in 2005. In particular, there is a welcome increase in the % of telephone callers satisfied with 'ease of getting someone who can help'. On the other hand, there were a number of indicators relating to office visits where satisfaction levels fell.

7.1.3 Describing their most recent contact, 50% of respondents said it was to request a service and 89% of these were satisfied. 25% said to seek information and 85% of these were satisfied. The proportion saying it was to make a complaint was 24% (up on

2005's figure of 13% but similar to the figure of 26% in 2004) and 63% of these were satisfied with the way their complaint was handled.

7.1.4 2005's survey shows that 70% of respondents felt that they receive enough information about the Council and the services it provides - a continuing increase on the figures of 69% in 2005, 64% in 2004, 60% in 2003 and 59% in 2002.

## 7.2 Fear of Crime

7.2.1 2005's survey used a different set of questions about fear of crime than were used in previous surveys. This followed academic research into the most effective ways to survey fear of crime. These questions were repeated in 2006 and provide the first opportunity to examine trends.

7.2.2 Key results from the 2006 survey show that:

- 29% of respondents said that they had felt fearful about becoming a victim of crime in the past year, virtually identical to the 30% figure in 2005
- of those who had felt fearful, 19% had felt very fearful (down from 23% in 2005) and 36% quite fearful (virtually identical to the 37% figure in 2005)

## 7.3 Public Image Profile

7.3.1 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 3 below, along with the percentage of interviewees who responded positively each year. 2006's survey continued to use the new factor introduced two 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.

Table 3

<b>Public Image Profile</b>	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Good Range of Services	48%	77%	79%	61%	68%	82%	64%	63%	69%	81%
Friendly Employees	75%	73%	79%	64%	64%	85%	67%	68%	75%	76%
Good Quality Services	46%	67%	65%	54%	63%	76%	55%	60%	64%	72%
Efficient Services	39%	66%	69%	54%	86%	70%	54%	58%	63%	66%
Communicates Well	34%	61%	67%	43%	31%	28%	49%	47%	53%	61%
Promotes Services Well	40%	59%	65%	45%	68%	64%	44%	47%	55%	58%
Receives Fair Press Coverage	52%	59%	69%	31%	37%	42%	45%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Value For Money	39%	53%	57%	34%	64%	67%	45%	49%	50%	56%
Listens to Complaints	45%	53%	69%	46%	23%	29%	53%	53%	55%	64%
Has Sufficient Resources	38%	52%	68%	51%	48%	23%	53%	55%	55%	68%
Tackles Important Issues for the Future of the City	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	41%	44%	55%
<b>Average</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>66%</b>

7.3.2 The average score for the public image of the Council across all indicators in 2006 was higher than in 2005, 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. It is encouraging to note that, of the top three priorities identified by respondents,

two of these were ranked first and third respectively in terms of the Council image scores i.e.

- offering a good range of services
- providing good quality service

However, the second priority identified by respondents - providing an efficient service - was ranked fifth in terms of the scores above.

## 8. **BENCHMARKING**

- 8.1 Previous reports on the survey have 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, work being planned through the Improvement Service for local government may provide benchmarking opportunities in future. Comparisons with other areas will be included in the report on future surveys if available.

## 9. **CONCLUSIONS**

- 9.1 The Annual Consumer Survey continues to provide valuable information on residents' perception of the Council. 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 The survey also provides valuable information on how the public access our services, which will inform the development and implementation of the Council's Customer First strategy.

## 10 **CONSULTATIONS**

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

## 11 **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 - September 2006

Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning)

10 October, 2006