REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 17 OCTOBER 2005

REPORT ON: ANNUAL CONSUMER SURVEY 2005

REPORT BY: ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (COMMUNITY PLANNING)

REPORT NO: 580-2005

1. PURPOSE

This report summarises the main findings from the 2005 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.

(iii) note, in particular, the results in relation to service delivery issues outlined in para 7.2 of this report, which will inform the development and implementation of the Customer First Strategy, including reviewing the opening hours of telephone contact centres, the development of a city-centre one-stop-shop and the continuing expansion of online services.

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

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

Table 2

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

7.1.2 The profile of satisfaction remains very positive across all the indicators, with all satisfaction ratings showing an increase compared to those in 2004.

7.1.3 Describing their most recent contact, 50% of respondents said it was to request a service and 83% of these were satisfied. 36% said to seek information and 81% were satisfied. The proportion saying it was to make a complaint was down significantly to 13% (26% in 2004) and 53% of these were satisfied with the way their complaint was handled.

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

7.2 **Service Delivery Issues**

7.2.1 A number of questions in the survey are designed to find out about the way the public access Council services. The results will inform decisions on the way in which services should be delivered and, in particular, on the development and implementation of the Customer First strategy.

7.2.2 The results below are of particular interest:

- the primary method by which respondents had contacted the Council recently was by telephone - 61%, up from 47% in 2004. 33% of respondents had made their most recent contact by visiting an office, down from 46% in 2004.

- when asked which method would be most convenient if they needed to contact the Council, 68% said by telephone (up from 59% in 2004) while 28% said by office visit (down from 36% in 2004). This may reflect the introduction of contact centres

- 69% of respondents said it would be useful if the Council had a telephone number they could call to request services later in the evening than normal office hours. 48% said this would be <u>very</u> useful, although 28% felt it would be little or no use.

- 24% of respondents said they would probably or definitely consider using the website to request services. 41% would at least possibly consider this.

- 19% of respondents said they had used the Council's website, up from 13% in 2004. Among those who had used the site there were high levels of satisfaction with:

  - the amount of information provided (91% satisfied)
  - how easily they managed to find information (86%)
  - the outcome of their contact (85%)

- 67% of respondents said they visit the city centre at least once a week. 17% said they do so less than once a month

7.2.3 The above results are highly significant in three key areas:

- the demand for evening opening hours for telephone contact centre
- the accessibility of a new city-centre one stop shop in the Council's new offices as almost 70% visit the city centre at least once per week
- the opportunity to provide more self-service facilities on the internet

7.3 **Fear of Crime**

7.3.1 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. The results are not therefore comparable with previous years but future surveys will allow trends to be monitored.

7.3.2 Key results from the 2005 survey show that:

- 30% of respondents said that they had felt fearful about becoming a victim of crime in the past year
- of those who had felt fearful, 23% had felt very fearful and 37% quite fearful

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 3 below, along with the percentage of interviewees who responded positively each year. 2005's survey continued to use the new factor introduced in 2004 - ' 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

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

(note: factors marked * also appear in respondents' top 4 issues of most importance to them)

7.4.2 The average score for the public image of the Council across all indicators in 2005 was higher than in 2004, reflecting increases in the score for almost all of the individual factors. The survey also asked respondents to state which of these factors are of most importance to them, and it is interesting to note that the 4 priority issues which they said were most important i.e.

- friendly employees
- good range of services
- efficient services
- good quality services

are the same 4 issues for which the Council received the most positive ratings in the table 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, 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 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 2005
Report prepared for Dundee City Council by Ashbrook Research and Consultancy Ltd - September 2005

Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) 12 October, 2005