

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY**Lead Officer: Tony Pomfret – Development Control Manager**

To inform Members of the results of the customer satisfaction survey of users of the Development Control service for the period 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012 and to invite feedback

Recommendation: That the report be noted and feedback from Members welcomed

Resource Implications: Cost of pre-paid envelopes for the return of questionnaires is met from the development control budget for 2011/12.

1.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.1 The Council has rightly been proud of its top quartile performance in the speed of determination of planning applications in recent years. However, the quality of the planning decisions is arguably more important than the time taken to reach a decision.

1.2 It was therefore decided to test customer satisfaction by way of a simple questionnaire sent out with every decision notice issued. Previous reports to the Planning Panel on 20 July 2011 and 4 January 2012 covered feedback for the first quarter and second/third quarters of 2011/12 respectively. This report collates the findings for the full year from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012. During this period 495 decision notices were issued and 168 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 34%.

1.3 The following analysis reflects the questionnaire findings:-

Q.1 The applicant

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| • private individual | 31 (18%) |
| • agent | 123 (73%) |
| • own business | 8 (5%) |
| • on behalf of employer | 6 (4%) |

Q.2 Type of Application

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| • householder | 76 (45%) |
| • residential | 31 (18%) |
| • business/industrial | 22 (13%) |
| • non-material amendment | 0 |

- listed building/conservation area 15 (9%)
- advert consent 9 (6%)
- discharge of condition 0
- other 15 (9%)

Q.3 Most recent application

- granted permission/consent 163 (97%)
- refused permission/consent 5 (3%)

Q.4 Experience of the Council's handling of your application(s) in the last year

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Doesn't apply/don't know
Given help/advice needed	75 (44.6%)	58 (34.6%)	12 (7.1%)		1 (0.6%)	22 (13.1%)
Kept informed about progress	68 (40.5%)	78 (46.4%)	14 (8.3%)	4 (2.4%)	3 (1.8%)	1 (0.6%)
Queries promptly dealt with	92 (54.8%)	56 (33.3%)	13 (7.7%)	2 (1.2%)	3 (1.8%)	2 (1.2%)
Understand reasons for decision	107 (63.7%)	47 (28.0%)	9 (5.3%)	1 (0.6%)	3 (1.8%)	1 (0.6%)
Treated fairly and courteously	110 (65.5%)	45 (46.4%)	10 (8.3%)	2 (1.2%)	1 (0.6%)	

Q.5 Satisfaction with service provided

- very satisfied 136 (81%)
- fairly satisfied 25 (15%)
- neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 5 (3%)
- fairly dissatisfied 1 (0.5%)
- very dissatisfied 1 (0.5%)

Q.6 Has overall quality of planning service:

- improved 41 (24.5%)
- worsened 1 (0.5%)
- stayed the same 94 (56%)
- not applicable 32 (19%)

- 1.4 Respondents were also afforded the opportunity to provide additional comments, including suggestions for improvement. Forty four (26%) respondents took up this opportunity during the year, specific comments received during the last quarter including:-

“very helpful gave me confidence in the process being correct”.

“excellent service as usual”

“officers are very approachable and helpful”

“our application was processed extremely quickly . Our experience with other Councils is that this speed of service is unusual but very welcome”.

One respondent, however, resented having to pay a further fee for discharge of conditions (a statutory requirement) and was, accordingly, “very dissatisfied” with the service provided.

All the responses are available for inspection in the Development Control Office.

1.5 CONCLUSION

Overall the survey results and additional comments received are testimony to the high quality of service provision, with 96% of respondents stating that they are “very” or “fairly” satisfied with the service provided. Of those respondents who have used the service previously, almost a quarter (24.5%) consider that the overall quality of the planning service has improved with only one respondent stating that the service has worsened. Comments for service improvement will, however, be afforded close scrutiny in order that appropriate actions may be implemented. This is particularly relevant in relation to website content and electronic consultation, both of which are ongoing service improvement projects.

Contact Officer: Tony Pomfret – Development Control Manager

Background Papers A copy of the questionnaire and accompanying letter together with all of the completed questionnaires are available for inspection in the Development Control Office