Cherwell District Council

Executive

5 October 2015

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results 2015

Report of Head of Transformation

This report is public

Purpose of report

To advise the Executive of the results of the 2015 annual customer satisfaction survey which illustrate a 79% level of overall satisfaction with the Council, and 55% satisfaction in relation to how the Council represents value for money; the highest levels of satisfaction since the survey began in 2006.

The report also identifies areas to be considered for further improvement or investment within the District as part of the annual business planning and budget setting process for 2016/17.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

1.1 To note that overall satisfaction with the Council and perception of how the Council represents value for money was rated at 79% and 55% respectively amongst survey respondents, both of which represent the highest levels of satisfaction since the survey began in 2006.

1.2 To agree to consider the areas identified as being of most importance to survey respondents, and those which may be identified for improvement or investment as part of the business planning and budget setting process for 2016/17 based on survey respondent feedback.

1.3 To express thanks to the survey respondents.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Cherwell District Council has a strong track record in customer and community consultation and currently uses a citizen's panel to help track customer satisfaction with Council services and understand people's priorities, issues and concerns. It emphasises the importance that the Council places upon stakeholder engagement and enables us to adopt a well-informed and transparent approach to the way in which we shape the services that we are responsible for delivering across our District.

2.2 This report provides a summary of the results of the customer satisfaction survey undertaken in May/June/July 2015. The survey was conducted via the Council's citizen's panel and respondents were encouraged to complete the survey online. Hard copies were available for those that needed them.

2.3 The survey included questions on most Council services, value for money, spending priorities and quality of life issues. Specific services that the majority of the general public wouldn't have accessed during the year (e.g. Development Control or Benefits) were not included within the survey questionnaire, although respondents were able to make any additional comments about Council services in the open questions that were included.

2.4 The Council has been undertaking customer satisfaction surveys since 2006. The data provides a statistically valid and robust trend analysis to help inform decision making, prioritisation and customer service development as part of the annual business planning and budget setting process. This in turn enables the Council to ensure that it continues to serve the needs of the District based on what our constituents as key stakeholders, tell us.

2.5 A full summary of the survey results is attached as Appendix 1.

3.0 Report Details

3.1 The report details overall satisfaction with the Council and its services, the key drivers of satisfaction, how the Council is perceived to represent value for money, the areas that the survey respondents identified as being of most importance to them and the areas of least satisfaction. Each section is addressed below:

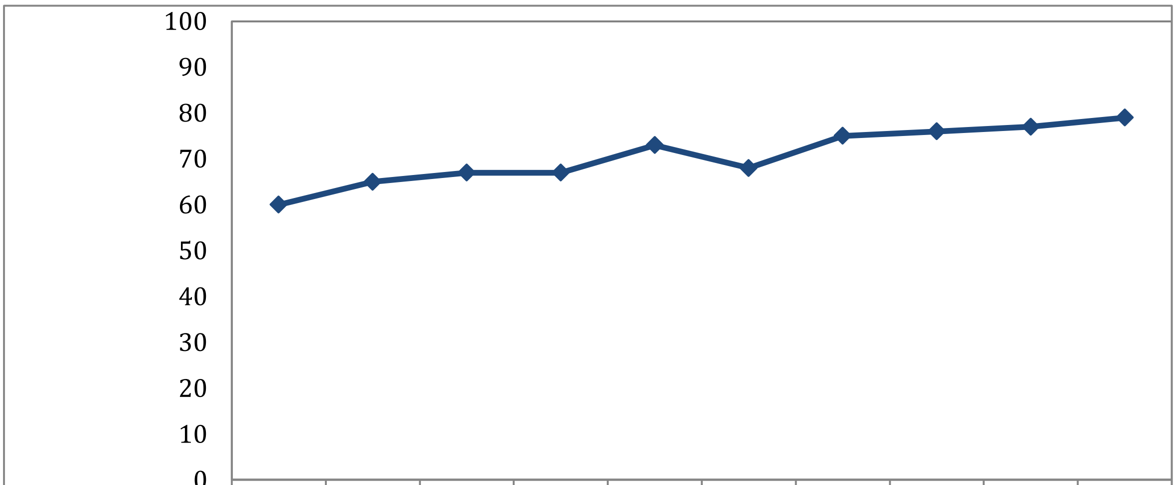
Overall satisfaction with the Council

A three-year trend of growing overall satisfaction with Cherwell District Council has continued into a fourth year as scores have reached 79% in 2015, as illustrated in chart 1 below.

The survey also confirms that the District, as a place to live, is at its highest level of satisfaction to date, rising from 81% to 88%. Trust that the Council will do what is best for residents has also increased.

This movement is a likely reflection of some all-time best satisfaction ratings for the way parks and open spaces are looked after (79%), local car parking facilities (66%) and leisure activities (64%).

Chart 1: the growing trend of overall satisfaction with Cherwell District Council



	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total	60	65	67	67	73	68	75	76	77	79

Key areas in the 2015 survey which have helped this trend are:

- Female participants are more satisfied overall than at any previous point in the survey's history at 77% each
- Rural inhabitants registered 81% overall satisfaction in 2015, an all-time survey high among this group
- Further all-time high overall satisfaction scores are recorded among residents of Kidlington (88%) and from households with 2 adults, no children (81%)

Households with children have largely consolidated an improvement on the 2014 results (rising to 78% at that time) with 77% in 2015. An improvement recorded among urban dwellers in 2014 has also largely been maintained in 2015 with 78%.

Although constituting smaller proportions of the sample overall, those not in employment and those aged 35 or under also report their highest satisfaction levels so far in the survey, awarding 78% and 83% respectively for this measure.

Key drivers of satisfaction

Particular environmental aspects in terms of community cleanliness and upkeep, along with car parking lead the key drivers of overall satisfaction indexes in 2015.

<u>Car parking</u>
Local car parking facilities top the index for key services driving satisfaction in 2015, a difficult measure to influence quickly due to numerous constraints including land acquirement, planning implications/ consultations etc. but it is positive to see that a marginal increase in satisfaction has been recorded to 66% for this measure. It is however interesting to observe at section 3.7 that there is also a concern about paying for parking by mobile phone and the cost associated with parking.

<u>Street cleaning</u>

Street cleaning services follows closely behind parking as a driver of satisfaction so it is encouraging to see that this aspect of Council responsibility is given 69% in 2015 which represents the best score for this measure to date.

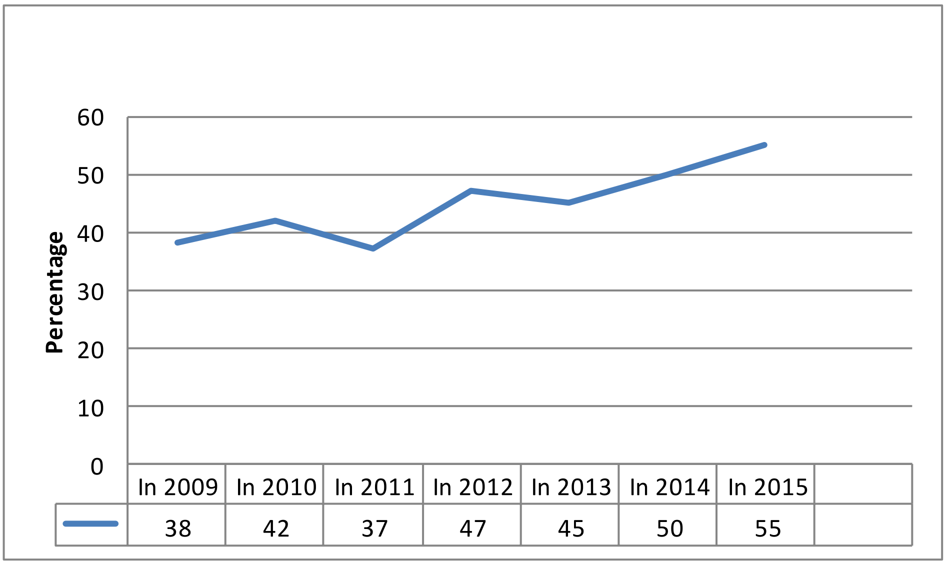
Examination of drivers according to specific aspects of services reinforces the priority currently placed upon the upkeep of environments with ‘frequency with which streets are being cleaned’ topping the index. ‘How town centres look and feel’ also enters the top three drivers.

Driver’s analysis additionally shows that positive gains could be made by enhancing/ promoting leisure facilities/ activities.

Value for Money

Positive perceptions of the value for money offered by Cherwell District Council reach 55% in 2015, its highest to-date.

Chart 2: Value for money from 2009 - 2015



Drivers of perception of value for money

Leisure activity
Access to and availability of leisure facilities/activities is seen as a visible commitment to residents beyond the Council’s other important, but perhaps more routine, services.

Security
A sense of safety and security when ‘walking alone’ in town centres also appears as a relatively important aspect driving perceptions of value for money. Commitments to keeping areas tidy and litter-free are likely to be feeding in here.

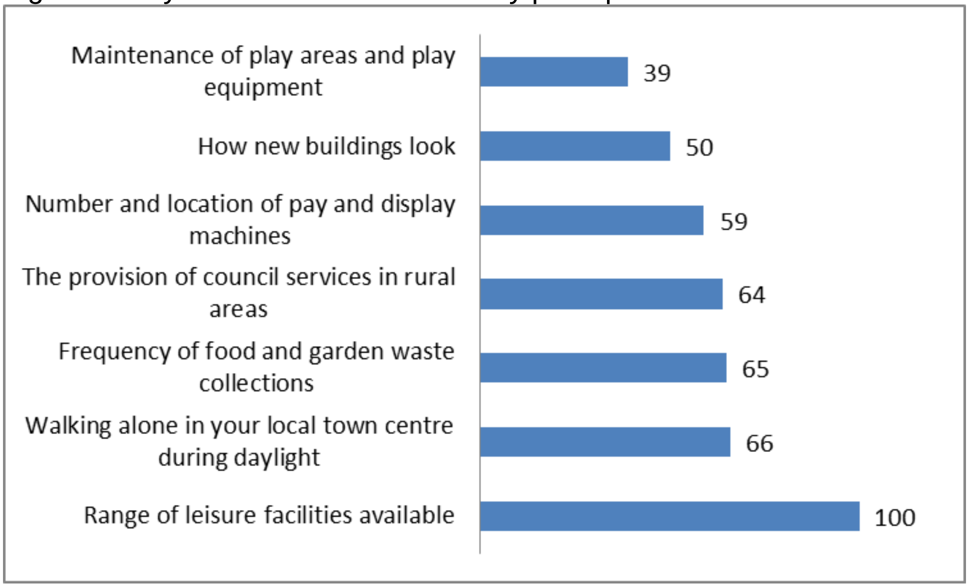
Hygiene services
Positive perceptions are driven by consistently high delivery of core hygiene duties which the Council is expected to undertake as a matter of course, such as waste collections.

Rural services
The provision of Council services in rural areas moves into fourth place in the index. The overall satisfaction rating of 81% from those living in rural areas is evidence that Cherwell District Council activities are having a positive impact.

Car parking facilities/pay & display
Local car parking facilities is also a factor driving perceptions of value for money.

Figure 3 illustrates out of a base of 100 the main drivers for the perceptions of value for money.

Figure 3: Key drivers of value for money perceptions



3.2 **Satisfaction with Council Services**

In addition to the overall satisfaction rating the survey provides more specific details about individual service areas. These results tend to be more likely to shift between years but give a good indication of where the Council is getting things right and where improvement or investment is required.

Table 1 below summarises the satisfaction in the service areas included within the questionnaire and highlights percentage changes since last year.

Looking at the results a general dip in satisfaction can be seen across several service areas during 2011, recovered during 2012 and consolidated but not significantly improved in 2013. Of the Council's services Recycling and Waste collection consistently shows the highest levels of satisfaction.

Table 1: Levels of satisfaction with specific services

	Change since 2014	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Overall Satisfaction	**+2%**	**79**	**77**	**76**	**75**	**68**	**73**	**67**	**67**
Recycling centres	+2%	91	89	91	87	88	87	86	83
Household recycling collection service	-1%	87	88	83	80	82	83	78	75
Waste collection service	-2%	83	85	82	80	76	78	70	68
Food and garden waste collection	-2%	84	86	81	80	80	76	n/a	n/a
Street cleansing service	+2%	69	67	70	69	64	72	67	66
Local car parking facilities	+2%	66	64	64	63	49	63	64	63
Local parks and open spaces	+2%	79	77	75	77	72	74	73	70
Leisure facilities	-	68	68	69	76	74	71	68	63
Leisure activities	**+9%**	64	56	59	61	56	n/a	n/a	n/a
Local area as a place to live	**+7%**	88	81	80	86	78	n/a	n/a	n/a
Council's approach to dealing with environmental crime	-4%	50	54	48	47	42	n/a	n/a	n/a
Dealing with anti-social behaviour/ nuisance	-1%	53	56	56	49	43	44	36	36

Recycling centres continue to represent the service that is valued most at 91%; again improving on last year's score.

It is encouraging that an increasing number of residents are noticing a wider range of leisure activities available to them, **64%** are currently satisfied with this; an increase of 9% on last year. The range of facilities available has achieved the highest score since recording began and is likely to positively impact perceptions of value for money of the District Council.

As referenced above, the increase in agreeing that Cherwell is a good place to live has risen by 7% to the highest ever (from recording since 2006) **to 88%.**

3.3 Communication and Information Provision

Official Council sources and the media

Residents obtaining most of their information about Cherwell District Council from official Council sources falls slightly since 2014. They are also now even less likely to obtain it from local media than they were in 2014.

There has been a decline in the proportions using local media and word of mouth:

- Local newspapers (0% vs 34% in 2013)
- Local radio (0% vs 13% in 2013)
- Local TV news (0% vs 11% in 2013)

Cherwell Link

Cherwell Link remains the most popular source of information about Cherwell District Council. About two-thirds (67%) of residents say that they obtain most of their information about Cherwell District Council using this source. This is a higher proportion than in 2009 (56%) and the second highest level recorded to-date.

Website

Similarly, the proportion using the Council website to obtain most of their information about the Council has fallen back to levels seen prior to a high in 2014 (25% currently vs 37% in 2014), however, it is worth noting that 54% of participants had actually used the Council website so it remains an important information source.

Social media
Social media is not something to be ignored, with **1 in 10** using Twitter/ Facebook to obtain most of their information about the Council.

3.4 Perceptions of the economy: The local economy and Council budget priorities

In most areas, the climate surrounding national financing remains similar to that of 2014. It remains a cause of concern in the District with 80% saying they are fairly/ very concerned.

Despite these concerns, it is positive to note that 55% trust that Cherwell District Council will do what's right for residents; a significant improvement on the 42% of 2014.

3.5 Ranking of customer priorities 2015

As part of the survey respondents were also asked to trade off services in terms of priority. This list gives us a ranked order of customer priority.

Whilst conjoint analysis results demonstrate the same top five key services to safeguard as in 2014, there has been some movement in the position of these five factors.

The provision of affordable housing was rated as the most important service to maintain in 2015 (having been rated 4th most important last year).

Dealing with anti-social behaviour/ nuisance drops from 3rd most important in 2014 to 5th in 2015 but there is now a clear 'gap' between this and the top four factors in terms of overall importance.

Figure 4 below highlights a 'top six' of key services which are perceived to be a priority by local residents in greater magnitude than other Council services.

1) Providing affordable housing (2014 4th)
2) Household recycling collection and food/ garden waste collection service (2014 2nd)
3) Household waste collection (2014 1st)
4) Street cleaning and tackling environmental crime (2014 5th)
5) Dealing with anti-social behaviour/ nuisance (2014 3rd)
6) Supporting the creation of jobs in the local area (no change)

This indicates that all six priorities identified by survey respondents are reflected in the Council's four strategic priorities, key objectives and pledges for the current year. They should also be considered as part of the business planning process for the year ahead.

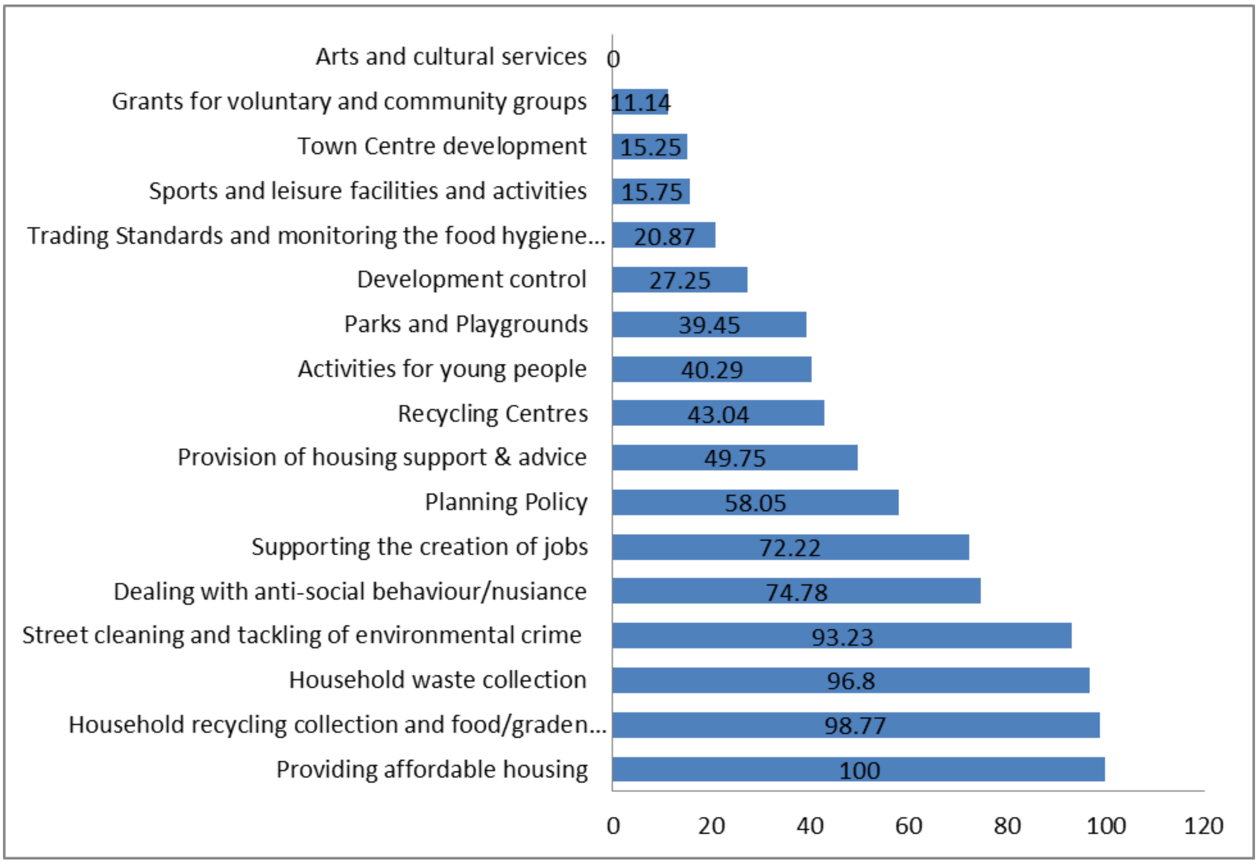
The Council's strategic priorities are:

Cherwell: A District of Opportunity
Cherwell: Safe, Green, Clean
Cherwell: Thriving Communities
Cherwell: Sound Budgets and Customer Focused Council

Council pledges in the current year are attached as appendix 3.

It should however, be recognised that the survey is only of local residents and that other stakeholder groups, e.g. local businesses may have slightly different priorities.

Figure 4**:** *It is important for Cherwell District Council to understand which services are most important to residents in the current economic climate. From the following pairs of Council Services, which would you prioritise for maintaining the current level of service provision?*



3.6 Areas of least satisfaction

Areas of least satisfaction appear to be focussed on those living in Banbury and Bicester with 74% apiece in 2015.

Although there is still room for improvement, these are factors by which residents can measure both visually and interactively a level to which the Council can be seen to be supporting the community.

Although higher proportions (around a third) answer questions surrounding the Council's approach to anti-social behaviour/ dealing with environmental crime with a neither/ nor response, positive answers over time show that perceptions can be influenced. Although not by significant margins, these two measures see their first down-turns for a number of years.

3.7 **Suggested areas for future focus**

The list below highlights areas where it is recommended that continued focus is maintained. These recommendations are based on two factors, current levels of satisfaction and the extent to which the service is a high priority for local residents. Just 5% of respondents expressed that they are ‘fairly dissatisfied’ with the Council.

A. Affordable housing
Concerns persist about the availability of affordable housing and how a balance will be struck between rural preservation and housing development. This ranked 1^{st} from 4^{th} last year and highlights the concerns of residents.

The provision of 150 units of affordable homes in the District and supporting opportunities for self-build and developing self-build skills is one of the core Pledges of this Council in the current year and will help to address this priority of survey respondents.

B. Anti-social behaviour
The survey illustrates a small decrease in satisfaction (from 51% in 2014 to 44% in 2015) with the measures in place for dealing with anti-social behaviour.

A presence of authority, particularly at night, would help residents’ feeling of security.

Working with the police and local licence holders to ensure that our town centres remain safe and vibrant is also one of the core Pledges of the Council in the current year. We will continue to work hard to address this with our partners, whilst also considering how we might continue to influence this priority going forward into 2016/17.

C. Car parking
There has been a decline in the numbers using car parks in Banbury & Kidlington. Bicester usage in the 2015 survey response is very similar to that recorded in 2014.

Paying by mobile phone and cost are still the main sources of dissatisfaction for car parking, with 1 in 5 respondents expressing dissatisfaction with payment via mobile devices in 2014 and this has increased to 24% in 2015.

D. Parks and recreational areas
The cleanliness/ upkeep of parks and recreational areas should be monitored along with the condition of some sports/ play areas to address the declines in ratings.

As one of the key deliverables associated with the strategic priority of Cherwell: Safe, Green, Clean, the Council has also pledged to improve local residents’ satisfaction with street and environmental cleanliness, continuing our successful programme of neighbourhood litter blitzes in the current year.

E. Sports and leisure
Satisfaction overall with leisure facilities has yet to recover from the 7% decrease encountered in 2013, a rating of 69% given in 2015. Kidlington & Gosford Leisure

Centre with 67% satisfaction among those using it in 2015 remains a fairly substantial margin away from attaining the 80% + satisfaction levels regularly achieved up to 2012.

Providing high quality and accessible leisure opportunities is a key objective of the Council under the strategic priority of Cherwell: Thriving Communities, with a number of outcomes planned in the current year.

F. Street Cleaning

One of the 'top 6' priorities, street cleansing is a service that is experienced by all residents and plays an important part in terms of quality of life and enjoyment living within a local area. It is a service upon which the Council is judged and valued by many residents and as such should remain an on-going area of focus.

The priority placed upon this service by survey respondents is reflected in the Council's strategic priority of Cherwell: Safe, Green, Clean and is also a specific pledge of the Council.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 This report presents a summary of the findings from the 2015 customer satisfaction survey. It highlights an increasing trend of improvement across Council services, and how the Council is perceived to represent value for money as well as areas where continued focus is required.

4.2 The report also highlights customer priorities. These will be used to help inform budget setting, the development of the Council's Business Plan and Performance Pledges for 2016/17 and the Council's five year Strategy.

4.3 As well as these high level findings the survey includes a wealth of service specific detail that will be used by service managers to help underpin service planning.

5.0 Consultation

Cherwell Residents	The survey is conducted with local residents.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To reject the recommendations and request additional work or alternative priorities arising from the survey findings.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:
Paul Sutton, Head of Finance and Procurement, Tel 0300 003 0106,
paul.sutton@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

Legal Implications

7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:
Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance, Tel 0300 0030107,
Kevin.Lane@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: **No**

Community Impact Threshold Met: **No**

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Sound Budgets and Customer Focussed Council

Lead Councillor

Councillor Barry Wood
Leader of the Council

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	2015 customer survey results (summary)
2	2015 customer survey results (full)
3	2015/2016 Cherwell District Council performance pledges
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Tracie Darke: Consultation & Engagement Officer
Contact Information	Tel: 01295 221575 Tracie.Darke@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk