Cherwell District Council

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

22 November 2016

Results of the Customer Satisfaction Survey 2016

Report of Director – Strategy & Commissioning

This report is public

Purpose of report

This report provides a summary of the key messages from the Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey which was undertaken in July 2016. Full details from the survey are contained in Appendix 1 which is the full report delivered by the company who ran the survey independently on behalf of Cherwell District Council (CDC), Marketing Means. This report will also outline some recommended actions to develop the Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey as an integral part of CDC's consultation with residents.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to:

1.1 Note the contents of the report and appendices.

1.2 To note that Executive agreed that the 2016 results are used as a baseline for future target setting and benchmarking (given the change in methodology for identifying and receiving information from respondents).

2.0 Introduction

2.1 This is the first time that the company Marketing Means has run the annual satisfaction survey for CDC following a re-tender of the contract. A summary of the re-tender is at Appendix 3.

2.2 The question base was kept the same as previous years although the method of contacting respondents has changed significantly. Households are now contacted directly via a postal survey rather than individuals being chosen from the Citizens' Panel.

2.3 The resident survey was sent to a sample of households across the authority area to gauge satisfaction with Council services and the local area, as well as asking about service priorities.

2.4 The survey was sent out to a geographically stratified sample of **3,500** households on 13 June 2016 with a further reminder mailing issued to those respondents who had not replied on 4 July 2016. The survey closed on 20 July 2016.

2.5 A total of **1,034** valid surveys were returned, giving a response rate of **31%** of the 3,500 surveyed. This is a large increase on last year's respondent base of **437**, who responded via the Citizens' Panel. Part of the reasoning for re-tendering of the contract was to improve the response rate and use a more statistically significant proportion of the district's population.

2.6 All households in the sample received a postal survey with an opportunity to complete the survey online. 36 online surveys were completed (which are included in the response rate above).

2.7 The final respondent profile was 'weighted' by age and gender in order to be reflective of Cherwell's population as a whole. All charts and data in this report are based on 'weighted' data.

2.8 For key questions, respondents were asked for a particular statement whether they were:

- Very Satisfied
- Fairly Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

For the purpose of the key messages below and the full report (Appendix 1), 'Fairly satisfied' and 'Very satisfied' have been combined to 'satisfied' and 'Fairly dissatisfied' and 'Very dissatisfied' have been combined to 'Dissatisfied'.

2.9 More specific questions asked the respondent for a rating between 1 and 10, where 1 is very satisfied and 10 is very dissatisfied.

For the purpose of the key messages below and the full report (Appendix 1), the following groupings have been applied to these ratings:

- Very Satisfied (1,2)
- Fairly Satisfied (3,4)
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (5,6)
- Fairly dissatisfied (7,8)
- Very dissatisfied (9,10)

2.10 Where people have not answered a question, they have not been included in calculating the percentage satisfied/dissatisfied answers.

2.11 The results of the survey have already been considered by Executive. Any comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be feedback to the Leader of the Council.

3.0 Report Details

Overarching key messages

3.1 Satisfaction with the services provided by Cherwell District Council overall is 69%, a fall from 79% in 2015's survey. Those answering that they were dissatisfied rose from 9% to 11%

3.2 80% were satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

3.2.1 Among the factors providing greatest levels of dissatisfaction were issues around the town centres and access to jobs: 'the town centres attract people to shop' (42% dissatisfied); 'the availability of good quality jobs' (31% dissatisfied); 'the location of jobs' (26% dissatisfied) and 'the look and feel of town centres' (24% dissatisfied).

3.2.2 That said however, town centre development ranked very low on the priority areas for which the Council should maintain the current level of service provision.

3.3 Large proportions of respondents **did not feel very or fairly well informed** about the benefits and services the Council provides (40%) nor what it spends money on (51%).

3.4 Just over a third (35%) **agreed** CDC provides value for money (23% **disagreed**). This is a drop of 20% from 2015's result of 55%.

3.5 There is a high level of concern overall with the nation's current budget deficit (77% concerned). Around a third (32%) **agreed** that their household has been affected by public spending cuts.

3.6 In terms of the Council, 42% **agreed** they trust CDC will do what is right for residents in the current economic climate (27% **disagreed**).

3.7 Respondents were very much of the opinion that there were efficiency savings to made in the Council to avoid cutting services (53% **agreed**) and respondents were against paying more council tax to maintain current services (54%).

Reason for drops in results

3.8 These results (and indeed all the results in this covering report and the full results set in Appendix 1) should be read in the context that the survey was sent to a geographically stratified sample of households rather than just those people who had volunteered to give feedback and would possibly be more positive towards the council to start with.

3.8.1 The membership of the Citizens' panel used for last year's results had also been declining year on year meaning the results were based on an increasingly smaller proportion of the overall Cherwell district population.

3.8.2 There was also a small financial incentive for people to be involved in the Citizens' Panel which may have led to more positive answers being submitted. Members of the panel were paid for completing initial training to take part in the panel and there was a randomly selected prize winner from those that did complete the survey.

3.8.3 By sending a postal survey to a cross-section of the district we have seen nearly a 150% increase in the number of respondents giving us a broader range of opinions and more statistically significant proportion of the population giving their views. The response of 1,034 out of the 3,500 surveys sent out provides an overall confidence level of +/-3% at the 95% level. (More details on how the confidence interval is worked out are on page 8 of Appendix 1).

3.8.4 The change in methodology was agreed as part of the re-tendering of the contract to provide the Annual Customer Satisfaction survey. This was undertaken in response to dwindling numbers of respondents and increasing costs of the previous contract.

3.8.5 The final report style (Appendix 1) is significantly different from the previously provided information packs with more emphasis on pulling out the key messages from each question set.

3.8.6 The re-tender and subsequent award of the contract to Marketing Means saw a reduction in annual costs of £21,807 from an annual fee last year of £30,000 to £8,913 this year. Depending on changes to the survey's question bank, there may be further savings to be made next year. Appendix 3 has details of the cost comparison and brief details of the re-tender process.

Service prioritisation

3.9 Question 41 of the survey asked respondents to compare services and rate which they felt was more important. Conjoint analysis was applied to these results to rank services. This allows us to examine the relative 'importance' a number of factors have relative to each other.

The output from conjoint analysis is a hierarchy of importance, giving a clear indication of the relative importance of individual factors to respondents.

3.10 The top three key services to be maintained by the Council were identified as:

- Household recycling collection and food/garden waste collections
- Household waste collection
- Providing affordable housing

This is consistent with the top three results last year although the priority order of these three has changed.

These services are all currently reflected in the CDC business plan. A full list of ranked priorities is shown in Appendix 2, also showing the change in position over time.

3.11 The full service prioritisation information will be used as part of the evidence base to inform the business planning process for 2017/18.

Service specific satisfaction highlights

Environmental Services

3.12 There are high levels of satisfaction with the Council's household waste collection service (82%), household recycling collection service (80%) and household food and garden waste collection service (83%). These services have seen excellent results continue with only slight drops, probably due to the change in respondent base.

3.12.1 All three of these services were highlighted as the main priority areas for the Council to maintain the current level of service provision.

Leisure Services

3.13 Overall satisfaction with leisure facilities was 63%, which climbed to 69% for those who have used them in the past 12 months.

3.13.1 Satisfaction with various aspects of the local leisure facilities: 64% for the range of facilities available; 61% for the cleanliness and condition; 59% with staff, 51% for refreshment/catering at venues and 49% for the cost of using them.

3.13.2 Over a quarter (27%) of respondents were dissatisfied with the cost of using the local leisure facilities.

Community Safety

3.14 Although there were high levels of residents feeling safe in their homes and local communities, 40% of respondents outlined they felt fairly or very unsafe when walking alone in the town centre after dark.

Car parking

3.15 Overall 62% were satisfied with local car parking facilities, 21% were dissatisfied.

3.15.1 The main area of dissatisfaction revolved around price of parking where 40% were fairly or very dissatisfied.

Contacting the council and interaction with officers

3.16 74% of respondents were satisfied (score 1-4) with information about how to contact the council, only 9% were dissatisfied (score 7-10).

3.16.1 Just over three quarters (76%) were satisfied (score 1-4) with being respected/listened to by staff, 10% were dissatisfied (score 7-10).

3.16.2 Just under three quarters (74%) were satisfied (score 1-4) with staff knowledge, 11% were dissatisfied (score 7-10).

3.16.3 81% were satisfied (score 1-4) staff used plain English and did not speak in jargon, 9% were dissatisfied (score 7-10).

Summary Table

3.17 The table below shows the results of several of the key service satisfaction measures with a comparison to the results from the survey last year. As explained above in section 3.8, a change in who makes up the respondent base is the likely cause for the reduction across all results.

3.18 Despite the significant change in respondent base, some services show a negligible change in satisfaction. Waste collection for example has only dropped 1%.

3.19 While there are more marked drops in other service areas (and with the overall satisfaction rate), the figures for 2016 form a far more representative baseline to enable the tracking of satisfaction performance going forward.

	2015	**2016**	**% Change since 2015**
Overall Satisfaction	**79**	**69**	**-10**
Recycling centres	91	77	-14
Household recycling collection service	87	80	-7
Waste collection service	83	82	-1
Food and garden waste collection	84	83	-1
Street cleansing service	69	62	-7
Local car parking facilities	66	62	-4
Local parks and open spaces	79	69	-10
Leisure facilities	68	63	-5
Leisure activities	64	54	-10
Local area as a place to live	88	80	-8
Council’s approach to dealing with environmental crime	50	40	-10
Dealing with anti-social behaviour/ nuisance	53	42	-11

Lessons learnt and proposed changes to the Annual Survey

3.20 The Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey gives us a consistent method of gathering feedback from the public and should therefore form a critical part of the consultation CDC undertakes. There are however, several recommendations below for future surveys to help streamline and focus the survey. (These recommendations have come from both Cherwell District officers and also Marketing Means).

- Retain a small set of core comparable questions to enable the tracking of progress over time.

- Introduce target questions relating to services that we need to change or understand more regarding the requirements.

- Focus more on the priorities of our customers as opposed to assessing support to our actions/policies.

- Remove the high density of questions on Waste and Leisure that could be completed by a more targeted approach to consultation (i.e. ask users of the relevant service rather than ask several questions in the generic survey about services that the respondent may not have utilised).

- Take the opportunity to ask questions that link with partners (e.g. Police, Fire and Health services) and secure a contribution towards the running costs, thereby gaining shared information (ASB/Community Safety) as well as making savings on the annual cost.

- Investigate options for selecting the sample of residents to be contacted. Large numbers of surveys were returned by Royal Mail as they were selected from a property database which didn’t include information about occupancy (e.g. the house was a new build with no-one living there).

- Review the timetable for the survey so that it doesn’t clash with major elections and also fits into the Business Planning cycle at an earlier stage. Initial discussions around priorities and objectives for the Cherwell Business Plan have taken place prior to the results being available.

3.21 Appendix 4 sets out a draft Action Plan for reviewing and revising the contents of the Annual Survey.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 While key results have shown a dip in performance when compared to the performance last year, it is critical to consider the improvement in the number and range of respondents we now are using. Instead of asking a very small sample of people who have volunteered to respond, we are posing the questions to a far broader set of respondents and getting a more representative view of satisfaction from Cherwell residents.

4.2 The annual satisfaction survey is a core method of getting feedback from our residents. By reviewing the question base to align it with key service requirements for customer opinion and also the aims and priorities of the Corporate Business Plan, we will improve the quality of information we receive and the decisions that are made based on feedback and satisfaction data. A more concise survey may also improve response rates.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 Consultation will need to take place with officers and members before any changes to the question set can be introduced to make sure that key questions are retained and additional questions have the correct focus.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 Retaining the current survey will mean that we don't utilise the survey fully as a source of customer feedback information

6.2 Using the wider respondent base has meant a dip in results this year but provides a more accurate reflection of opinion in the district. Reverting to a more select group of respondents could potentially mask issues.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report

Comments checked by:
Paul Sutton – Chief Finance Officer
0300 003 0106 Paul.Sutton@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

Legal Implications

7.2 There are no legal issues arising from this report.

Comments checked by:
Kevin Lane - Head of Law and Governance
0300 003 0107 Kevin.lane@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

Risk Implications

7.3 There are no risk implications arising from this report

Comments checked by:
Louise Tustian – Senior Performance & Improvement Officer
01295 221786 Louise.tustian2@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

The satisfaction survey results link to many different services, contributing to all Corporate Aims. In future, there is an opportunity to align these links more strongly so that the satisfaction survey can both help provide evidence that local priorities are being addressed and also highlight issues which may need.

Lead Councillor

Councillor Barry Wood
Leader of the Council

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Full report
2	Service Prioritisation
3	Re-tendering of Annual Satisfaction Survey contract: Summary
4	Action plan for review of the next Annual Survey
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Ed Bailey – Corporate Performance & Insight Manager
Contact Information	01295 221605 Edward.Bailey@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk