

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY RESOURCES

19 SEPTEMBER 2007

HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT REVIEW OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise members of the results arising from the latest (2006/7) statutory customer satisfaction survey in respect of the Housing and Council Tax Benefits Service.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 All local authorities are required to conduct a triennial Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) Survey for the Benefits Service. The most recent survey was carried in respect of the year 2006/07. The main purpose of the BVPI Survey is to measure public satisfaction in the service.
- 2.2 The survey was conducted in line with guidelines laid down by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and was undertaken in-house using postal methodology. The survey questionnaires were sent out in 2 sampling periods during June 2006 and February 2007. In total 4,334 survey forms were sent out to new benefit claimants and of these 1,824 were returned, a return rate of 42%. In order to meet the requirements of the survey, it was only necessary to achieve a minimum of 625 returns.

3. RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

- 3.1 The overall performance of the Benefits Service as measured by national performance indicators has improved since the last survey was undertaken during 2003/04. Based upon the latest performance information provided by the Department for Works and Pensions the DWP's the Council has again achieved a grade 4 (the highest) for its processing of all new claims. This high level of performance has also been reflected in the customer satisfaction survey of the service that was undertaken. A comparison with the results from previous surveys is shown below. This gives a clear indication that in general, a high level of customer satisfaction with the service has been maintained and there has also been a slight improvement in comparison with the previous survey results.

Question (Strongly Agree or Agree)	March 2001	March 2004	March 2007
Overall I am satisfied with the facilities to get in touch with the Benefits Office	68%	81%	82%
Overall I am satisfied with the experience of visiting the Benefits Office	62%	76%	77%
Overall I am satisfied with the telephone service	52%	70%	71%
Overall I am satisfied with the service provided by staff in the Benefits Office	71%	84%	82%
Overall I am satisfied with clarity and understanding of the forms	50%	60%	61%
Overall I am satisfied with the amount of time it took to determine my claim	51%	70%	75%
Overall I am satisfied with the Benefits Service	n/a	80%	81%

Question (Strongly Disagree or Disagree)	March 2001	March 2004	March 2007
Overall I am satisfied with the facilities to get in touch with the Benefits Office	15%	9%	7%
Overall I am satisfied with the experience of visiting the Benefits Office	22%	11%	8%
Overall I am satisfied with the telephone service	19%	17%	17%
Overall I am satisfied with the service provided by staff in the Benefits Office	12%	7%	6%
Overall I am satisfied with clarity and understanding of the forms	26%	19%	17%
Overall I am satisfied with the amount of time it took to determine my claim	37%	22%	15%
Overall I am satisfied with the Benefits Service	n/a	13%	8%

4. EQUALITIES ISSUES

- 4.1 The Council has also further analysed the results of its most recent survey in terms of addressing any issues of equalities. This has been undertaken using the data collected from the actual survey forms but does not form a requirement of the DCLG.
- 4.2 The results have been further broken into 3 categories with regard to Ethnicity (Appendix 1), Age (Appendix 2), and Disability and Illness (Appendix 3). Although, with regard to ethnicity we have identified some differences in the levels of satisfaction (See Appendix 1), no specific action needs to be undertaken especially taking into account the small sample size used for analysing the data. It must be borne in mind however that the sample size used for analysing some of the Ethnicity data is extremely small. The Council, nevertheless, remains committed to continuing its own equalities based work.

5. ETHNICITY (APPENDIX 1)

- 5.1 The respondents of the survey are shown in 4 categories: White British and Irish, Other, White Other and Not Answered. The survey results would appear to indicate that in general over all the questions asked, the level of satisfaction is higher with those respondents that have been identified as White British and Irish.

6. AGE (APPENDIX 2)

- 6.1 The respondents of the survey are shown in 3 categories: Up to 60, Over 60 and Not Answered. This clearly shows that in all areas respondents over the age of 60 would appear to be far more satisfied with the service provided than those below the age of 60. Further analysis of the results has indicated that younger claimants (up to age of

19) have a much lower level of satisfaction compared with any other age group. Conversely claimants over the age of 80 have indicated satisfaction levels of 90% or more in all areas (apart from the claim form).

7. DISABILITY AND ILLNESS (APPENDIX 3)

7.1 Just above 50% of respondents to the survey identified that they had a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity. The results of the survey show that satisfaction levels are relatively consistent across all areas and for all respondents. In fact those respondents identifying themselves with an illness or disability would appear to be marginally more satisfied with the service that we provide.

8. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

8.1 The results of the latest customer satisfaction survey are noted.

HEAD OF TREASURY SERVICES

CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None

SR/Benefits Survey 2007

7 September 2007