

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE
29 JUNE 2007**

PLACE SURVEY 2008 RESULTS

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Executive of the results of the national Place Survey conducted in Autumn 2008.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A postal survey was conducted during September to November 2008 in accordance with the CLG guidelines for the Place Survey. A copy of the survey is included in the full report. The Place Survey is the replacement for the Best Value Indicator Survey (BVPI) which was conducted in 2000, 2003 and 2006. Due to considerable change in the design of the survey and a focus on area rather than organisation there is limited comparability to the BVPI 2006.
- 2.2 The objective of the survey was to measure satisfaction with public services in Exeter. All local authorities were required to undertake this survey.
- 2.3 The Council sent out 4,000 surveys to addresses selected at random across the city. The total number of completed questionnaires was 1,764 out of 4,000 giving a response rate of 44% this is almost identical to that achieved in 2006 with the BVPI survey.
- 2.4 This report focuses on the key findings. The full report compares the findings with previous data, where comparable, from the 2006 survey. The satisfaction scores quoted in this report correspond to the percentage sum of the people who were either very satisfied or satisfied with the service provided.
- 2.5 The survey provides the data for a number of the statutory national indicators (NIs) and these NIs are noted in the full report.
- 2.6 The Audit Commission has not yet published the national results for the Place Survey so comparative data for all the survey questions with similar councils is not available. Once it is available the Devon Consultation group is planning to do a benchmarking exercise to share data.

3.0 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

- 3.1 The key issues for local people in what makes somewhere a good place to live and what things need most improving have proved relatively consistent over the life of the BVPI and Place surveys.

Top five most important in making Exeter a good place to live

- The level of crime 62%
- Clean streets 39.7%
- Health services 38.1%
- Affordable decent housing 36.2%
- Parks and open spaces 34.1%

3.2 This indicates the importance of the cleaner, greener, safer agenda promoted by the Local Government Association which has consistently been shown across a range of surveys to be key in influencing public satisfaction. It also indicates the need for partnership working at Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) level to address the issues of place.

3.3 **The top five things that most need improving in Exeter**

- The level of traffic congestion 55.4%
- Road and pavement repairs 41.4%
- Activities for teenagers 36.6%
- Affordable decent housing 27.8%
- Wage levels and cost of living 27.6%

3.4 This again shows the consistent level of concern over three key areas of service which are provided by Devon County Council. This has hardly changed since 2006. Issues around housing and the economy which are two of the City Council's key priorities show some change. Housing has seen a significant fall in the percentage of people seeing this as an area for improvement and wage levels entered the top five for the first time since 2000 indicating the level of concern around the current recession.

3.5 Overall, it should be noted that satisfaction with Exeter as a place to live is high at 83.6% and has risen slightly since 2006. Views around sense of place are split with just under half of people feeling affinity with their immediate neighbourhood and just over half not feeling it. However, other survey work conducted by Ipsos MORI in 2008 for the City Council showed that there is a high affinity level with the city.

3.6 The questions around public services in the Place Survey are differently worded from previous years in that they focus on views about the effectiveness and satisfaction with public services rather than specifically about the Council as was the case in the BVPI surveys. This reflects the government's emphasis on the area rather than the agency.

3.7 Public services are generally thought to be effective on the cleaner, greener agenda (66.9%), on the safer agenda (57%) and on delivering equality (51.7%). People were less convinced however that the agencies promote the interests (36.5%) and act on the concerns (37.8%) of the local residents. This would suggest that there is a greater need for the public services in the city to engage with local people.

3.8 Satisfaction with public services in the city appears to be quite high with fire and rescue (80.4%), GPs (81.4%) and hospitals (86.4%) all scoring well. Dentists scored 64%, the police scored 62.5%, the City Council 55.1% and lastly Devon

County Council 46.8%. The latter two scores were also reflected in the value for money ratings which saw 40% of respondents agree that the City Council provided value against only 31.1% agreeing that the County Council did.

- 3.9 This is backed up with the findings in the report on providing information and on local decision making. In 2006 43% of people felt well informed by the City Council however in the new survey which asks about how well informed people feel about public services the score is considerably lower at 37.4%. Other survey work conducted by the City Council in 2008 suggests that people still feel well informed about City Council services so this may be less a reflection on the City Council's communications than on those of other partners.
- 3.10 There has been a significant fall in the percentage of people feeling they have influence over decisions from 38.1% in 2006 to 28.2% in 2009. At the same time the percentage of people wanting to be involved in decision making generally has fallen slightly from 24.7% to 21.1% but the percentage of people wanting to be involved in specific decisions about issues they care about has risen from 56.1% in 2006 to 67.1% in 2009. This suggests there is a real appetite for community engagement and involvement but that people need to be engaged on their terms and on specific issues rather than general policies.
- 3.11 In the section of the survey which deals specifically with services provided by the City Council and County Council within Exeter it is clear as in previous surveys that people's satisfaction with individual services is often higher than with the organisations as a whole.
- Refuse collection 81.9%
 - Doorstep recycling 72.9%
 - Parks and open spaces 72.5%
 - *Local tips and household waste recycling centres (DCC) 70.6%*
 - Keeping land clear of litter and refuse 63.6%
 - *Libraries (DCC) 66%*
 - *Local Bus services (DCC) 54.2%*
 - Sports and leisure facilities 54.1%
 - Museums and galleries 49.5%
 - *Local transport information (DCC) 47.7%*
 - Theatres and concert halls 41%
- 3.12 It is noted that the relatively poor score for museums which was a significant fall from 2006 is likely to be due to the closure of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum since 2007 for major refurbishment.
- 3.13 The survey also looked at a range of issues around community cohesion. There was a very slight fall in the percentage of people who agree that people from different backgrounds get on well together from 83.5% in 2006 to 79.6% in 2009. However, there was a very encouraging improvement in the percentage of people who say that people treating each other with respect is not a problem from 56.8% in 2006 to 72.3% in 2009. The majority (77.3%) of people felt they were treated with respect by their public services.

- 3.14 Community safety was covered for the first time in the Place survey. The findings are in line with previous survey work conducted by the City Council in this area although the findings are not directly comparable. Although 89.5% of people felt safe in their local area in daylight this fell sharply at night to 55.7%.
- 3.15 When asked about aspects of anti social behaviour such as noise, rowdiness, and vandalism there was a general across the board fall in the percentage of people identifying them as problems with particularly sharp falls in concern around teenagers hanging around (down 17.4%), rubbish and litter (down 14.8%) and drug taking (down 11.1%). However, there is an issue in that people don't feel that the police and local public services seek people's views about anti social behaviour and crime in their local area with only 19.3% feeling involved and only 26.5% feeling the police and public services are successful in tackling the agenda.
- 3.16 Overall the Place Survey presents a positive picture of people's perceptions of living in Exeter and their views about public services. There is clearly some work to do in relation to making people feel better informed and engaged with their public services which needs to be tackled alongside public service partners.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 A detailed analysis of the findings of the report by age, gender and ward will be undertaken during the summer and the results provided to SMT/Heads of Service for use in service planning.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Executive note the report.

ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

Local Government (Access to information) Act 1985 (as amended) Background papers used in compiling this report:

Place Survey full report.