

Appendix 3 MORI Residents survey – Improvement activity

Background

Since 1995 Sunderland City Council has commissioned an annual survey to monitor residents' satisfaction with and perceptions of the council and the services it provides. The latest survey was conducted in Autumn 2008 and comprised 1260 interviews with residents across the city in addition to a 'booster' sample of residents from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. Cabinet received a copy of the findings from the 2008 survey on 11 March 2009.

It is increasingly important that the council understands the needs and requirements of its communities, and in particular the most marginalised and vulnerable groups to ensure that policies and services are designed to meet them. The Annual Residents' Survey is an important starting point in developing this understanding since it enables the council to measure satisfaction with the council, council services and local area and monitor trends over time. It also provides the opportunity to conduct more detailed analysis of how perspectives vary amongst different groups of the population, for example by geographical area, age, gender, disability and ethnicity.

It is crucial that the council actively uses this information to help inform this understanding and in future engagement, service planning and improvement. It was therefore agreed that the key issues arising from the 2008 survey should be identified and for the council to consider how to respond to them.

It should however be recognised that there is still a need for directorates to consider the wider results in more detail and across subgroups, looking at not only areas where improvement is needed but also where progress has been made and in relation to interventions in the previous year.

The 2008 survey presents a largely positive set of results although there are some issues to consider in order to improve performance further. This report outlines the key issues and the existing and planned interventions that are designed to respond to them. The sections are organised by key themes although some actions may cut across more than one theme.

Council and local area satisfaction

Overall area satisfaction remains high at 78% with only 15% dissatisfied, although there was a notable fall in area satisfaction levels in both South Sunderland and Coalfield from 2007 and Coalfield residents are less positive than in other areas.

Satisfaction with the council retains previous levels at 63% while 19% are dissatisfied. Those aged 45-54 and those from East Sunderland are more dissatisfied than overall.

The council has made good progress on a number of image indicators since 2007, for example value for money, keeping promises and learning from mistakes. There are still however a significant minority (between one quarter and one third) who are less positive on a number of these indicators.

Due to the cross-cutting nature of these measures, existing and planned developments are picked up in subsequent sections.

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Community engagement

Key issues

Ratings continue to be relatively low in terms of the council asking for and listening to the views of local people (42% and 28% agree respectively), although net agreement has improved on the latter by 9 points since 2007. Residents in Washington and those with a C2 social class¹ are less positive on both measures. Those from Coalfield are additionally less positive about the council listening to the views of local people.

In addition the provisional score for NI4 which is the percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality has declined by 6 points to 26% (as measured in the 2008 Place Survey) since 2006.

Existing and planned developments

There is a need for a council wide and city-wide approach to improving perceptions on these measures. This will include developing a greater appreciation of and responsiveness to the principles of the Duty to Involve (which comes into force in April 2009). Service providers should therefore have a better understanding of the most appropriate ways in which to involve residents in service design and delivery and to target opportunities to key groups having identified the ways in which those groups most want to be involved.

There are a range of corporate measures designed to support this and improve community engagement at the council and across the city. The include:

- Further development of the Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) and citizens' panel
- Implementation of the Sunderland Compact to develop and maintain the relationship between The Council and partners of the Sunderland Partnership and Voluntary and Community Sector organisations in Sunderland
- Strengthening of the Consultation Group and database to facilitate the sharing of information, expertise, knowledge and best practice and better co-ordinate activity
- Procurement and implementation of an e-consultation solution to encourage wider involvement in engagement activity
- Review and improve consultation/engagement resources available to officers to drive up the quality of activity
- Implementation of the Sunderland Partnership Community Development Plan
- A more integrated programme of promotion regarding consultation / engagement opportunities and how involvement is making a difference
- Implementation of an improved Traffic and Road Safety communication framework which will ensure the public can, where appropriate, consider a range of options for traffic calming, access and congestion related proposals.

Future developments should include ensuring that community engagement and other issues such as equalities are adequately covered in Project Initiation Documents and in reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny.

¹ See Appendix One for social class definitions.

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Proposals around area arrangements and continued involvement in the development of local area plans are also designed to encourage greater participation in local decision making and increase the number of residents who feel they can influence priority setting and decision making in their area.

Communications

Key issues

Although more than half of residents feel informed about the council, 40% still do not feel informed and 32% have never seen a copy of Sunrise or Switched On. Those in social class C2 and those from Coalfield are less likely to feel informed. Those who have seen Sunrise are better informed although BMEs and Under 24's are also better informed but dissemination of Sunrise is somewhat lower amongst these groups and to a lesser extent those in social class DE, men and those from East Sunderland.

Existing and planned developments

Using this and in depth research with residents, there is a proposal to extend the reach and appeal of Sunrise, providing more frequent issues specifically covering local issues as well as city wide developments in a timely and more frequent manner. This will allow the magazine to contain areas of interest and use to a wider range of residents such as job adverts, local events and ways to get involved.

There is also a proposal to better integrate and coordinate all communications materials intended for residents and to use a brand recognition exercise and mapping to focus on targeting information materials at areas where there is least awareness and greatest need for more information directly associated with the council.

The development of Area Communication Plans will improve communication at a local level so that residents are kept up to date with what is going on in their area.

Customer Services

Key issues

Forty-five percent of residents have contacted the council with an enquiry or problem in the last 2 years. Views are largely positive and progress has been made in all areas since 2007, although a significant minority are dissatisfied with some measures. For example 31% of those in contact were dissatisfied with the outcome of their enquiry and 26% were dissatisfied with the handling of their enquiry while 30% think staff were slow in dealing with their request. 25-34s are less positive about speed of dealing with the request, ability to deal with the problem and the handling of their enquiry. They are more likely than other groups to say they have contacted the council in relation to housing.

Existing and planned developments

Customer service ratings are a reflection of not only the customer services function but also the service delivery department with responsibility to fulfil the service request. In

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addition customer services are handled by both service directorates and the 'formal' Customer Services Network.

The Business Improvement Project Customer Services Network Transformation Project will address the issues raised and more by implementing a standard business operating model (based on an advocacy and brokerage model that will address third party issues such as interfaces with Gentoo, and provide service request tracking to improve the outcome of service requests/enquires). It will also include the implementation of common customer care standards and training, rationalisation of IT systems and processes, migration of services into the 'formal' Customer Services Network, reduction in avoidable contact and improved access across a range of channels resulting in increased customer satisfaction.

Data from various sources will be collected and further research undertaken to improve 'customer insight' and enable further tailoring of service delivery to fulfil customer requirements.

The Council's website will also be improved to enable the public to self serve their information requirements in relation to traffic and road safety through the development of a GIS based data analysis and request progress tool.

Volunteering

Key issues

Levels of volunteering have fallen since 2007 with 70% of residents having never taken part in formal volunteering, although this is still an improvement since 2005. Volunteering is lowest in the North, amongst social class C2,DE, over 65s and those with a disability.

Existing and planned developments

During 2009/2010 agreement will be secured within the council and across the Sunderland Partnership to key actions and lead officer arrangements for implementation of the Sunderland Partnership Community Development Plan (CDP) priorities. Appropriate performance management arrangements will be established including a highlight system to promote effective delivery. Six monthly reports on progress will be provided to EMT and the Sunderland Partnership Board.

The CDP will help to increase community capacity to engage with the Sunderland Strategy Priorities, promote active citizenship and support communities in identifying and meeting their needs to close the inequalities gap. This will help meet the targets associated with new national performance indicators NI 6 – participation in regular volunteering and NI 7 – Environment for a thriving third sector.

Support will be provided to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) through development of an Integrated Bureau of Support to increase the skills and knowledge available within the VCS and to provide more effective and coordinated support aimed at increasing the number of residents volunteering in the city. A refresh of the Sunderland Compact arrangements will be undertaken in 2009/2010 to embed them across the organisations of the Sunderland Partnership and the VCS to develop better relationships

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between the VCS and the wider Sunderland Partnership which should lead to improved service delivery for the citizens of Sunderland.

The Council in partnership with Sunderland Volunteer Centre have developed and launched a 'Volunteering Toolkit aimed at organisations' which involve volunteers. The toolkit provides good practice guidelines on working with volunteers, information on volunteering and routes to progression. This information is provided in a booklet format with CD Rom. This work has arisen from the joint work with the VCS to develop the Sunderland Compact - Volunteering Code of Practice.

The Council has commissioned research to accurately understand the levels of participation in volunteering across Sunderland, as local information from Sunderland Volunteer Centre suggests a different picture to the survey results

Further research/analysis

When directorates are considering this year's results in more detail they may identify areas where further work is required to better understand perceptions.

The information from the survey will be used together with a range of other consultation information and intelligence at a local level to help inform the local area plans.

BME residents who took part in the survey and indicated that they would like to take part in further research will be invited to a workshop in order to explore further the issues raised in the survey. This may include for example recycling and safety in the city centre.

The findings, analysed by each of the six equality strands (gender, faith, disability, age, ethnicity and sexuality) will be provided to the relevant IAGs for further consideration and action planning.

Future surveys

The council will continue to review the scope of the survey and consider how it can be developed in future years.

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Social Class Definitions

A Professionals such as doctors, surgeons, solicitors or dentists; chartered people like architects; fully qualified people with a large degree of responsibility such as senior editors, senior civil servants, town clerks, senior business executives and managers, and high ranking grades of the Services.

B People with very responsible jobs such as university lecturers, hospital matrons, heads of local government departments, middle management in business, qualified scientists, bank managers, police inspectors, and upper grades of the Services.

C1 All others doing non-manual jobs; nurses, technicians, pharmacists, salesmen, publicans, people in clerical positions, police sergeants/constables, and middle ranks of the Services.

C2 Skilled manual workers/craftsmen who have served apprenticeships; foremen, manual workers with special qualifications such as long distance lorry drivers, security officers, and lower grades of Services.

D Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, including labourers and mates of occupations in the C2 grade and people serving apprenticeships; machine minders, farm labourers, bus and railway conductors, laboratory assistants, postmen, door-to-door and van salesmen.

E Those on lowest levels of subsistence including pensioners, casual workers, and others with minimum levels of income.