

## **Cabinet – 28 February 2007**

### **2006/07 Best Value satisfaction performance indicators**

<b>Portfolio:</b>	Councillor Marco Longhi – Transformation & Performance
<b>Service:</b>	Corporate focus - performance management
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Key decisions:</b>	No
<b>Forward plan:</b>	No

#### **Summary of report**

This report sets out the best value satisfaction performance indicator outturns from the 2006/07 statutory best value user and general residents' satisfaction surveys. Results indicate that the council's overall reputation has improved by +9.2% points from 36% in 2003/04 to 45.2% in 2006/07 alongside significant increases in satisfaction with a wide range of council services.

Many of these indicators are used in Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and make an important contribution to improving our CPA 2006 scoring; demonstrating that the council's achievements are recognised by the community.

#### **Recommendation**

That the results be noted.

#### **Resource and legal considerations**

Every three years the council has a duty under the best value regime to administer a range of satisfaction surveys. They are undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) so that the results provide nationally comparable data. There are four surveys; general residents, planning applicants, library adult users, and benefit recipients, and were conducted by post.

Previously the surveys were uncoordinated. To provide greatest value for money the council instigated a consortium arrangement with Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sandwell councils to jointly commission the surveys from consultants Bostock Marketing Group (BMG) at a total cost of £22,000. The only exception to this was the library survey which was undertaken in-house at point of service delivery by librarians to Institute of Public Finance (IPF) requirements. The ongoing process has been coordinated by corporate performance management in liaison with relevant services and funded from within existing service budgets.

## **Citizen impact**

The surveys measure citizen and customer perceptions, including their overall satisfaction with the council and individual services. When compared with previous comparable results, trends show the extent to which people think that the council is improving service delivery and local quality of life.

The information gathered is embedded within the council's corporate integrated planning and performance framework (CIPPF) and is used to inform service plans and the resulting budget plan. This demonstrates that the organisation is listening to and acting upon the needs of the community.

## **Community safety**

In addition to the best value indicators produced through the general residents survey there is a wide range of additional information available once the survey has been fully analysed. For example indications of the extent to which people feel the council is improving local quality of life and community safety issues. So far we have confirmed results and trend data for the best value indicators only. More detailed reports of survey are imminently awaited.

However, from other research undertaken we already know that community safety is of great importance for local communities and partners and this remains a council priority. The survey information will help inform future community safety initiatives and priorities for improvement.

## **Environmental impact**

A core set of the published best value indicators measure satisfaction with waste management services and cleanliness of the street scene. These indicators are showing significant improvement demonstrate a positive environmental impact on the community. A full report of survey will indicate a wider range of local environmental quality of life perceptions.

## **Performance and risk management issues**

Perception trends clearly show that satisfaction with the performance of the council overall and its services are improving; hence that achievements are recognised by Walsall residents. The results are used to inform CPA. They also form an integral part of the council's own CIPPF so will provide a valuable picture of customer performance and this will be embedded across CIPPF elements.

The results show that the council has been successful in managing out the risk that these measures performed poorly by improvement planning issues from previous surveys and impacting negatively on the council in CPA.

## Equality implications

All our consultation activity is designed to obtain a representative picture of local opinion including young people, older people, those with disabilities, black and minority ethnic residents, and including “hard to reach” groups. The surveys are specifically sampled so that the results are representative of the community and service user groups and the information gathered is used to assist council services to meet the need of all citizens. Results broken down by demographics will shape future focussed improvements to services where there is negative perception of services and local quality of life.

In addition surveys were available in large print and in translated format on request so that everyone who wanted to was able to take part.

## Consultation

The best value surveys have taken place every three years since 2000/01. In excess of 9,000 residents and customers have been consulted through the 2006/07 surveys and so demonstrate a robust picture of their perceptions. The surveys form an integral part of our consultation strategy and calendar and the feedback is valued within the organisation and used extensively throughout the CIPPF to inform future improvement.

## Vision 2008

The survey results underpin our success in delivery of the council’s vision and the ten strategic priorities, not least that *‘the council listens to what people want’*. In terms of our vision of excellence the much improved results mean that we can clearly demonstrate through CPA that achievements are seen in the eyes of our residents and service users and this has previously been difficult to evidence.

## Background papers

BV Satisfaction Guidance  
Corporate Integrated Planning and Performance Framework (CIPPF)

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19 February 2007



**Cllr Marco Longhi – Portfolio Holder**  
19 February 2007

## 2006/07 best value satisfaction performance indicators

The council has prepared for and undertaken four surveys in fulfilment of the best value requirement to consult with residents and service users. This is in addition to our annual calendar of consultation and participation activity. Details of the surveys as follows;

- **General survey** of residents sampled from a random list of addresses provided by central government. 4,000 households surveyed through a postal survey between September and November 2006.
- **Planning survey** of planning applicants and or their agents who used the service between April and October 2006. 600 individual customers were postally surveyed between September and November 2006.
- **Library survey** of 3,372 adult users during a week in September 2006 by self completion of a paper survey across all libraries.
- **Benefits survey** of housing/council tax recipients receiving a decision on their application in the summer and winter of 2006. The results of this current survey will be available by 31 March 2007. 1,500 customers are being surveyed by post.

For the first time the Government directed that the surveys must be administered postally so that national results are entirely free from bias caused by undertaking differing survey methodology and therefore directly comparable across all councils. Here previously most of these surveys were undertaken in-house and largely uncoordinated with one another. They also require close contact with the Audit Commission, which helps set the stringent guidelines on behalf of DCLG. They can be resource hungry exercises and so a number of improvements to the process featured this time;

- Walsall instigated out-sourcing through a joint commission in conjunction with Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sandwell councils for all but the library survey which was required to be undertaken at point of service contact.
- Coordination by corporate performance management of all surveys on behalf of services.
- A single dedicated authority contact for interface with the Audit Commission's and council's contractors.
- Better integration with the CIPPF and reporting into CPA.
- All surveys were postal surveys and out-sourced to BMG, which was able to deliver greater efficiency and added value than possible in-house.
- The consortium reaps benefits of mutual support and now potential for improved benchmarking capabilities and communication of cross cutting partnership issues.

Results from the general, planning and library surveys are used in CPA 2006 scoring which is why CPA scores reporting has been delayed until 22 February 2007. The AC returned our satisfaction scores based on survey data provided to them by BMG on our behalf which was weighted to ensure that results were representative of the boroughs demographic profile and where necessary also weighted for deprivation for use in CPA 2006 service assessment framework.

As BMG have collected the data and the Audit Commission analysed the scores, the information is an independently substantiated result.

On 8 February 2007 DCLG released national statistics detailing the best value satisfaction scores across all single tier authorities and county councils (STCC's). This includes results for 149 authorities including unitary authorities, metropolitan districts, London boroughs and county councils.

Results are summarised in **Table 1** showing the following:

- Column 1 - Walsall's 2003/4 satisfaction scores; weighted to ensure results are representative of the boroughs demographic profile.
- Column 2 Walsall's 2006/7 satisfaction scores; weighted to ensure results are representative of the boroughs demographic profile.
- Column 3 +/- percentage point improvement/reduction between Walsall's 2003/04 and 2006/7 scores.
- Column 4 Equivalent +/- improvement/reduction in percentage points between 2003/4 and 2006/7 of the mean scores for all Single tier and county councils.
- Column 5 Equivalent +/- improvement/reduction in percentage points between 2003/4 and 2006/7 of the mean scores for all Metropolitan councils.
- Column 6 Satisfaction scores used in CPA scoring, where applicable, based on adjustments for local deprivation.
- Column 7 The position that the Walsall scores are placed in CPA 2006 (environment and culture service assessment framework); expressed as performance thresholds.

Thresholds for CPA 2006 are based upon 2003/4 national statistics; upper threshold equates to all England top quartile performance or higher, mid threshold equates to all England above bottom but below top quartile performance, Lower threshold equates to all England bottom quartile performance or lower.

CPA 2007 will refresh the threshold position of these measures based upon 2006/07 all England quartile performance. Whilst results for district councils wait to be added to the ST&CC results, producing all England results, column 4 gives an early indication of the extent to which threshold positions may change. The fact that Walsall largely out-performs ST&CC performance stands us in good stead, but our CPA 2007 positioning will depend on how district councils perform overall.

**Table 1: 2006/7 satisfaction outturns from general, planning and libraries surveys**

	Walsall Council			All Single Tier and Counties	Mets	Walsall Council	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Best Value Performance Indicator reference and short title	2003/4 % satisfaction (weighted results)	2006/7 % satisfaction (weighted results)	Walsalls trend % point 2003/4~2006/7	National trend % point 2003/4 ~ 2006/7	Mets trend % point 2003/4 ~ 2006/7	2006/7 when adjusted for deprivation*	2006 CPA Position (awaiting confirmation on 22/2/07)
<b>General resident satisfaction with:</b>							
BV3 Overall satisfaction	36	45.2	9.2	-2	-2	54*?	n/a
BV4 Complaints handling	27	23	-4	1	No change	n/a	n/a
BV89 Cleanliness standard	46	59	13	9	7	73.4*	Mid threshold
BV90a H'Hold waste collection	79	84	5	-2	-3	n/a	Mid threshold
BV90b waste recycling	56	72	16	5	5	85.8*	Upper threshold
BV90c waste disposal (local tips)	82	85.8	3.8	4	4	n/a	Mid threshold
BV103 Transport information	48	55	7	4	4	n/a	n/a
BV104 local bus services	57	63	6	6	4	n/a	n/a
BV103 Transport information (those that have seen information in last 12 months)	62.4	79	16.6	nya	nya	n/a	Upper threshold
BV104 Local bus service (Those that have used in last 12 months)	59.3	66.7	7.4	nya	nya	n/a	Mid threshold
BV119a Sports & Leisure	46	56	10	3	1	n/a	Mid threshold
BV119b Libraries (general residents)	67	71	4	4	4	n/a	Mid threshold
BV119c Museums & galleries	44	54	10	-1	No change	n/a	Upper threshold
BV119d Theatres & concert halls	36	27	-9	-3	-3	n/a	Lower threshold
BV119e Parks & open spaces	61	65	4	2	1	n/a	Mid threshold
<b>Planning user satisfaction:</b>							
BV111 Planning services	77.5	75	-2.5	nya	nya	n/a	Mid threshold
<b>Library service users:</b>							
BV118a Found a book to borrow	68	85	17	nya	nya	n/a	n/a
BV118b Found info looking for	67	77.5	10.5	nya	nya	n/a	n/a
BV118c Overall satisfaction (PLSS7)	92.1	94.3	2.2	nya	nya	n/a	Upper threshold

\* - adjusted for deprivation based on latest IMD and gradient published in CPA 2006 (BV3 is an estimated adjustment based on CPA 2006 IMD and 2003/4 gradient)

n/a - not applicable - BV3 & BV4 are not used directly in CPA service assessment framework

2003/4 to 2006/7 trends in satisfaction both locally and when benchmarked nationally with ST&CCs compare very favourably demonstrating that the council is improving service delivery and local quality of life that is recognised as positive improvement by the community and has improved .

Notable local improvements and trends in comparison to latest national statistics shows:

- +9.2 % point improvement in overall satisfaction (BV3) locally indicating a significant improvement in the council's reputation amongst local people and against a backdrop of nationally declining satisfaction (- 2 % points) with local government across ST&CCs.
- Demonstrating the immense scale of the improvement in overall satisfaction (BV3); Walsall is joint fourth in a table of top 10 improvers; **table 2**.

<b>Table 2: Top ten improving authorities nationally (overall satisfaction – BV3)</b>				
	2003/4	2006/7	% point Improvement 2003 ~2006	position
	Weighted scores			
London borough of Tower Hamlets (LB)	36%	50%	14	1
Borough of Poole (UA)	53%	63%	10	=2
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (MD)	42%	52%	10	=2
Coventry City Council (MD)	42%	51%	9	=4
Newcastle City Council (MD)	55%	64%	9	=4
<b>Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (MD)</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>=4</b>
Dorset County Council (CC)	49%	57%	8	=7
Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (MD)	32%	40%	8	=7
London Borough of Hackney (LB)	36%	44%	8	=7
Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (LB)	69%	77%	8	=7
LB = London borough, UA = Unitary authority, MD = Metropolitan District, CC = County council				

- Hence, in terms of metropolitan councils Walsall is in joint second place of top 10 improvers with Bradford, Coventry and Newcastle.
- Improvement locally for household waste collection and museums and galleries also bucks trends in declining satisfaction across ST&CC authorities.
- Improvement across 12 out of 15 of the best value satisfaction measures.
- Significant (+10% pt) improvement in satisfaction for cleanliness standards, recycling, transport information, sport and leisure facilities and museums and galleries.

- Improvement in cleanliness standards, waste recycling, transport information, sport & leisure and parks and open spaces that out-performs the improvement across ST&CCs.
- Upper threshold performance in CPA for satisfaction with recycling, transport information, museums/galleries and libraries; meaning that in satisfaction terms these services perform amongst the top 25% of councils nationally against the 2003/04 all England benchmark.
- High levels of satisfaction (94.3%) amongst adult library users and this result now means that Walsall libraries meets or exceeds ten out of ten of the national library standards for service delivery. Only two other library authorities achieve a similar ten out of ten result in 2006/07.

All these improvements have resulted from a concerted effort to listen to people's views, improving service delivery and therefore customer performance. Results from the last best value survey in 2003/04 and the 2005 Tracker Survey have been used to inform service improvements; most recently through tracker action planning. These results reflect the improvements undertaken by services engaged in that process, with particular attention being given to critical CPA measures and key satisfaction drivers such as improved communication, street scene services and services with poor/neutral non-user perceptions. This shows the importance of such improvement planning and similar processes will be fundamental to continued future improvement.

However, the following services areas show declining local satisfaction;

- Planning services (-2.2%pt); this result is disappointing and is despite significant improvements in the performance across a range of other service indicators i.e. speed of planning decisions, increases in online planning applications, and checklist of best practise. This may be due to changes not having time to become embedded and familiar to customers. Possibly, that in providing a faster decision and increasingly more online services direct customer contact is diminished so that customers miss the personal touch they have been previously used to. At present there is no national comparison available to indicate if this is a national trend.
- Complaints handling (-4 %pt); this question is more likely to be a measure of the decision itself and not the process of complaint handling necessarily. Nationally across ST&CCs satisfaction is similarly in decline.
- Theatres and concert halls (-9%pt); though the survey refers to examples of these facilities including Walsall Town Hall, Bloxwich library theatre, it is likely that we score low because Walsall does not have any high usage theatres or concert halls that the general population will connect with when answering this question. Nationally across ST&CCs satisfaction is similarly in decline.

All results showing declining satisfaction will be analysed in greater detail to better understand where issues exist and if necessary followed up with further research, following through to improvement planning.

## **What next?**

An indication of forthcoming satisfaction survey milestones;



- Results will help refresh CPA 2006 scoring on 22 February 2007 and will stand as individual out-turns for the following three years assuming current best value requirements are continued.
- Reports of survey are currently being prepared by BMG and will be available by the end of the financial year.
- Results for the benefits survey will be known late March 2007 and a report of survey will be published April/May.
- Communication and improvement planning workshops are planned to follow report of surveys including a Black Country event with partners.
- National statistics for all England satisfaction published summer 2007 allowing benchmarking against all England 2006/7 results and detailing national trends in satisfaction.