

PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SELECT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 23RD JUNE 2004

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND REGENERATION AND
THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS.

BVPI SATISFACTION SURVEY 2004

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the main findings and their implications for services and Brent Council of the BVPI Satisfaction Survey 2004. The survey was undertaken between October 2003 and January 2004. The Executive Summary from MORI's findings is attached as Appendix 1. A full copy of MORI's findings will be available at the meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Performance and Finance Select committee are recommended to:-

- 2.1 Note the main findings of the BV PI satisfaction survey 2004 as summarized below:-
- Overall satisfaction with the Council increased to 48% in 2004 from 45% in 2001. This is 2% below the outer London average and 5% below the London wide average. This ranks Brent 17th out of 29 participating boroughs. In 2001 Brent was 24th.
 - 26% of respondents considered the Council's performance had improved and 47% felt it had stayed the same. 27% felt that performance had got worse.
 - Overall satisfaction with service areas is decreasing but there has also been a corresponding decrease in dissatisfaction. There has been no significant change in satisfaction levels with Housing, Environmental Services and Education services. In fact the net satisfaction for all these services has risen. Respondents were least satisfied with Planning (22%) and Cultural and Recreation Services (30%). These findings are for all respondents.
 - Actual users of services report higher levels of satisfaction with services (see paragraph 7.2) although these figures are for a relatively small sub-group of the survey and are not those used in the CPA framework.
 - In 2004 residents are more satisfied with the quality of information received from the Council with 55% feeling well informed (up from 48% in 2001).

- Overall of the 14 measures included in the survey only 3 are ranked in the top half of the league table against the 29 participating boroughs. Of the remaining 11 indicators, 5 are in the bottom quartile of satisfaction. None are in the top quartile.
- While Brent Council has improved the overall level of satisfaction and keeps most people well informed, in general the satisfaction figures are still slightly below London average. There is improvement but the slow rate of increase amongst all residents is cause for concern.

2.2 note that the Consultation team and PRU will be undertaking further analysis of the liveability issues covered by the survey and will report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Best Value Performance Indicators, (BVPI's), are part of the performance management framework for local authorities, introduced as part of the Best Value regime in 1999. The government has specified that local authorities must collect and report on a number of resident satisfaction BVPI's on a triennial basis. These satisfaction measures are also included in the BVPI element of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).
- 3.2 The 2003/04 BVPI Satisfaction Survey, (the second satisfaction survey – the first one having taken place in 2000/01), was undertaken by MORI between October 2003 and January 2004. This survey was undertaken on the basis of a contract negotiated between MORI and the Association of London Government, (ALG), who were acting on behalf of 29 participating local authorities. Brent Council benefited from cost savings by adopting a consortium approach with 28 other London boroughs
- 3.3 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) prescribes in detail what it believes to be the minimum requirements for the conduct of the study. This includes the methodology, wording of the questionnaire and weighting of the data. This is to ensure comparability of data across all authorities.
- 3.4 The methodology employed in Brent was a postal survey. Five thousand, (5,000) Brent residents were sent a questionnaire. Two following reminders were also sent. The final number of responses was 1,194 – equivalent to a response rate of 24%.
- 3.5 The demographic profile of respondents to the BVPI Satisfaction survey differs slightly from the Borough's actual demographic profile. These

differences are consistent with the pattern of non-response typically found in postal research of the general public and any significant bias in the data resulting from the response profile was corrected through the weighting process.

4. CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

- 4.1 The survey looks at seven best value performance indicators, (encompassing fourteen different measures, and including overall satisfaction with the Council), service satisfaction, quality of life in Brent and liveability issues as well as current themes in London and in local government generally.
- 4.2 The survey deals with residents' perceptions at the time of the survey and not facts. Respondents may not always be current users of services. Perceptions may be informed by direct experience of the Council or council services, but more often than not, they are likely to be informed by external factors over which the Council may have little control. Perceptions of services may not therefore reflect the quality of the services actually being delivered within the local authority at the present time.
- 4.3 Recent research suggests that the public are more critical of local councils than other public service institutions such as Health and the Police service. In this context local government is frequently criticized for the level of information it provides, the quality of management and in particular, openness and honesty in handling mistakes. Research suggests that local government is less well regarded as an institution than many of the individual services it provides. MORI point to adverse media coverage on council tax and 'value for money' issues as possible causes. Dissatisfaction with central government may also impact on satisfaction levels with local government and local government services.

5. BVPI SATISFACTION SCORES

5.1 The satisfaction scores on the fourteen BVPI measures together with our London rankings are set out in the table below. Trend data should be approached with caution. Unlike the data from the current survey, data from 2000/01 was un-weighted.

BVPI NO	Indicator	2000/01	2003/04	Ranking 2003/04
3	Satisfaction with overall service provided by authority	45%	48%	17
4	Satisfaction of complainants with complaints handling	28%	29%	15
89	Percentage of people satisfied with cleanliness of streets	47%	51%	13
90	Satisfaction with household waste collection	74%	73%	14
90	Satisfaction with recycling facilities	54%	51%	18
90	Satisfaction with local tips	43%	50%	23
103	Satisfaction with provision of public transport information	45%	50%	14
104	Satisfaction with local bus services	37%	48%	28
119	Satisfaction with the local authority's cultural and recreational activities overall	43%	30%	22
119	Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities	41%	38%	23
119	Satisfaction with libraries	56%	56%	24
119	Satisfaction Museums/galleries	30%	25%	21
119	Satisfaction with Theatres/Concert Halls	N/a	29%	20
119	Satisfaction with parks and open spaces	59%	66%	17

Note: the figures in the table above are for all respondents (users and non-users) which are the figures used in the CPA assessment.

5.2 There is some sub-group analysis by gender, ethnicity, age and disability. Main points to note include:

- Women are generally more likely to rate services favourably than men.
- Older people rate waste collection and recycling more favourably than young people.
- Older people are more satisfied with local buses and libraries.

- BME residents generally report higher satisfaction ratings than white residents, with the exception of waste collection, local tip and parks.
- Residents with a disability tend to rate services slightly more favourably than those who have no disability.

6. OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE COUNCIL BVPI 3

- 6.1 Just under half of residents (48%), are satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council. This is an increase of 3 % points over the 2001 BVPI survey and 2 % points over the 2002 Residents Attitude Survey. The following table shows how our overall satisfaction score has improved since 2001.

Overall Satisfaction with Brent Council – Comparative Surveys	
Frontiers of Performance – target	43%
BVPI survey 2001	45%
Residents' Attitude Survey 2002	46%
BVPI survey 2004	48%

- 6.2 The current report benchmarks Brent against the 28 other participating London authorities. Brent's ranking has moved from 24th in 2001 to 17th - and at 48% we are 2 % points below the outer London average and 5 % points below the all London average.

BVPI 2000/01	Rank	BVPI 2003/04	Rank	Outer London Average	All London Average
45% (+22% net)	24th	48% (+26% net)	17th	50%	53%

- 6.3 In terms of sub-groups, women, BME residents and those who have lived in the area for less than 5 years are more likely to be satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council. Similarly those residents who say they are kept informed by the Council are more likely to be satisfied.
- 6.4 Better or Worse - This survey also asked respondents whether they thought the Council's overall performance had got better or worse. 47% thought the Council's performance had stayed the same.

Same	Better	Worse
47%	26%	27%

6.5 Key Messages

- Brent Council has steadily improved on its overall satisfaction score since 2001. This is despite the fact that the trend for this particular measure is generally down amongst outer London Boroughs. In addition, MORI, (in their 'Frontiers of Performance' analysis), have previously highlighted the importance of 'peer comparisons'. The benchmarking in this report is against all London authorities, and although we are only two points below the average for outer London boroughs, most of these boroughs could not be considered as peer authorities.
- Better or Worse - MORI regard this result as a 'balanced view giving a more positive picture than other London boroughs'. The general trend amongst outer London boroughs is for a more unfavourable rather than a favourable picture.

7. SERVICE AREA SATISFACTION

- 7.1 Overall satisfaction with service departments in the Borough is decreasing but there has also been a corresponding decrease in dissatisfaction.

Service Area	2003/04		2000/01	
	Satisfied	D/satisfied	Satisfied	D/satisfied
Transport	54%	15%	43%	34%
Environment	46%	16%	51%	24%
LEA's	37%	11%	35%	13%
Personal Social Services	21%	11%	28%	13%
Planning	22%	14%	28%	13%
Cultural & Recreational	30%	13%	43%	16%
Housing	24%	18%	25%	26%

There has been no significant change in satisfaction levels with Housing, Environmental Services and Local Education Authority Education Services. In fact the net satisfaction levels for all of these services have risen.

- 7.2 Some services are used by a minority of residents. When asked, all residents may be able to express a view about the quality of a service they do not use, but typically they will answer 'don't know'. Consequently people who have contact with, or experience of a service are more likely to give a higher rating than non-users. This is illustrated in the following table.

Service Area	Users (Satisfied)	All (Satisfied)
Transport	62%	54%
Environment	64%	46%
LEA's	66%	37%
Personal Social Services	45%	21%
Planning	42%	22%
Cultural & Recreational	60%	30%
Housing	48%	24%

8. COMMUNICATIONS

- 8.1 A question to elicit how well informed residents feel was included in the 2003/04 survey. This was to reflect the importance of communications and the fact that authorities that are more effective in putting across a clear message on what they are doing, and how services are being delivered, tend to be better regarded by residents.
- 8.2 More than half, (55%) of Brent residents felt they are kept informed and 13% feel they are kept *very well* informed. The same question had previously been asked in the 2002 residents' Attitude Survey. On that occasion 48% of residents felt they were kept informed.

Question: How well informed do you think Brent Council keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides?	BVPI 2003/04 %	RAS 2002 %
Keeps us very well informed	13	5
Keeps us fairly well informed	42	43
Gives us only a limited amount of information	31	37
Doesn't tell us much at all about what it does	14	12

- 8.3 Brent's ranking on this measure is 11th amongst the 29 participating London boroughs.

9. IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Overall the Council has made steady progress in improving resident's satisfaction with overall performance, while for actual users of services there is a more positive picture of satisfaction. The difference in satisfaction between users and all residents points to a significant element of 'perception' rather than experience influencing peoples' responses. This is bourn out by the finding that respondents who have been resident in the borough for less than 5 years tend to be more satisfied. This suggests that they have less pre-conceived or historical opinions of the Council and it's performance.

- 9.2 There is a very clear link between communication and satisfaction. Those who feel well informed about the Council are more satisfied overall. This supports the interpretation that people who use and know about the Council are generally positive about improvements in the quality of services available. The Council may wish to consider the scope for encouraging more use of universal services such as sports, parks, cultural activities and libraries as routes to communicating with residents about the range of Council services available to them.
- 9.3 Some of the negative perceptions of local government in general are probably influenced by national media coverage and raised public expectations for public service reform. The recent national debate about Council Tax levels is a particular factor in peoples' perceptions of the value for money achieved by their council. Brent needs to ensure that these perceptions are challenged at a local level with regular information on the services available, how the Leadership is addressing local concerns and particularly issues around effective management of resources.
- 9.4 Against a difficult national context, where the overall trend is for decreases in satisfaction, the Council has made steady progress in meeting residents' expectations. However progress is from a relatively low base and the speed of improvement is slow at 3% over 3 years, placing Brent still in the lower half of London wide comparisons at 17th.
- 9.5 In addition to the data related to current satisfaction, the BVPI survey also covered questions on residents' views on livability issues and priorities for service improvement. These have not been covered in this report but will be of significant interest to Members and Directors as part of future service planning and budget decisions.
- 9.6 The critical factor in these responses has been perception and the fact that the majority of the population of the borough who do not use particular Council services remain unaware of the real improvements that have been made. Their image of Brent remains stubbornly rooted in the past. It is a possibility that we will only see a quantum shift in these indicators if we learn the lessons of other authorities which have sold themselves consistently harder than we ever have – not only our aspirations but also our achievements.

**BVPI SATISFACTION SURVEY 2004.
MORI – REPORT OF FINDINGS
Executive Summary**

- Almost half (48%) of residents say they are satisfied with the way the authority runs things overall, while 22% say they are dissatisfied. Levels of satisfaction are consistent with those found in 2000/1 (45% satisfied, 23% dissatisfied). On this overall 'corporate health' measurement, Brent's rating (48%) is slightly below the London average (52%), and the Council ranks 17th out of 29 boroughs overall.
- Residents are most likely to say that the Council's performance over the last three years has stayed the same (47%). Opinion among the remainder of residents is divided as to whether or not it has improved 26% say it is better, 27% say it is worse.
- Priorities for the area centre on 'liveability' issues; with 58% of residents feeling more should be done to reduce the levels of crime in Brent and 41% feeling that more should be done to improve the cleanliness of the streets. It is likely that the Council will want to focus on the issues which residents feel are *most important in making somewhere a good place to live*, such as these two aspects.
- Although we need to be cautious about making comparisons with 2000/1 data, people do appear to be more satisfied with different aspects relating to the local tip and bus services. However, it's worth noting that levels of satisfaction with these services place Brent in the lower quartile for London. The pattern of response for household waste collection is a little less favourable than three years ago. Having said that, on this measurement, the Council rating (73%) is in line with the average for London (72%)
- On balance, Brent residents tend to feel that they are kept well informed by the Council. Over half (55%) say the Council keeps them well informed, while 45% say they are given at best a limited amount of information. This is an area where comparative data from other London boroughs proves particularly helpful; these findings place the Council in the top half for London boroughs, (11th), but not in the top quartile.
- Twenty nine percent of Brent residents claim to have contacted the Council with a complaint in the last twelve months. Of complainants,

29% are satisfied with the way in which their complaint was handled, while 60% are critical. On this measurement, the Council's rating is in line with the London average, (both 29%).

- Residents think that many aspects relating to quality of life in Brent are getting worse. On the other hand, there is a general sense that many specific Council services have improved over the last three years. Specifically local recycling facilities, doorstep recycling and collection of household waste.
- The picture on public transport is generally a positive one, and this is a pattern we are observing across London. The level of satisfaction with the provision of public transport information is in line with the London average. However, as previously noted, satisfaction with the local bus service (48%) is significantly lower than the London average (58%).

Comparing Brent Council with other LBs

Frequency of place

1st place		
2nd place		
3rd place		
4th place		0
5th place		
6th place		
7th place		
8th place		
9th place		
10th place		3
11th place		
12th place		
13th place	Cleanliness	
14th place	Waste collection/Transport information	
15th place	Complaint handling	
16th place		
17th place	Overall satisfaction/Local recycling facilities/Parks and open spaces	6
18th place		
19th place		
20th place	Theatres and concert halls	
21st place	Museums and galleries	
22nd place	Cultural and recreation activities	5
23th place	Local tips/Sports and leisure facilities	
24th place	Libraries	
25th place		
26th place		
27th place		
28th place	Bus services	
29th place		

Source: London-wide ALG BVPI survey

Source: MORI