	Executive 18 January 2010 **Joint report from the Directors of Communication and Diversity and Policy and Regeneration**
	Wards affected: All

Brent Residents' Attitude Survey 2009

Forward Plan Ref: Cent-09/10-2

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report highlights the key findings of the Residents' Attitude Survey 2009 (RAS) and provides comparative performance information in relation to the previous residents' attitude survey conducted in 2005 and the place survey carried out in 2008.

1.2 The objectives of the RAS 2009 were:

- To establish how residents feel about living in Brent.
- To ascertain their views about Brent Council and the services we provide.
- To identify issues of local importance to residents
- To provide the council with an up-to-date and robust evidence base for use in policy development and the service planning process.

1.3 The results from the 2009 residents' attitude survey are a 'good news' story for Brent and have provided a rich and robust data set for the Council's evidence base.

1.4 The results highlight the clear advantages of the RAS methodology over the place survey methodology. The RAS results demonstrate that respondents are more positive about their local area and the services the council provides than seen in the place survey results.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members of the Executive note the report, particularly the issues highlighted in section 4.

2.2 Members of the Executive note that findings from the 2009 Residents' Attitude survey have provided a robust data set which:

- Is invaluable to Council's new service planning framework, which is underpinned by the philosophy of evidence-based decision making.
- Enhances the Council's corporate evidence base to complement the findings of the place survey and the external comprehensive area assessment audit process. .

3.0 Background

3.1 The Council has conducted a residents' attitude survey at least once every three years since 1990. The RAS focuses on measuring residents' perceptions of their local area as well as satisfaction with Brent Council and the services we provide. The methodology involves face-to-face interviews and as such the sample tends is more representative when compared to our population demographics.

3.2 The place survey was introduced in 2008 as part of the comprehensive area assessment process. It replaced the previous best value performance indicator general survey. All local authorities in England and Wales are legally required to undertake this survey every two years. The place survey focuses on satisfaction with the local area - specifically how well partner agencies (Council, Police, NHS Brent etc.) are perceived to be working together in order to improve local outcomes. The methodology involves a postal survey and as such the sample tends to be less representative of the population. Respondents are self-selecting and response rates are low for younger residents, residents with poor literacy skills and residents whose first language is not English.

3.3 Both surveys were undertaken on behalf of the council by the market research company Ipsos MORI.

4.0 Key Findings from the Residents' Attitude Survey

4.1 <u>Overall satisfaction with the Council</u>

65% of respondents were satisfied overall with the way Brent Council runs things, and this compares favourably to 48% in the 2005 survey and 45% in the 2008 place survey. The level of overall satisfaction with Brent Council, (65%) is the highest recorded since we first conducted the survey in 1990. This result is twenty percentage points above that recorded in the place survey and seventeen percentage points above the figure recorded in 2005 RAS. This positive trend reflects a sustained year on year increase since the year 2000.

4.2 Satisfaction with the local area

83% of respondents were satisfied with the local area as a place to live, which compares favourably to 75% in 2005 and 68% as recorded in the 2008 place survey. Satisfaction levels have consistently remained within the 72% - 75% bracket since 1993.

4.3 Perceptions of the local area

25% of respondents felt that their local area had got better over the past two years, which is comparable to the 2005 result. 23% felt their local area had got worse compared to 27% in 2005, while 40% felt that not much had changed, compared to 37% in 2005.

4.4 Strong sense of community

51% of respondents agreed that there was a strong sense of community cohesion in their local area, which represents an increase of 14% on the 2005 result of 37%.

74% agreed that Brent is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, which is marginally above the figure of 72% recorded in 2005.

4.5 Influencing decisions in the local area

Whilst only around 3 in 10 residents (32%) feel they could influence decisions in the local area, this figure represents an increase of 9% since 2005.

However because 49% agree they would like to be more involved in decision-making, this suggests there is further scope for the Council to offer more community engagement opportunities.

4.6 Listening to the views of local people

37% of respondents agree that the Council listens to the views of local people, a 6% increase since 2005. Response rates have consistently increased from 27% in 2000 to 37% in 2009.

The Council is striving to further improve this perception through its consultation programme using the area and service user consultative forums, the Brent citizens' panel and through the Neighbourhood Working team.

4.7 Issues making somewhere a good place to live

The top 5 issues which respondents feel are the most important drivers in making somewhere a good place to live have remained unchanged since the last RAS in 2005, although importantly the rank order has changed slightly.

RAS 2009			RAS 2005		
Rank	**Issue**	**Response**	**Rank**	**Issue**	**Response**
1	Levels of crime	52%	**1**	Levels of crime	50%
2	Clean streets	41%	**2**	Public transport	43%
3	Health Services	32%	**3**	Clean streets	37%
4	Shopping facilities	31%	**4**	Health services	35%
5	Public transport	31%	**5**	Shopping facilities	35%

In 2009 a slightly higher proportion of respondents identified clean streets as a key driver, while the proportion identifying health services declined by 3%. Public transport remains in the top 5 but has dropped from a ranking of 2nd in 2005 to a ranking of 5th in 2009.

4.8 What most needs improving in the local area?

The top 5 issues which respondents feel are mostly in need of improvement are also consistent with those listed in RAS 2005, although again the rank order has changed slightly.

RAS 2009			RAS 2005		
Rank	**Issue**	**Response**	**Rank**	**Issue**	**Response**
1	Levels of crime	30%	**1**	Levels of crime	32%
2	Activities for teenagers	25%	**2**	Clean streets	28%
3	Road/pavement repairs	24%	**3**	Road/pavement repairs	28%
4	Clean streets	23%	**4**	Activities for teenagers	22%
5	Traffic congestion levels	17%	**5**	Traffic congestion levels	18%

4.9 Satisfaction with Council services

Council service satisfaction levels are very positive in RAS 2009, and have increased for 24 out of the 28 services. The highest levels are recorded for refuse collection (86%), street lighting (85%), parks and open spaces (86%) and recycling facilities (84%). 55% of respondents were satisfied with road and pavement maintenance, road safety and traffic calming and 84% of users were satisfied with the library service,

Services with the largest increases include sports facilities (71% of users compared to 46% in 2005), recycling facilities (84% compared to 81% in 2005) and street cleaning (79% compared to 63% in 2005).

Less than 10% of respondents feel that Council services have deteriorated in the last 12 months and whilst 18% feel they have got better, 63% feel they have remained the same. 59% feel the quality of Council services is good overall, compared to 56% in 2005.

RAS 2009 also reveals increases in the proportion of residents who feel:

- "*the Council is doing a good job for people like me*" (47% agree with this which is an 8% increase since 2005),
- "*feel informed about how the Council spends its money*" (36% agree with this which is a 10% increase over the 2005 figure)
- "*keeps its promises to local people*" (30% agree with this which is a 12% increase over the 2005 figure).
- "*feel informed about the services and benefits provided by the Council*" (49% agree with this which is a 5% increase since 2005)

4.10 Value for money

The question *'how strongly do you agree or disagree that the Council gives local people good value for money'* was also asked in the place survey. The following table shows how the scores compare:

	RAS 2009	**Place Survey 2008**	**RAS 2005**
Q. *how strongly do you agree or disagree that the Council gives local people good value for money'*	36%	31%	26%

4.11 Information about the Council

The Brent magazine remains both the main and preferred source of information about the council. 56% of respondents confirm they obtain most of their information about the Council via the Brent Magazine. This equates to a 2% increase from 2005 and a 6% increase since 2002 and 41% say it is their preferred source of information.

The proportion of residents who say they receive a copy of the Brent Magazine through their door has nearly doubled from 42% in 1993 to

80% in 2009. Of those who receive the magazine, 42% read all or most of it, 70% believe it contains a lot of useful information and 69% like the design. The popularity of the Brent Magazine in terms of main and preferred source of information about Brent Council is considerably greater than the local press.

4.12 Customer Contact

Half of residents claim to have contacted the Council at least once in the past two years. Of these:

- 78% made contact via the telephone
- 13% made contact in person

The proportion of people using these methods closely matches those naming them as their preferred method of contact – (76% prefer the phone / 12% prefer personal contact)

65% felt it was easy to get hold of the right person compared to 58% in 2005 and 75% felt that Council staff were helpful compared to 73% in 2005.

4.13 Community Safety

39% of respondents said they feel threatened by crime "*a fair amount*" or "*a great deal*". This represents a decrease of 14% compared to 2005. 88% feel safe walking outside in their local area during daytime, and 43% feel safe after dark.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 Brent council completed its residents' attitude survey in September 2009. The council has undertaken a residents' attitude survey at least once every three years since 1990 and this has been the key mechanism for measuring resident perceptions of the council and the services it provides.

5.2 The data from the 2009 survey forms a key part of the Council's evidence base. Ward level data and ward profiles using this data combined with MOSAIC data are being developed through the Council's policy and GIS departments. Findings from the survey have been disseminated to service areas for use in service planning and service improvement programmes.

5.3 Brent is a multicultural, young and vibrant community. More than 55% of our residents are from black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME) groups and the borough has the highest proportion of people born outside the EU. Given these circumstances it's essential that Brent generates regular research data from a genuinely representative sample of its residents. The reliability and robustness of this data is crucial to the policy and service development planning process. The postal survey, particularly in the place survey format, is widely recognised to have limitations in relation to the reliability of the data produced and its overall representativeness.

5.4 Members can obtain a copy of the Residents' Attitude Survey 2009 full narrative report by downloading if from the Consultation Tracker website: www.brent.gov.uk/consultation
or obtain a copy from the Consultation Team, Room 210 Brent Town Hall.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 The total cost of the 2009 residents' attitude survey was £112k. Survey information was obtained through face to face interviews with 2,100 local residents. The sample number was chosen to collect ward level data from a minimum 100 sample per ward.

7.0 Legal Implications

None.

8.0 Diversity Implications

None.

9.0 Staffing / Accommodation Implications

None.

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