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## **SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 19 DECEMBER 2007**

### **IPSOS MORI REPORT ON RESIDENT SATISFACTION IN LEICESTERSHIRE AND COUNTY COUNCIL ACTION PLAN**

#### **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

##### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Scrutiny Commission of the results of a review by Ipsos MORI of resident satisfaction in Leicestershire and of the contents of an action plan agreed by Cabinet in response.

##### **Background**

2. The Council places important emphasis on understanding and acting on the results of resident satisfaction intelligence as part of its overall approach to performance management. The Council uses a variety of approaches to understand resident satisfaction and improve services including satisfaction surveys, complaints and compliments systems, research and analysis of data, and consultation and engagement with communities through for example Citizens Juries, Focus Groups and regular surveys of the County Citizens Panel.
3. The Council, together with all other local authorities, is currently required to carry out a resident satisfaction survey every three years following guidelines and questionnaire templates supplied by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The results feed into the calculation of a number of Council performance indicators and supporting targets. The last survey was carried out in autumn 2006 with the initial results for Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) published in spring 2007. Other elements of the survey were published in October 2007.
4. The results and targets relating to the BVPIs covered by the 2006 Resident Survey were reported to and approved by the Council on 11 July 2006 as part of the Council's Annual Plan. Understanding and

acting on resident satisfaction information is a key element of the Council's own Performance Management Framework.

5. In order to obtain the most informed and well understood picture of overall resident satisfaction in Leicestershire the County Council commissioned Ipsos MORI, one of the leading experts in local government satisfaction nationally, to undertake a review and analysis of satisfaction data including the 2006 resident survey results. MORI hold a range of satisfaction data which is helpful in understanding the full picture on satisfaction. The results of MORI's analysis form the basis for this report.

### **Resident Satisfaction in Leicestershire**

6. The MORI report points to many areas of positive service satisfaction in Leicestershire. For example:-
  - The Council and its partners have seen a significant fall in perceptions of anti-social behaviour and the County now sits in the top quartile;
  - The Council scores relatively well for public perceptions of value for money - just 2% below the top performing County;
  - The Council also scores comparatively well for perceptions of efficiency and trustworthiness;
  - The survey carried out by MORI on Leicestershire Highways Services shows a continuing trend of improving satisfaction levels including 79% of users satisfied with local bus services;
  - The 2007 MORI survey showed satisfaction with waste sites at 94% and highways services at 85%;
  - Council investments in service improvement are beginning to come through with increased satisfaction with libraries and household waste sites;
  - The National Active People Survey showed satisfaction with sports and leisure at 74% compared with an East Midlands average of 67.7%;
  - Surveys of users of the Council's cultural services show high levels of satisfaction such as libraries (95%) and country parks (95%);
  - All County Council museums conduct customer satisfaction surveys and users indicate satisfaction in excess of 90%; and
  - The Council has 90%+ satisfaction from applicants using the County Planning Service.
7. However, despite the many positive indications of satisfaction with the Council and its services, the 2006 Residents Survey recorded a fall in overall resident satisfaction with the way the Council runs things, in line with a general fall in satisfaction nationally. The fall places the Council behind the top performing Councils. MORI's report seeks to explain

some of the key factors behind this gap between service and overall satisfaction and how we can improve in the future.

### **Resident Survey Methodology**

8. A copy of the main conclusions and recommendations arising from MORI's analysis is attached as Appendix 1. One of the key issues identified by MORI is the extent of confusion amongst the public, particularly between County and District Councils, but also with other agencies, over who is responsible for different services. This is particularly evident in residents' written comments where there are nearly as many non-County Council comments as county ones and where more non-County Council complaints are recorded than County Council complaints.
9. This confusion is exacerbated by the survey methodology which, whilst including some particular aspects of County services, also includes a wide range of cross-cutting issues such as anti-social behaviour, housing, sports/leisure, theatres/concert halls, parks/open spaces and planning. The overall effect is that one cannot be sure of the extent to which residents are expressing satisfaction about the County Council, District Council or services as a whole.
10. The survey also includes minimal reference to large areas of County Council service provision such as adult social care services and services for children and young people. MORI highlight the difficulty county councils face in gaining credit for good performance in these less visible public services and the methodology seems to reinforce that.
11. MORI also highlight the extent to which visible public services and in particular waste collection, cleanliness and greening services and anti-social behaviour impact on overall satisfaction rates.
12. It seems likely that these have been key factors as to why aspects of the Residents Survey results do not align with other more positive satisfaction data. It is of concern that the Government places significant weight on these results whilst the methodology shows difficulties in capturing accurate results in two tier areas. The Cabinet agreed to lobby the Government on this point to ensure that future survey approaches are fit for purpose.
13. Whilst the wider approach of surveying residents on non-county council services is consistent with the role expected of local authorities as community leader and place shaper, working with its partners, it raises serious questions about how we should interpret some of the results. Indeed it would perhaps be more accurate to read 'the overall satisfaction with the Council' result as 'overall satisfaction with Leicestershire Councils, partners and Leicestershire Together'. This is very much reflected in MORI's conclusion that increasing satisfaction

can only occur through the Council 'grasping the place shaping agenda' and using stronger partnerships to change residents' quality of life.

### **Key Action Points and Action Plan**

14. Despite the methodological difficulties with the 2006 resident survey, the wider review of satisfaction by MORI does identify a number of specific areas which need to be tackled to improve satisfaction. Key actions include:-
  1. Improving the communication of partnership activities and achievements to improve quality of life and of performance in delivering on these;
  2. Improving the perceptions of services amongst non-users through better communications;
  3. Ensuring improvements in the most visible public services such as cleaner/greener issues, nuisance, town centre improvements, teenagers on the streets, anti-social behaviour, waste collection and recycling by a strong partnership approach and using the opportunities of the LAA;
  4. Ensuring increasing resident satisfaction comes through from targeted improvement in the County Council's own services including libraries, museums, household waste sites, bus information and customer services; and
  5. Maintaining the Council's good perceptions for efficiency, trustworthiness and value for money.
  
15. A number of the service specific action points and actions are picked up in the action plan attached as Appendix 2 which was approved by Cabinet on 2 October. The other actions which require activity at a partnership level are being picked up as part of the discussions on the new Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement.

### **Future Satisfaction Surveys**

16. The Government seems to have recognised the need to ensure satisfaction and performance on an area rather than agency basis in its new performance framework for local government and its partners. Under the new framework the triennial resident survey is to be replaced by a new Place Survey, likely to commence in autumn 2008. The new survey will be used to collect around 20 citizen perspective indicators included in the new national set of 198 indicators.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

17. The 2006 Resident Survey and the Council's other surveys include monitoring questions to enable results to be analysed by gender, age, ethnicity and disability. Work has already been carried out to analyse

resident satisfaction within BME communities and to look at results by disability. MORI's report highlights some of the key differences in data by age.

### **Conclusion**

18. The continuing emphasis within the new performance framework on increasing public satisfaction with the area means that it is important that the Council and its partners look to improve satisfaction further. The MORI review and action plan identify a number of practical recommendations which need to be taken forward by the Council and its partners to improve overall quality of life and satisfaction in the future.

### **Recommendations**

19. (a) That the results and key messages arising from the review of resident satisfaction in Leicestershire attached as Appendix 1 be noted; and  
  
(b) That Scrutiny Commission note and comment on the key action points in Appendix 1 and action plan attached as Appendix 2 which have been endorsed by Cabinet to ensure that resident satisfaction moves towards levels seen in the higher performing areas.

### **Circulation under Sensitive Issues Procedure**

20. The report relates to satisfaction across the whole of Leicestershire and cuts across a number of services and agencies. There are no issues affecting particular local members.

### **Officer to Contact**

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### **Background Papers**

MORI Report on Resident Satisfaction in Leicestershire 2007  
MORI Report on Satisfaction with Highways Services 2007  
Leicestershire Residents Survey 2006  
Active People Survey 2006 Results  
Library (PLUS) User Survey 2006  
Planning Survey 2006