REPORT TO: **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 24 SEPTEMBER 2007**

REPORT ON: **ANNUAL CONSUMER SURVEY 2007**

REPORT BY: **ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (COMMUNITY PLANNING)**

REPORT NO: **466-2007**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report summarises the main findings from the 2007 Annual Consumer Survey and explains their use.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee:

(i) note the results contained in this report and agree that the issues raised should continue to be addressed as part of the Council's commitment to continuous improvement.

(ii) authorise officers to publish the report on the Council's website and distribute copies to partner organisations and representative bodies as part of the Council's commitment to Public Performance Reporting.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4. INTRODUCTION

4.1 The Council carries out an Annual Consumer Survey as part of evaluating progress towards achieving the objectives set out in the Council Plan. The main purpose of the survey is to track over time a core set of questions related to customer care issues and the public's overall perception of the Council as an organisation. In addition, the survey asks about fear of crime and includes a number of questions about the way in which respondents access, or would like to access, Council services. For this year, questions have been included regarding satisfaction with local facilities, environment and quality of life.

4.2 The survey is conducted by an independent market research company, Ashbrook Research and Consultancy. For this year, the survey was based on a sample of 800 citizens, increased from the normal 400, which allows some analysis at ward level. Respondents were interviewed in their homes during June and July.

4.3 Key results from the survey are summarised below. A full copy of the research report will be sent to each Group Secretary and made available in the members' lounge. A summary of results for each ward will be produced for the Local Community Planning Partnerships. This report also includes some results from the Scottish Household Survey.

5. KEY RESULTS

5.1 Customer Care

5.1.1 A key objective of the survey is to gauge the levels of customer care perceived by people who contact a Council service, either by phone or by visit to an office. Tables 1 and 2 below show the results on a range of satisfaction indicators:

Table 1

Satisfaction with Telephone Contacts	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy of Staff	87%	79%	75%	81%	96%	78%	84%	92%	93%	87%
How Quickly Phone Was Answered	79%	90%	96%	84%	100%	84%	85%	91%	91%	94%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	77%	76%	92%	71%	84%	80%	79%	90%	93%	92%
Overall Helpfulness of Staff	74%	79%	75%	81%	96%	78%	84%	92%	93%	87%
Ease of Getting Someone Who Could Help	70%	79%	86%	64%	97%	74%	76%	80%	89%	88%
Outcome of Contact	68%	65%	51%	59%	53%	64%	71%	77%	82%	72%
Average	76%	78%	79%	73%	88%	76%	80%	87%	90%	87%

Table 2

Satisfaction with Office Visits	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Ease Of Getting To Office	87%	91%	95%	100%	91%	94%	96%	98%	100%	94%
Suitability of Office	N/A	89%	89%	87%	89%	82%	75%	92%	97%	91%
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy Of Staff	86%	87%	93%	81%	100%	79%	85%	92%	81%	89%
Overall Helpfulness Of Staff	81%	87%	93%	81%	100%	79%	85%	92%	81%	89%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	79%	81%	96%	83%	100%	83%	82%	92%	87%	94%
Outcome of Contact	60%	59%	78%	58%	80%	66%	62%	88%	80%	76%
Average	79%	81%	91%	82%	93%	81%	81%	92%	88%	89%

5.1.2 The profile of satisfaction remains very positive across all the indicators, although a number of satisfaction ratings are up or down compared to those in 2006.

5.1.3 Of those who had recently contacted the Council, 42% of respondents said their last contact was to request a service and 83% of these were satisfied. 37% said to seek information and 78% of these were satisfied. The proportion saying it was to make a complaint was 19% (down on 2006's figure of 24%). However, only 39% of these were satisfied with the way their complaint was handled, with 53% being dissatisfied. A new system for recording and reporting on complaints is being introduced this year and it is hoped this will increase satisfaction in this area.

5.1.4 2007's survey shows that 64% of respondents felt that they receive enough information about the Council and the services it provides. This compares to figures of 70% in 2006, 69% in 2005, 64% in 2004, 60% in 2003 and 59% in 2002. 32% of those interviewed in 2007 said they had used the Council's website (up from 14% in 2006). Satisfaction levels with the website remain high, averaging 84%, although these are down on the 2006 figures. The majority of respondents would have used the site prior to the recent re-launch, so it is hoped that the improvements made to the site recently are reflected in higher satisfaction scores next year.

5.2 Fear of Crime

5.2.1 The survey in 2005 used a different set of questions about fear of crime than had been used in previous surveys. This followed academic research into the most effective ways to survey fear of crime. These questions were repeated in 2006 and 2007, providing the opportunity to examine trends.

5.2.2 Key results from the 2007 survey show that:

- 28% of respondents said that they had felt fearful about becoming a victim of crime in the past year, compared to 29% in 2006 and 30% in 2005
- of those who had felt fearful, 21% had felt very fearful (compared to 23% in 2005 and 19% in 2006) and 39% quite fearful (compared to 37% in 2005 and 36% in 2006)

5.3 Public Image Profile

5.3.1 The questionnaire includes a list of ten factors which seek to assess the respondent's overall impression of the Council. The full list of factors is shown in Table 3 below, along with the percentage of interviewees who responded positively each year. 2007's survey continued to use the new factor introduced three years ago - ' Tackles Important Issues for the Future of the City' - which was seen as a better measure of the Council's image than 'Receives Fair Press Coverage' which it replaced.

Table 3

Public Image Profile	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Good Range of Services	77%	79%	61%	68%	82%	64%	63%	69%	81%	72%
Friendly Employees	73%	79%	64%	64%	85%	67%	68%	75%	76%	73%
Good Quality Services	67%	65%	54%	63%	76%	55%	60%	64%	72%	66%
Efficient Services	66%	69%	54%	86%	70%	54%	58%	63%	66%	62%
Communicates Well	61%	67%	43%	31%	28%	49%	47%	53%	61%	57%
Promotes Services Well	59%	65%	45%	68%	64%	44%	47%	55%	58%	54%
Receives Fair Press Coverage	59%	69%	31%	37%	42%	45%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Value For Money	53%	57%	34%	64%	67%	45%	49%	50%	56%	51%
Listens to Complaints	53%	69%	46%	23%	29%	53%	53%	55%	64%	61%
Has Sufficient Resources	52%	68%	51%	48%	23%	53%	55%	55%	68%	60%
Tackles Important Issues for the Future of the City	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	41%	44%	55%	55%
Average	63%	69%	48%	50%	57%	53%	54%	58%	66%	62%

5.3.2 The average score for the public image of the Council across all indicators in 2007 was lower than in 2006, reflecting decreases in the score for almost all of the individual factors, but still higher than all other years since 2000. The survey also asked respondents to state which of these factors are of most importance to them. It is encouraging to note that the top four priorities identified by respondents were also the four factors on which the Council scored highest i.e.

- offering a good range of services
- providing efficient service
- friendly, polite, well-informed employees
- providing good quality service

5.4 Local Facilities and Quality of Life

5.4.1 For the first time in 2007, the survey asked about satisfaction with a range of local facilities, ease of accessing those facilities, satisfaction with the local environment and quality of life. Overall results are set out in Tables 4, 5 and 6 and para. 5.4.2 below. In most cases, totals for satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not add to 100%. This is because many respondents said they did not use the facilities under consideration or the facilities did not exist. Results for each of the eight wards will be submitted to the appropriate Local Community Planning Partnerships.

Table 4

Local Facilities	% Satisfied	% Dissatisfied
Local Shops	83%	13%
Public Transport	80%	10%
Local Library	67%	2%
Local Health Clinic	62%	4%
Local Dentist	54%	5%
Schools	48%	5%
Arts, Sports or Leisure Facilities	43%	8%
Social Facilities	31%	11%
Local Phone Boxes	25%	17%
Community Centre	25%	6%
Local Childcare Facilities	22%	6%
Local Community Groups	21%	5%
Local Youth Facilities	16%	12%
Local Day Centres	15%	6%

Table 5

Ease of Accessing Local Facilities	% Satisfied	% Dissatisfied
Local Shops	89%	5%
Public Transport	85%	5%
Local Library	66%	3%
Local Health Clinic	62%	4%
Local Dentist	56%	5%

Schools	49%	2%
Arts, Sports or Leisure Facilities	43%	7%
Social Facilities	36%	6%
Local Phone Boxes	33%	11%
Community Centre	26%	5%
Local Childcare Facilities	25%	6%
Local Community Groups	22%	7%
Local Youth Facilities	20%	6%
Local Day Centres	18%	5%

Table 6

Local Environment	**% Satisfied**	**% Dissatisfied**
Shopping Facilities	85%	14%
Cleanliness of area around house	83%	17%
Cleanliness of streets	71%	28%
Quality and maintenance of open spaces	70%	26%
Condition of roads, pavements and streetlighting	49%	51%
Children's play areas	35%	27%

The results are largely positive, with the condition of roads, pavements and streetlighting being the only item on which the % of respondents dissatisfied was higher than those satisfied, although there were significant levels of dissatisfaction with a number of other aspects of the local environment.

5.4.2 Regarding quality of life in the neighbourhood:

- 43% of respondents were very satisfied
- 46% were fairly satisfied
- 8% were fairly dissatisfied
- 3% were very dissatisfied

6. BENCHMARKING

6.1 Previous reports on the survey have mentioned a facility on COSLA's website which allows Councils to compare results from residents' surveys. Few Councils have used this facility and there is no fresh data available for comparison. However, work being planned through the Improvement Service for local government may provide benchmarking opportunities in future. Comparisons with other areas will be included in the report on future surveys if available.

6.2 The latest results from the Scottish Household Survey were published in August 2007. Although none of the questions used are directly comparable to the Council's own survey, there are a number of results which cover similar areas to those outlined above. Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10 below show the results from the sections on 'quality of Council services' and 'neighbourhoods'. The figures for Dundee are broadly comparable with those for Scotland as a whole.

Table 7

Agreement with statement 'My Council provides high quality services'	Dundee	Scotland as a whole
Strongly agree	7%	5%
Tend to agree	39%	38%
Neither agree nor disagree	16%	19%
Tend to disagree	20%	20%
Strongly disagree	12%	13%
No opinion	8%	5%

Table 8

Agreement with statement 'My Council does the best it can with the money available'	Dundee	Scotland as a whole
Strongly agree	6%	5%
Tend to agree	29%	34%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%	17%
Tend to disagree	23%	21%
Strongly disagree	16%	15%
No opinion	11%	9%

Table 9

Agreement with statement 'My Council is addressing the key issues affecting the quality of life in my neighbourhood'	Dundee	Scotland as a whole
Strongly agree	7%	4%
Tend to agree	33%	34%
Neither agree nor disagree	18%	20%
Tend to disagree	19%	19%
Strongly disagree	13%	13%
No opinion	11%	9%

Table 10

Rating of neighbourhood as a place to live	Dundee	Scotland as a whole
Very good	49%	52%
Fairly good	42%	41%
Fairly poor	5%	5%
Very poor	2%	2%
No opinion	1%	0%

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The Annual Consumer Survey continues to provide valuable information on residents' perception of the Council and the new questions added this year provide useful information on satisfaction with local facilities and neighbourhoods. As in previous years, the issues raised by the survey results will continue to be addressed as part of the Council's commitment to continuous improvement through consultation with service users. The survey provides important information on trends for self-assessment under the EFQM Organisational Excellence Model, which is a key part of the Council's performance management arrangements for Best Value. The results are distributed amongst officers and used in training courses in relevant areas.

7.2 The survey also provides valuable information on how the public access our services, which will inform the development and implementation of the Council's Customer First strategy.

8 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty and Equality Impact Assessment. There are no major issues.

9 CONSULTATIONS

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executives, Head of Finance and Head of Public Relations have been consulted on this report.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background paper was relied upon in the preparation of this report:

Annual Consumer Survey - Report prepared for Dundee City Council by Ashbrook Research and Consultancy Ltd - September 2007.

Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) 18 September, 2007