REPORT TO: **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 9 SEPTEMBER 2002**

REPORT ON: **ANNUAL CONSUMER SURVEY 2002**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE PLANNING**

REPORT NO: **643-2002**

1. PURPOSE

This report summarises the main findings from the 2002 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.

(iii) note the benchmarking comparisons with other Councils which have entered results on the COSLA website

(iv) agree that the annual survey should continue to be carried out for the next three years.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is estimated that the annual survey will cost around £3,500 per annum for the next three years. This can be contained within existing budgets.

4. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

None

5. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

None

6. BACKGROUND

6.1 The Council Plan 1999-2002 committed the Council to continue to conduct an Annual Consumer Survey as part of evaluating progress towards achieving the objectives of the 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 tracks the public's perception of whether the city is improving and whether fear of crime is reducing.

6.2 The survey is conducted by an independent market research company – Ashbrook Research and Consultancy – and is based on a sample of 400 citizens, who were interviewed in their homes during June.

6.3 Key results from the survey are summarised below, and comparisons are given with the results from other surveys where available. A full copy of the research report will be sent to each Group Secretary and made available in the members' lounge.

7. KEY RESULTS

7.1 Customer Care

7.1.1 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 or facility. Tables 1, 2 and 3 below show the results on a range of satisfaction indicators:

Table 1

Satisfaction with Telephone Contacts	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy of Staff	79%	87%	79%	75%	81%	96%
How Quickly Phone Was Answered	84%	79%	90%	96%	84%	100%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	79%	77%	76%	92%	71%	84%
Overall Helpfulness of Staff	77%	74%	79%	75%	81%	96%
Ease of Getting Someone Who Could Help	74%	70%	79%	86%	64%	97%
Outcome of Contact	61%	68%	65%	51%	59%	53%
Average	76%	76%	78%	79%	73%	88%

Table 2

Satisfaction with Office Visits	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Ease Of Getting To Office	94%	87%	91%	95%	100%	91%
Suitability of Office	N/A	N/A	89%	89%	87%	89%
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy Of Staff	81%	86%	87%	93%	81%	100%
Overall Helpfulness Of Staff	82%	81%	87%	93%	81%	100%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	86%	79%	81%	96%	83%	100%
Outcome of Contact	60%	60%	59%	78%	58%	80%
Average	81%	79%	81%	91%	82%	93%

Table 3

Satisfaction With Facility Visits	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy of Staff	83%	95%	95%	96%	87%	90%
East Of Getting To Facility	90%	95%	100%	97%	98%	95%
Suitability of Facility	N/A	N/A	98%	84%	81%	85%
Overall Helpfulness Of Staff	81%	95%	95%	96%	87%	90%
Overall Standard of Service	72%	93%	97%	98%	93%	80%
Average	82%	95%	97%	97%	89%	88%

7.1.2 The profile of satisfaction remains positive across all the indicators, with two-thirds of the results up on the scores obtained last year. As in previous years, the most significant level of dissatisfaction relates to ‘outcome of contact’ with telephone contacts and office visits. These issues in particular will continue to be monitored closely to identify any significant trends which require attention or have implications for training or the way services are delivered.

7.1.3 2002’s survey shows a fall in the percentage of respondents (59%) who felt that they receive enough information about the Council and the services it provides. This was down from 2001’s figure of 80% and 2000’s result of 68%

7.2 **Improvement in the City**

In 2001, there was a relatively equal split between the people who perceived the City to have improved, deteriorated or stayed the same. Table 4 shows that, in 2002, more people felt the City to have stayed the same or deteriorated, with a fall in those saying the city has improved.

Table 4

Changes to Dundee	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Improved	41%	44%	42%	46%	28%	17%
Stayed the Same	21%	27%	20%	19%	28%	37%
Deteriorated	31%	25%	31%	31%	33%	37%
Can’t Say	7%	5%	6%	4%	11%	9%

When residents were asked, on an unprompted basis, to identify ways in which the city could be improved, the principal suggestions were:

- more/better facilities for young people (16%)
- better/more policing, CCTV etc (10%)
- better service from the Council (7%)
- reduce litter (6%)
- tackle vandalism/graffiti (6%)
- better paid job (5%)

7.3 **Fear of Crime**

The percentage of people more worried about becoming a victim of crime was 41%, up from 32% in 2001. However, the percentage of people saying they were less worried was also up, from 34% to 44%. Only 8% said they were 'not worried' compared to 22% last year. In the years prior to 2001, the percentage saying 'more worried' was generally between 50% and 60%.

7.4 **Public Image Profile**

7.4.1 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 5 below, along with the percentage of interviewees who responded positively each year:

Table 5

Public Image Profile	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Good Range of Services	48%	77%	79%	61%	68%	82%
Friendly Employees	75%	73%	79%	64%	64%	85%
Good Quality Services	46%	67%	65%	54%	63%	76%
Efficient Services	39%	66%	69%	54%	86%	70%
Communicates Well	34%	61%	67%	43%	31%	28%
Promotes Services Well	40%	59%	65%	45%	68%	64%
Receives Fair Press Coverage	52%	59%	69%	31%	37%	42%
Value For Money	39%	53%	57%	34%	64%	67%
Listens to Complaints	45%	53%	69%	46%	23%	29%
Has Sufficient Resources	38%	52%	68%	51%	48%	23%
Average	46%	63%	69%	48%	50%	57%

7.4.2 The average score for the public image of the Council across all indicators in 2002 was up slightly on the 2001 figure. There were notable increases with respect to the following indicators:

- Providing good quality services (rising from 63% to 76%)
- Providing a good range of services (rising from 68% to 82%)
- Having friendly employees (rising from 64% to 85%)

During the same time, however, there were significant falls in:

- Providing an efficient service (falling from 86% to 70% though still up from 2000's figure of 54%).

- Having sufficient resources (falling from 48% to 23%)

8. **BENCHMARKING**

8.1 There is now a facility on COSLA's website which allows Councils to compare results from residents' surveys. Only three other Councils have entered data so far and the questions have not been fully standardised, but some comparisons can be made using a detailed interpretation of our survey results and the results of those Councils which have entered data on similar questions. It is hoped that more Councils will add survey results to the system in future which will allow more extensive comparison.

8.2 The comparable figures are:

(a) I was satisfied with the contact I had with the Council

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Dundee	49%	40%	1%	8%	2%
Council 1	31%	35%	8%	15%	11%
Council 2	61%	5%	3%	24%	7%
Council 3	25%	21%	12%	35%	7%

(b) The staff I spoke to were helpful

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Dundee	53%	45%	0%	2%	0%
Council 3	8%	21%	31%	32%	8%

(c) I am satisfied with the information I get on local Council services

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Dundee	N/A	59%	N/A	41%	N/A
Council 2	8%	41%	3%	42%	6%

(d) The Council gives residents good value for money

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Dundee	N/A	67%	20%	13%	N/A
Council 1	4%	35%	15%	28%	18%
Council 3	4%	18%	46%	29%	3%

9. CONCLUSIONS

9.1 The Annual Consumer Survey continues to provide valuable information on residents' perception of the Council and the city. 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.

9.2 As well as the key results highlighted in this report, the survey also provides valuable information on usage and demand for services and on issues such as citizens' views on, and access to, new technology, which informs the implementation of the Council's Information and Communication Technology strategy.

9.3 This year's survey is the last covered by the existing contract with the market research company, and it is recommended that the survey be continued for the next three years.

Director of Corporate Planning …………………………….. Date ………………………..