REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 19 APRIL 2004

REPORT ON: PURCHASE OF SURVEY DESIGN AND ANALYSIS PACKAGE

REPORT BY: ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (COMMUNITY PLANNING) AND
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REPORT NO: 185-2004

1   **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

        To recommend the purchase of a computer package to assist all departments with the
        design and analysis of customer and service user surveys.

2   **RECOMMENDATIONS**

        It is recommended that Committee approve the purchase of the SPSS Dimensions
        package as a corporate resource available for use by all departments.

3   **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

        The capital cost of the package, including installation and training, will be £38,355 which
        can be met from an allowance for the purchase of computer equipment in the Capital
        Plan 2004/05. There will also be an annual cost estimated at £5,654, which can be met
        from the IT Department's revenue budget.

4   **LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

        By recommending use of a tool which will improve the Council's ability to gather and
        analyse the views of customers and service users, the report will have an impact on the
        following key Local Agenda 21 theme:

        'all sections of the community are empowered to participate in decision-making'.

5   **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

        The survey design and analysis package will enhance the Council's ability to monitor
        the views of all groups within the community.

6   **BACKGROUND**

6.1   The Council has a commitment to consult citizens on the services it provides and their
        satisfaction with these. Consultation with stakeholders is also a key aspect of best
        value, while the modernising government agenda foresees a growth in consultation
        using electronic means. Surveys can also be used in-house, to gather the views of
        employees, members and other departments, and also to gather and analyse factual
        information as well as opinions.

6.2   Examples of the wide range of customer and service user surveys carried out at present
        or planned in the near future include:

        •   Satisfaction Surveys

                -       council house tenants
                -       parents of school pupils

- visitors to galleries and arts events
- library users
- meals on wheels and day care facilities
- flower show visitors and exhibitors
- smartcards

- Information Gathering

    - voluntary population survey
    - company employment survey
    - staff travel habits
    - young peoples' reading

A very rough estimate suggests that over 100,000 questionnaires will require to be analysed, based on surveys likely to be carried out in the coming year.

6.3 At present, departments use a variety of methods to design and analyse surveys, including at least six different IT packages. Consultation with departments has indicated that there would be an interest in acquiring a package for use throughout the Council which would enhance the capability to produce and report on surveys, and allow common training and support for staff doing this work. Such a package should allow surveys to be produced and completed online, as well as allowing electronic analysis of surveys completed on paper.

6.4 The IT Department has carried out an assessment of the products available, and recommends that the SPSS Dimensions package best meets the Council's requirements. SPSS is a well-established company with many government and local authority clients. The package proposed contains a number of useful features and has been successfully piloted on a test survey for Dundee Contemporary Arts, which was chosen as the pilot because it had complicated features which would test the capabilities of the package. The package is accessed through a web portal, providing access to staff throughout the Council without the need for expensive individual desktop software and will incorporate a facility for scanning in the data from paper-based surveys, which will continue to be widely used.

6.5 The costs of the proposed package are set out below:

	Initial Costs	Recurring Costs
Dimensions Package	£19,430	£3,266
Scanning Package	£14,730	£2,388
Training	£4,195	
TOTAL	£38,355	£5,654

These prices are based on up to 25 simultaneous 'hits' on the web server, whether for design, reporting or submission of surveys, which is felt to be sufficient capacity for the Council's purposes. The initial costs can be met from an allowance for purchase of computer equipment in the 2004/2005 Capital Plan and the recurring costs can be met from the IT Department's Revenue Budget.

6.6   Purchase of this package will allow scope for increasing consultation with the public while making more effective use of staff time. It may also potentially reduce the cost of using external market research companies, although this will still be required in some cases due to the need for independence or trained interviewers.

7   **CONSULTATION**

7.1   The Chief Executive and Depute Chief Executives have been consulted on this report.

7.2   In addition, the report reflects the findings of a survey of departmental representatives who expressed an interest in the use of surveys and attended a demonstration of the proposed package in January 2004.

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