REPORT TO: **IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY SUB-COMMITTEE - 28 JANUARY 2010**

REPORT ON: **ANNUAL CONSUMER SURVEY 2009**

REPORT BY: **ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

REPORT NO: **6-2010**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report summarises the main findings from the 2009 Annual Consumer Survey and explains their use.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Sub-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 using the Public Sector Improvement Framework model

(ii) remit the Assistant Chief Executive to disseminate the customer contact results to departments for use in staff training on customer care

(iii) invite each local community planning partnership to consider the key neighbourhood results for their area once the detailed information has been analysed and disseminated

(iv) authorise officers to publish the report on the Council's website and make available copies on request as part of the Council's commitment to Public Performance Reporting

(v) note some results in relevant areas from the separate Scottish Household Survey commissioned by the Scottish Government

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4. INTRODUCTION

4.1 The Council commissions 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 satisfaction issues and the public's overall perception of the Council as an organisation. In addition, the survey asks about fear of crime; the way in which respondents access, or would like to access Council services; and about 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. As in the past 2 years, the survey was based on a sample of 800 citizens, increased from the 400 surveyed in previous years, which allows some analysis at ward level for use by Local Community Planning Partnerships. Respondents were interviewed in their homes during Autumn.

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. To achieve efficiency savings through economies of scale, this year's survey was carried out in conjunction with a wider household survey on behalf of the Dundee Partnership, which covers issues such as neighbourhoods, housing, community involvement, health, employment, community safety and money matters. Results will be reported through the Dundee Partnership, and are included in the full copy of the research report referred to above. A summary of key neighbourhood results for each ward will be sent to each Local Community Planning Partnership once further detailed analysis has been carried out.

5. KEY RESULTS

5.1 <u>Customer Care</u>

5.1.1 A key objective of the survey is to gauge the levels of customer satisfaction 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 over the past ten years:

Table 1

Satisfaction with Telephone Contacts	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy of Staff	75%	81%	96%	78%	84%	92%	93%	87%	93%	86%
How Quickly Phone Was Answered	96%	84%	100%	84%	85%	91%	91%	94%	94%	98%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	92%	71%	84%	80%	79%	90%	93%	92%	91%	83%
Overall Helpfulness of Staff	75%	81%	96%	78%	84%	92%	93%	87%	93%	86%
Ease of Getting Someone Who Could Help	86%	64%	97%	74%	76%	80%	89%	88%	93%	93%
Outcome of Contact	51%	59%	53%	64%	71%	77%	82%	72%	77%	71%
Average	79%	73%	88%	76%	80%	87%	90%	87%	90%	86%

Table 2

Satisfaction with Office Visits	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Ease Of Getting To Office	95%	100%	91%	94%	96%	98%	100%	94%	96%	98%
Suitability of Office	89%	87%	89%	82%	75%	92%	97%	91%	89%	93%
Overall Friendliness/Courtesy Of Staff	93%	81%	100%	79%	85%	92%	81%	89%	82%	93%
Overall Helpfulness Of Staff	93%	81%	100%	79%	85%	92%	81%	89%	82%	93%
How Well Staff Understood What Was Wanted	96%	83%	100%	83%	82%	92%	87%	94%	86%	91%
Outcome of Contact	78%	58%	80%	66%	62%	88%	80%	76%	56%	77%
Average	91%	82%	93%	81%	81%	92%	88%	89%	82%	91%

5.1.2 The profile of satisfaction remains positive across all the indicators. The average score for satisfaction with telephone contacts is down compared to 2008, reflecting decreases in most of the individual ratings (although satisfaction with 'how quickly the phone was answered 'remains very high at 98%). However, the satisfaction scores for office visits are generally up compared to last year, with a particular increase in the % of respondents satisfied with the outcome of their contact. The survey results show that, among those who had contacted the Council in the past year, 71% had done so by a telephone call and 17% by personal visit, with other contacts being by letter (8%), or email (3%).

5.1.3 Of those who had recently contacted the Council, 36% of respondents said their last contact was to request a service and 81% of these were satisfied. 34% said the contact was to seek information and 71% of these were satisfied. The proportion saying it was to make a complaint was 29%, considerably lower than the 41% figure in 2008. However, of those who did contact the Council to make a complaint, only 39% said they were satisfied that the Council responded reasonably to the complaint. This is the same as the figure in 2007, but down on the 60% satisfaction figure last year.

5.1.4 2009's survey shows that 66% of respondents felt that they receive enough information about the Council and the services it provides. This is slightly down on 2008's figure of 71% but is in line with 2007's figure of 64% and compares to figures of 70% in 2006, 69% in 2005, 64% in 2004, 60% in 2003 and 59% in 2002. 31% of those interviewed in 2009 said they had used the Council's website (up from 22% in 2008 and similar to 2007's figure of 32%). Satisfaction levels with the website remain high, averaging 85%, slightly up on the figures of 83% and 84% in the past two years.

5.2 Fear of Crime

The fear of crime questions were changed in the 2009 survey to be consistent with those asked in the wider household survey being carried out on behalf of the Dundee Partnership, so there are no comparisons with previous years. 25% of respondents stated that they had felt fearful about becoming a victim of crime in the past year. 9% said that they or a member of their household had been a victim of crime in the past year, most commonly in the form of vandalism. These questions will be repeated in future surveys to establish any trends.

5.3 Public Image Profile

5.3.1 The questionnaire includes a list of eleven factors which seek to assess respondents' 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. 2009's survey continued to use the new factor introduced five 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. A new factor was introduced last year - 'Ensures sustainable use of resources and care for the environment' - in order to meet a commitment in the Council Plan to survey public perception of the Council on sustainable issues, and this was again included in the 2009 survey.

Table 3

Public Image Profile	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Good Range of Services	61%	68%	82%	64%	63%	69%	81%	72%	77%	74%
Friendly Employees	64%	64%	85%	67%	68%	75%	76%	73%	77%	77%
Good Quality Services	54%	63%	76%	55%	60%	64%	72%	66%	74%	67%
Efficient Services	54%	86%	70%	54%	58%	63%	66%	62%	70%	65%
Communicates Well	43%	31%	28%	49%	47%	53%	61%	57%	67%	55%
Promotes Services Well	45%	68%	64%	44%	47%	55%	58%	54%	70%	58%
Receives Fair Press Coverage	31%	37%	42%	45%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Value For Money	34%	64%	67%	45%	49%	50%	56%	51%	65%	48%
Listens to Complaints	46%	23%	29%	53%	53%	55%	64%	61%	68%	64%
Has Sufficient Resources	51%	48%	23%	53%	55%	55%	68%	60%	69%	64%
Tackles Important Issues for the Future of the City	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	41%	44%	55%	55%	65%	53%
Ensures sustainable use of resources and care for the environment	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	66%	59%
Average	48%	50%	57%	53%	54%	58%	66%	62%	70%	62%

5.3.2 The average score for the public image of the Council across all indicators in 2009 was lower than the high score achieved in 2008, reflecting decreases in the score for most of the individual factors, which generally returned to 2007 levels. The survey also asked respondents to state which of these factors are of most importance to them, and it is pleasing to see a fairly good correlation between the top priorities identified by respondents and the factors on which the Council scored most highly. The top four priorities identified by respondents are all in the top five in terms of performance. The top priority identified by respondents was 'having friendly, polite, helpful, well-informed employees' and this was also the issue on which the Council scored the highest. However, it should be noted that 'listening to complaints' ranked 3rd in terms of importance but 6th in terms of performance and 'providing value for money services' ranked 6th in terms of importance but 11th in terms of performance.

5.4 Local Facilities and Quality of Life

5.4.1 As in the past two years, the survey asked about satisfaction with a range of local facilities, ease of accessing those facilities, satisfaction with aspects of the local environment and quality of life. Overall results are set out in Tables 4, 5, 6 and 7 below.

5.4.2 The list of facilities asked about in Tables 4 and 5 was changed this year to make this consistent with the wider household survey being carried out on behalf of the Dundee Partnership, so there are no directly comparable figures from 2008. However, these questions will be repeated in future years to establish any trends. Note that the figures presented in Tables 4 and 5 exclude respondents who stated that the facility did not exist or they never used it - the figures show the % satisfied of those who expressed an opinion.

Table 4

Satisfaction with local facilities	% satisfied in 2009
Fire service	100%
Local schools	99%
Local health services	97%
Refuse collection	96%
Community centres and libraries	96%
Police service	94%
Social care/social work	93%
Street cleaning	92%
Parks and open spaces	91%
Public transport	90%
Local shops	89%
Sport and leisure facilities	89%
Community warden service	81%
Local youth facilities	71%
Local phone boxes	64%

Table 5

Ease of accessing local facilities	% satisfied in 2009
Fire service	99%
Local schools	99%
Local health services	95%
Refuse collection	98%
Community centres and libraries	92%
Police service	94%
Social care/social work	93%
Street cleaning	98%
Parks and open spaces	90%
Public transport	89%
Local shops	90%
Sport and leisure facilities	87%
Community warden service	79%
Local youth facilities	75%
Local phone boxes	63%

Table 6

Local Environment	% Satisfied		
	2007	**2008**	**2009**
Shopping Facilities	85%	80%	87%
Cleanliness of area around home	83%	79%	91%
Cleanliness of streets	71%	78%	91%
Quality and maintenance of open spaces	70%	80%	88%
Condition of roads, pavements and streetlighting	49%	61%	80%
Children's play areas	35%	33%	33%

The results in Table 6 are largely positive, showing a further welcome increase in the level of satisfaction with the condition of roads, pavements and streetlighting. Satisfaction with the cleanliness of streets and areas, and the quality and maintenance of open spaces, have also increased. A significant % of those interviewed gave a 'don't know' response on children's play areas - of those who did have an opinion, 68% were satisfied.

Table 7

Quality of Life in the Neighbourhood	% Satisfied		
	2007	**2008**	**2009**
Very satisfied	43%	31%	50%
Fairly satisfied	46%	55%	45%
Fairly dissatisfied	8%	9%	5%
Very dissatisfied	3%	5%	0%

Table 7 also shows a welcome increase in the % of respondents satisfied with the overall quality of life in their neighbourhood.

6. BENCHMARKING

6.1 The Improvement Service for Local Government in Scotland is currently undertaking a pilot project on the measurement of customer satisfaction which may provide opportunities to benchmark our results with other authorities. Comparisons with other Councils will be included in future reports as soon as available.

6.2 The latest results from the Scottish Household Survey were produced in August 2009. This is an entirely separate survey, commissioned by the Scottish Government, and none of the questions used are directly comparable to the Council's own survey. However, there are a number of questions which cover similar areas to those covered in our own survey and outlined above, and provide an opportunity to benchmark the Scottish Household Survey results for Dundee with the average for the country as a whole. Tables 8, 9,10 and 11 below show the results from the sections on 'quality of Council services' and 'neighbourhoods'. The figures for Dundee remain broadly comparable with those for Scotland as a whole.

Table 8 - Scottish Household Survey

Agreement with statement 'My Council provides high quality services'	Dundee 2007	Dundee 2009	Scotland as a whole 2007	Scotland as a whole 2009
Strongly agree	7%	6%	5%	5%
Tend to agree	39%	37%	38%	35%
Neither agree nor disagree	16%	25%	19%	23%
Tend to disagree	20%	16%	20%	19%
Strongly disagree	12%	9%	13%	11%
No opinion	8%	6%	5%	7%

Table 9 - Scottish Household Survey

Agreement with statement 'My Council does the best it can with the money available'	Dundee 2007	Dundee 2009	Scotland as a whole 2007	Scotland as a whole 2009
Strongly agree	6%	5%	5%	5%
Tend to agree	29%	33%	34%	32%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%	21%	17%	20%
Tend to disagree	23%	18%	21%	20%
Strongly disagree	16%	12%	15%	13%
No opinion	11%	11%	9%	11%

Table 10 - Scottish Household Survey

Agreement with statement 'My Council is addressing the key issues affecting the quality of life in my neighbourhood'	Dundee 2007	Dundee 2009	Scotland as a whole 2007	Scotland as a whole 2009
Strongly agree	7%	5%	4%	4%
Tend to agree	33%	32%	34%	30%
Neither agree nor disagree	18%	25%	20%	23%
Tend to disagree	19%	23%	19%	20%
Strongly disagree	13%	6%	13%	12%
No opinion	11%	8%	9%	11%

Table 11 - Scottish Household Survey

Rating of neighbourhood as a place to live	Dundee 2007	Dundee 2009	Scotland as a whole 2007	Scotland as a whole 2009
Very good	49%	46%	52%	52%
Fairly good	42%	43%	41%	40%
Fairly poor	5%	7%	5%	5%
Very poor	2%	4%	2%	2%
No opinion	1%	0%	0%	0%

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The Annual Consumer Survey continues to provide valuable information on residents' perception of the Council and 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 Public Sector Improvement Framework, which is a key part of the Council's performance management arrangements for Best Value. The results will be 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 continuing 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, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

9 CONSULTATIONS

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Director 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:

Citizen Survey 2009 - Report prepared for Dundee City Council by Ashbrook Research and Consultancy Ltd - December 2009.

Chris Ward
Assistant Chief Executive 25/01/2010