



AGENDA

CABINET

MONDAY, 7 MARCH 2005

10.30 AM

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, ST PETERS HILL,
GRANTHAM**

Duncan Kerr, Chief Executive

CABINET MEMBERS:	Councillor Mrs. Linda Neal (Leader), Councillor Peter Martin-Mayhew (Deputy Leader/Portfolio: Housing), Councillor Teri Bryant (Portfolio: Community Affairs), Councillor Ray Auger (Portfolio: Environmental), Councillor Paul Carpenter (Portfolio: Technology), Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright (Portfolio: Cultural) and Councillor John Smith (Portfolio: Economic)
Cabinet Support Officer:	Lena Shuttlewood tel: 01476 406119 e-mail: l.shuttlewood@southkesteven.gov.uk

Members of the public are entitled to attend the meeting of the Cabinet at which key decisions will be taken on the issues listed on the following page. Key decisions are marked *.

1. ***Review of Council Priorities and Corporate Planning Arrangements**
Report by the Chief Executive. **To Follow**

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF: Chief Executive

REPORT NO. CEX283

DATE: 7th March 2005

TITLE:	Review of Council Priorities
FORWARD PLAN ITEM:	Yes
DATE WHEN FIRST APPEARED IN FORWARD PLAN:	May 2004
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	Yes
COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	All
CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS:	Detailed in the Report
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS:	None
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	Previous Reports to Council Minutes from meeting of the Local Area Assemblies and Development and Scrutiny Panels (DSPs)

1. Introduction and Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 In accordance with the Corporate Planning Framework approved by Council the authority has set a vision, core values, priorities and non-priorities for a four year time period. The purpose of this report is to formally review just one element of this framework namely the Councils priorities which are divided between Category A (where targets for step-change are set) and Category B (where targets for incremental change are set). It was determined by Council that this review should be undertaken annually (Minute 28 (7)).

- 1.2 When formulating its priorities the Council followed a robust and objective procedure, which applied the following three sequential tests:

1. What is the justification for considering it to be a priority at all?

The evidence accepted under this test was either local priority based upon a statistical survey of local people, national priorities based upon targets issued by Central Government, or future issues which whilst not currently priorities need action now to prevent them from developing into major problems in the future.

2. Taking all the consultation mechanism into account, is the weight of expressed opinion sufficient to justify it becoming a corporate priority of the whole Council?
3. Is there sufficient objective data to enable the Council to be confident that it can achieve sustainable improvements in outcomes for a cost effective investment?

- 1.3 This process led to the adoption by the Council of the following priorities:

Category A: Priorities for Step-Change

Anti-social Behaviour
Access to Council services
Street scene
Recycling
Development of the town-centres and Grantham as a Sub-regional centre.

Category B : Priorities for Incremental Change

Affordable Housing
Business Development
Vulnerable Persons
Communications and Consultation
Diversity
Planning and Conservation
LSP and Community Strategy
Council tax collection
Housing Management
Car Parks
Public Toilets

- 1.4 In October the Council completed this process by determining the Category Y and Category Z services.

2. Framework for this review

- 2.1 As Council only approved the determination of services coming within categories Y and Z in October 2004, and furthermore as many of the actions necessary to give effect to this decision have yet to be implemented it is not proposed to formally review the services in these categories.
- 2.2 It is intended to review the services in categories A and B by considering any new data available to the Council, in particular the results of the 2005 customer survey, reports from inspectors, any new government priorities and the performance of the Council against the targets set.

3. Results of the 2005 Customer Survey

- 3.1 This survey was undertaken on a statistically valid sample basis and completed by over 1,000 households. It therefore represents a robust and objective assessment of the priorities of local residents.
- 3.2 The full un-weighted results of this survey are enclosed as Appendix A. Weighting is currently being applied to ensure that the results reflect the demography of the district and these weighted results will replace this unweighted data when it is available.
- 3.3 The results which are particularly relevant to this review are as follows:
- There is strong support for the priorities the Council has adopted with nearly 9 out of ten people (88.3%) agreeing with them.
 - 965 respondents (91.7%) supported the Council's vision "To ensure that the residents of South Kesteven are proud of their district and their Council"
 - Over three-quarters (77.0%) of respondents were proud of their local community. Nearly half (48.3%) were proud of their Council.

4. National Government Priorities

- 4.1 The major change here is that during the last year representatives of the ODPM and Local Government have agreed the following shared priorities:
- Sustainable Communities and Transport
Safe and Strong Communities
Healthier Communities
Older People
Children and Young Persons
- 4.2 Unfortunately these priorities do not differentiate between the responsibilities of District and County Councils.
- 4.3 The linkage between the current priorities and these shared themes has been clarified in my report proposing amendment to the Corporate Planning Framework. From this assessment it is evident that there is already a high

degree of correlation between our current priorities and those shared nationally.

4.4 During the course of the year the Council has received a number of documents stating or proposing developments of Government policies. These include:

- Vibrant Local Leadership
- Citizen Engagement and Public Services: Why Neighbourhoods Matter
- Delivering Sustainable Communities
- Our Healthier Nation : A Contract for Health

4.5 The development of ambitions, approved by the Council at its last meeting, is intended to provide a means for examining in detail these proposals and considering the extent to which they should be reflected in future District Council priorities. Currently this work has not concluded.

5. Progress to-date

5.1 In October 2004 targets were set for all category A and B priorities on a three to four year time horizon. It is therefore rather premature to review performance, particularly as some of the investment being provided from non-priority areas is not yet available. However in the light of developments in 2004/5 it is appropriate to review the status of the following services:

a. Recycling

5.2 Although performance in 2004/5 has not increased significantly from 2003/4, the success of the Council in securing nearly £1 million in grant aid from DEFRA means that we are able to predict that we will reach our four-year target of 18% recycling by the end on 2005/6.

5.3 Of course this is currently only a prediction and still depends upon actual take-up of the green bin-composting scheme. Whilst the initial response to this scheme was good, requests for containers has slowed-down recently.

5.4 Given the severe financial limitations being imposed on the ability of the Council to raise additional revenue from Council tax income, our ability to meet future recycling targets is becoming increasingly dependent upon our success in securing DEFRA grants. In this regard our previous approach, which has not placed us at the forefront, will prejudice our application. If additional Council tax income cannot be secured, delivery of higher recycling targets will require a significant increase in the number of services included within category Z (non-priorities).

5.5 Recently DEFRA have made it clear that priority for future grant applications will be given to those Councils who, of their own volition, have elected to exceed the minimum targets and “get ahead of the game” by setting higher targets. Increased targets for this priority would also resolve the dissatisfaction being experienced by our residents as a consequence of the inequity caused by current variations in the patterns of recycling services across the District. Furthermore, it would also enable the Council to formally

consider future refuse collection options and invest to make efficiency savings.

- 5.6 As a result of this it is recommended that the Priority A status for recycling be maintained with the following new targets set:

Year	Current Target	Proposed new target
2005/6	18%	18%
2006/7	18%	21%
2007/8	18%	24%

b. Affordable Housing

- 5.7 When the priorities were set by the Council in May 2004, there was an amendment made seeking to make the provision of more affordable housing a Priority A (step-change) rather than a Priority B. As members will recall, the reason why incremental improvement was the only improvement considered to be sustainable was because of the housing figures being imposed on the District in the Lincolnshire Plan imposing severe limitations on the quantum of affordable housing that could be delivered through the planning system.
- 5.8 As a category B priority Council approved the following targets in October for the provision of affordable housing:

YEAR	NEW AFFORDABLE HOMES
2004/5	60
2005/6	70
2006/7	80
2007/8	90

- 5.9 For historical comparison, performance in 2003/4 was 35 and in 2002/3 just 4 homes.
- 5.10 Since last year the Council has received a Strategic Housing Services Inspection, which has challenged several aspects of the Council's performance in this area and suggested ways of improving. An action plan has been prepared to reflect the findings of this inspection.
- 5.11 Improvement in our ability to deliver affordable housing would need to be reflected in the targets set for this activity as a category B priority. In informal session, the inspectors expressed the perception that the targets already set represented, in their view, a step-change.
- 5.12 In addition to the Housing inspection we also have the very earliest outcomes from the Stock Options Appraisal Commission, which has indicated that stock transfer may emerge as the recommendation that will come to Council. This has been coupled with a valuation of the housing stock, which has intimated that transfer could deliver a considerable capital receipt to the authority, which could be used to fund the delivery of affordable housing. Neither the size of this capital receipt, nor the willingness of tenants to consider transfer, were known to the authority when it set its priorities last year

- 5.13 Taking all these factors into account there would appear to be a clear justification in moving this service from a Category B to a Category A priority with consequential adjustments to the targets:

YEAR	NEW AFFORDABLE HOMES
2004/5	60
2005/6	80
2006/7	100
2007/8	150

c. Planning and Conservation

- 5.14 The Council has made substantial progress in improving the speed of planning applications and has indeed exceeded most of the targets set. As a result of this, new targets have been set and will be included in future Best Value Performance Plans. In view of the importance of the service to our residents and the present large incentive grants from the ODPM, it is not recommended that the Priority B status of this service be changed.

6. Recommendation

6.1 Taking all the factors into account it is recommended that the cabinet endorse and consult the Development and Scrutiny Panels on the following proposals:

- A) Affordable Housing is moved from a Priority B to a Priority A
- B) New targets for both Affordable Housing and Recycling as set-out in this report are adopted

Duncan Kerr
Chief Executive

Report Title: General Satisfaction Survey 2005 – Preliminary findings

Prepared by: Deborah Wyles, Business Management Services

Date: 28th February 2005

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Chief Executive with the results from the 2005 general satisfaction survey and in particular to inform the corporate planning framework procedure that is taking place over the next few weeks.
2. The results outlined below have not yet been weighted to ensure that they are representative of the population as a whole. Early indications are that weighting may be required for age but not for gender or ethnic group. As such any conclusions drawn from these results should have this health warning attached to them.
3. A copy of the raw results has been attached at appendix 1.

Background

4. 3980 surveys were sent out on the 20th January 2005. 1123 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 28.2%. Potential respondents were drawn from the Council Tax register on a random basis. No reminder runs were undertaken; instead the survey had an incentive attached to it to encourage people to respond.
5. The survey was structured around the Council's vision and priorities and was designed to provide baselines for some of these, so that progress towards improving service provision in these areas could be measured.

Results

The Council's vision and priorities

6. There is strong support for the priorities the Council has adopted. 808 respondents (88.3%) agreed with them.
7. 965 respondents (91.7%) supported the Council's vision "To ensure that the residents of South Kesteven are proud of their district and their Council"

8. 770 respondents (77.0%) were proud of their local community. A lower number – 442 (48.3%) were proud of their Council.

Anti-social behaviour

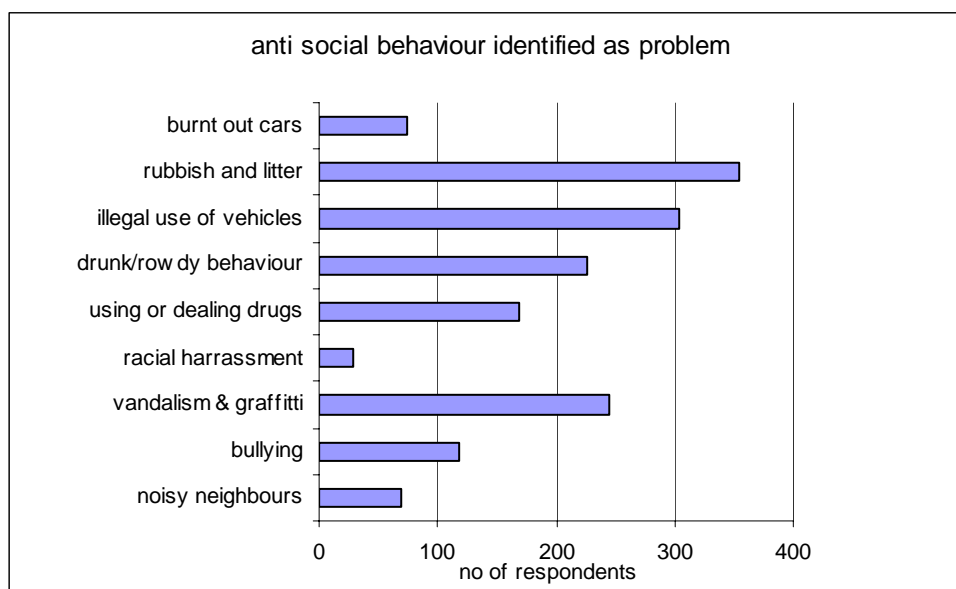
9. 313 respondents thought that anti-social behaviour was a significant problem in their neighbourhood. It will be interesting to cross tabulate these responses against postcode area to see if there are any particular “hot spots” and this will be done when weighting has been applied.

10. Respondents were then asked to state how much of a problem various different types of anti social behaviour were, in their neighbourhood.

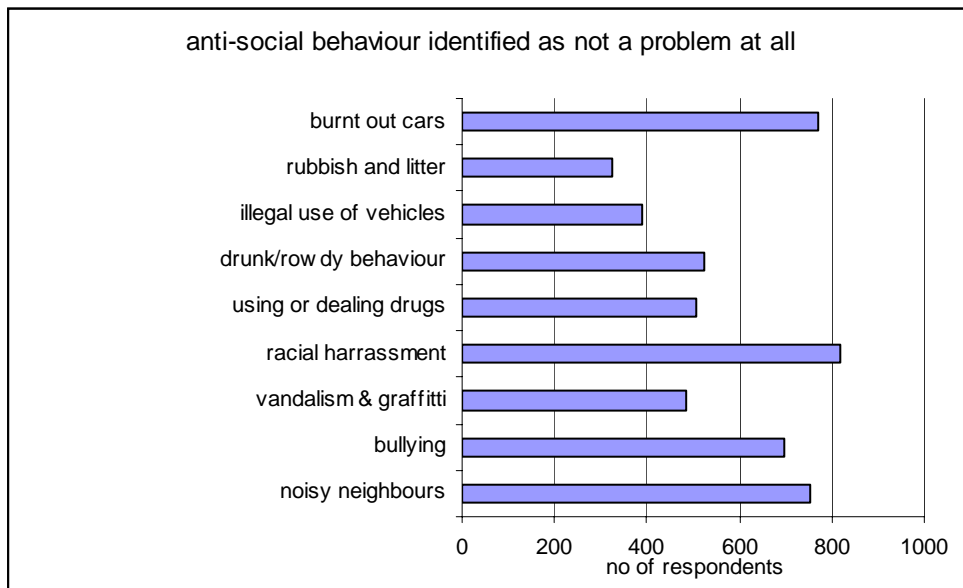
Those classifying:

- Noisy neighbours
- Bullying
- Vandalism and graffiti
- Racial harassment
- Dealing or using drugs
- Drunk or rowdy behaviour
- Illegal use of vehicles
- Rubbish and litter
- Abandoned or burnt out cars

as a very big or fairly significant problem are illustrated below.



11. Those who thought they were not a problem at all are also illustrated in graphical form overleaf.

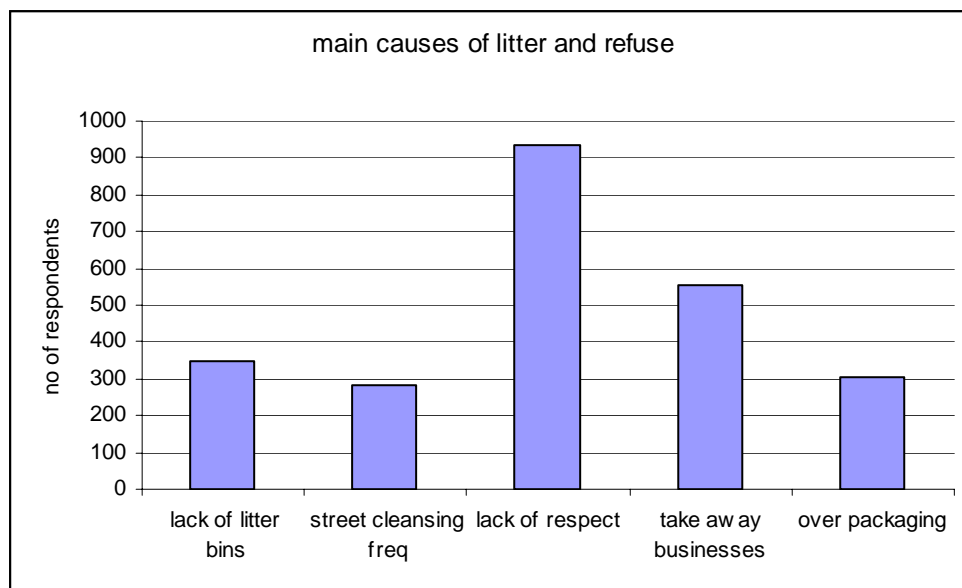


12. This is interesting as it shows in graphical format, the ratios between the types of antisocial behaviour identified as “a problem” and “not a problem”.
13. Interestingly, 451 respondents (41.7%) stated that they had had direct experience of some kind of anti-social behaviour in the last year.
14. The vast majority of respondents (91.1%) thought anti-social behaviour was more of a problem in the town centre and at night rather than during the day.
15. When asked to state whether they thought anti-social behaviour had got better or worse or stayed the same in the last 3 years, nearly half though it had got worse. A quarter of respondents thought that it had stayed the same, with the remainder answering “don’t know”.

Street Cleansing

16. Just over half of those responding -577 – were fairly or very satisfied that the Council had kept areas like parks, town centres and streets clear of litter and refuse. (This compares to 51.2% 18 months ago).
17. When asked to specify where they thought there was a particular problem,
- 230 said on the street where they live
 - 322 said in the town centre
 - 362 said in the surrounding area

18. Respondents were then asked to identify what they thought were the main causes of litter and refuse on our streets. They could choose as many or as few categories as they liked and their answers are shown in graphical form below.



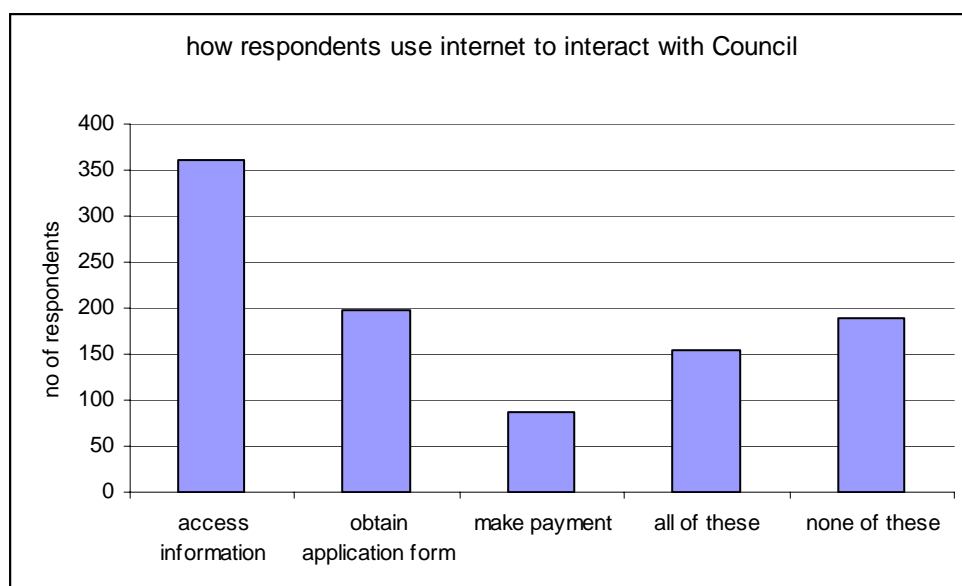
19. There was overwhelming support for prosecuting those who do not dispose of their litter in an appropriate way with 95.8% (1022 respondents) in favour. This may however be an area where weighting for age may have an impact.

Recycling

20. Respondents were asked a number of questions about both recycling facilities and kerbside collection schemes. Satisfaction rates for recycling facilities were good with those answering very or fairly satisfied ranging from 66.0% for provision overall to 75.0% for the range of materials that can be recycled.
21. The difference in the schemes provided across the area becomes apparent when looking at the satisfaction rates for kerbside collection. Significant elements answered “don’t know/ it does not apply” to each of the questions asked. Whether this is due to personal choice or because there is no scheme available to participate in requires further investigation and may be revealed to some extent by a cross tabulation of these responses against postcode area.
22. 55.4 % (564 respondents) were satisfied with the kerbside collection of items for recycling. If those answering, “don’t know/ it does not apply” are excluded, this percentage increases to 71.9%.

Access to council services

23. Nearly half of respondents (49%) had contacted the Council in the last year. The majority (88.9%) said it was easy.
24. When asked to state whether the response to their enquiry was polite, helpful, easy to understand, most were positive. Some respondents thought that we weren't very helpful (82) or efficient (83).
25. Just over half of respondents use the Internet.
26. When asked to state how they would use the Internet to interact with the Council, respondents answered as follows:



This however may be an area where weighting for age has an impact.

27. Some respondents (139) would like to be able to contact the Council on weekday evenings and on a Saturday during the day (284). 244 respondents would like to be able to contact us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
28. Nearly two thirds of respondents (664) are very or fairly satisfied with the ways in which they are able to access the Council's services. 142 stated that they would use text messaging as a way of contacting the Council. This may be another area where weighting for age may have an impact.

Town Centre Development

29. Satisfaction with various facilities in the town centres as listed below:

- car parks
- choice of shops
- CCTV
- Entertainment and eating out
- Markets
- Pedestrian areas
- Toilets

ranged from 65.4% for markets down to 14.5% for toilet facilities.

30. The majority of respondents (904 or 82.3%) do most of their shopping within the district. Peterborough, Lincoln, Nottingham and Newark were also popular destinations.

31. Nearly two thirds of respondents (63.6%) go outside the district to shop at least once a month.

Affordable Housing

32. Respondents were asked to state how much of a problem they thought the lack of affordable housing was in their neighbourhood. Just under half thought it was a fairly significant or very big problem. This may alter when weighting for age has been applied, and it will also be an interesting area to look at in respect of postcode, as there may well be some differences.

Communication

33. Nearly two thirds of respondents (688 or 62.6%) think that the Council keeps them fairly or very well informed. Only a third of respondents had heard of the Council publication "Districtline" – most of these read it.

Diversity and Cohesion

34. When asked if they thought the Council was doing enough to provide services in ways that reach all residents, including those from minority groups, 648 or 59.4% answered, "don't know". Nearly a third thought that the Council was doing enough, with 8.5% answering "no". It would be interesting to cross tabulate these replies against ethnic group, to see if the Council needs to rethink its approach in this area.

Vulnerable Persons

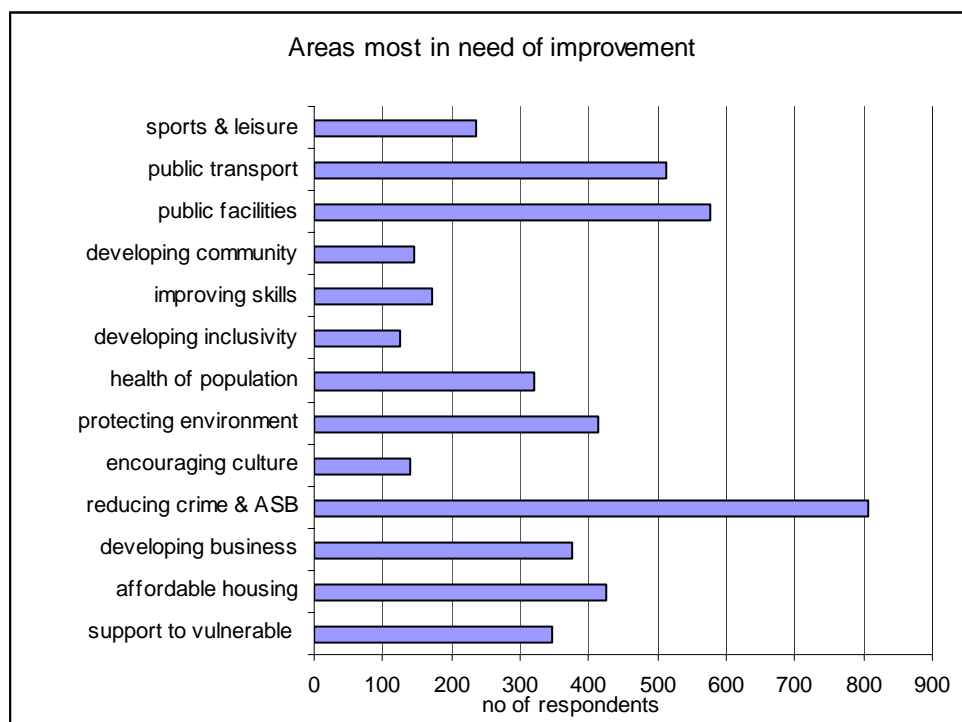
35. Just over half of respondents (608) were aware of the Helpline and Sheltered Housing services provided by the Council. Approximately 263 stated that they knew someone who may benefit from these services. Both sets of responses show significant marketing opportunities, both in terms of awareness and also need.

How the Council runs things

36. Just over half of respondents were fairly or very satisfied with the way the Council runs things. This compares to 48.4% 18 months ago.

The Local Strategic Partnership

37. Respondents were asked to comment on the LSP's vision and also what areas they thought were most in need of improvement. Support for the vision was strong, with over 90% (998 respondents) agreeing with "To ensure that by 2020 our residents live in one of the 10 most desirable locations in the country and are proud that they have the skills necessary to participate in sustainable communities that are safe, healthy and economically vibrant".
38. When asked to state which areas they thought most needed improvement, they answered as follows:



39. These responses are interesting because they support the priorities (and non priorities) identified by the Council. Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, improving public facilities, public transport (not in the Councils remit), and affordable housing all emerge as priorities. Encouraging culture is not quite as important.

Sample demographics

40. If the demographic make up of this sample is compared to the latest population figures supplied by the Office of National Statistics, the importance of applying weighting becomes clear. Government guidance states that weighting is not required if the ratio between the two figures falls between 0.8 and 1.2 (i.e. that they are almost one to one). If respective figures are compared on gender then it becomes clear that no weighting is required with respect to gender, as illustrated below.

Gender

	Sample %	ONS %	Weighting factor
Male	46.8	48.2	1.0
Female	53.0	51.8	0.9
Total	100	100	

41. If this is carried out across age group, there are some noticeable differences.

Age

	Sample %	ONS %	Weighting factor
18-24	2.3	8.9	3.9
25-34	9.8	14.8	1.5
35-44	19.0	20.0	1.0
45-54	19.3	17.8	0.9
55-64	20.1	16.6	0.8
65-74	16.5	11.4	0.7
75 +	13.0	10.5	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0	

Those under 35 are under-represented. Those aged between 65 and 74 are over represented.

42. When this exercise is undertaken on ethnic group, it appears that the sample is broadly representative in terms of ethnic group.

Ethnic group

	Sample %	ONS %	Weighting factor
Non black minority ethnic group	98.7	98.4	1.0
Black minority ethnic group	1.3	1.6	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	

Conclusion

43. Weighting for age may have an impact on the distribution of responses, and as such the results outlined in this report should be treated with caution. They do however provide an initial indication of what residents think and are valuable when considering priorities.
44. It is my intention to cross tabulate some sets of responses against age group and postcode area when weighting has been applied. An analysis of the free comment boxes will also be undertaken.

PLEASE NOTE:

- (I) Population figures on age and gender are from ONS population estimates 2003.
- (II) Ethnic group data from 2001 census
- (III) Comparative figures are from the 2003 triennial general survey (weighted results)